

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

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Contents

REVIVAL

AT A BURIAL

ZEPHANIAH - JEHOVAH'S HIDDEN ONE

REVIVAL

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**John 21: 1, 5-7 (to "Lord"), 9-12 (to "dine"); 1 Kings 19: 4-9;
Song of Songs 5: 2-7;
Genesis 45: 26-28; 46: 1,2**

I look for the Lord's help to say a little from these scriptures as to revival. There is no Christian but who has at some time in their histories felt the need of being revived. Perhaps it would be true of some of us in this room today. The idea of revival is that you should be restored to your true place, without any encumbrance, and functioning normally in relation to the things of God. The Lord has that in mind for every believer, that we should be functioning normally. He is going to revive Israel in the day to come - that nation which today is scattered, who have been so cruel - to Christ. What a day it is going to be when God revives them! Paul, speaking about it, says, "For if their casting away be the world's reconciliation, what their reception but life from among the dead?" Romans 11: 15. It is a wonderful feature of the work of God, that it is capable of being revived. You cannot revive the flesh because the flesh is going on to death: there is no hope for the flesh. But the work of God has that very fine feature about it that it is capable of being revived. Maybe the Lord would appeal to us for a few moments to revive the work of God in us.

You may have been discouraged, with "hands that hang down, and failing knees", Heb. 12: 12. He would appeal to us in the word that we may not be turned aside, but that we may rather be encouraged. It says again as to Israel, "... I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart", Hos 2: 14. They had become engaged in things that were Egyptian, such as would spoil true Christian character, but what He says to Israel He would say to some of us today, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart" ... "and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth", v 15. As you look at some believers today,

perhaps you can hardly see the work of God; yet the Lord has that wonderful capability to speak to the heart, to revive His work. How beautiful that must be to God, to hear that singing, that fresh expression of loyalty and love and appreciation of the Saviour and all His grace, that brought them out of Egypt through the blood. How precious Israel was in those days and how precious you are, my friend, to Christ, as you come to see that He died for your sins, and shed His blood on the cross. He died to meet your every liability that shut you out from the presence of God. How precious to heaven those tears of repentance, and of joy in the Saviour's love. Maybe now they are not so fresh as they should be! I would have to say that is true, perhaps, of many of us.

But, if it is, the Lord would speak to our hearts, and here in John 21, the Lord does that. It says "Jesus manifested himself again ... And he manifested himself thus." John goes to great pains to show the detail of the grace of Christ as flowing through the dispensation to revive and bring persons back into their true place, to function normally. It says "the third time", v 14. Was twice not enough? Well, maybe it should have been, but I believe the third time is to impress upon us how the Lord is taking care of His own through the dispensation. He knows our weaknesses, and the thoughts that flood into our minds as the pressure of circumstances and disappointments come. He knows, so it says, "This is already the third time." Oh! how He must have felt it that persons upon whom He had expended so much should go back to their fishing. Had He not called them away from it? In their zeal and loyalty they left all and followed Him. Here now, they have gone back. How like many of us, we have gone back, but the Lord does not leave them. "And he manifested himself thus." John is impressed with the detail of it: they had gone away, but He stood on the shore. He is on sure ground. We may be in circumstances where things are unstable but He does not go into the sea with them. They were on an expedition in which He could not go with them, but He stands on the shore, and as the morning dawns, you can visualise these weary, wet fishermen, and Jesus standing there. What is His word? Where

have you been? No! "Come and dine." How beautiful! What an appeal it had to John! What an appeal it had to Peter, the grace of Christ when they had turned their backs, shining upon them in all its freshness and lustre and beauty: "Come and dine." How graciously the Lord would come and bring us into conditions where He would have us to be functioning normally. Their expedition was fruitless. He says, While you have been doing that, I have been doing something else. I saw how wet and how weary you were, and I made a fire of coals. I have fish ready when you had none. Oh, the grace of Christ that would cause our hearts to be revived in this weary day, in this time when we have been discouraged, He has everything in hand to bring us back into normal circumstances!

As I have said, this is a picture, I think, of what is flowing through the dispensation, the grace of Christ to revive us, to call us back to normal circumstances. John says, "It is the Lord." Who else could it have been? There are those affections undivided now, no longer pulled one way and another. "It is the Lord." Oh! I am sure that every believer in this room has known something of it. Mr Darby says, from experience no doubt:

"Still sweet 'tis to discover,
If clouds have dimmed my sight,
When passed, eternal Lover,
Towards me, as e'er, Thou'rt bright."

That is Jesus here, His attitude still the same, His love for them unchanged, His grace flowing in all its fulness, "Come and dine." Well, I suggest that this illustrates the Lord's patient, gracious service in this dispensation, to allure us to where He is on solid ground, to taste some of His own reserves and resources. When they were unable to do anything, He had provided something at cost to Himself, and He says, "Come and dine": everything was prepared.

Well, with Elijah, things had not turned out the way he expected. He lost for a moment the sense that the continuation of the testimony and the dispensation depended on Christ and not on him. He had a very great place in God's ways with His people and

things did not turn out the way he expected. Have you ever known that? Alas, it is the feeling of many today, that things have not turned out the way they expected. Elijah was saying, as many say, that there is no longer a collective position there is breakdown all around, what can we do? And Elijah says, It is far better that I should die. Think of the man that he was, and how greatly he was used of God, and here he is thinking, It is far better that I should just go away and leave things as they are. God raises the question with him twice "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Why are you in those circumstances? Are any here like that today, in circumstances surrounded by discouragement, feeling that everything is gone· all is broken? God says, Why are you here, Elijah? Why are you in those circumstances?

God would not only say that, but He provides for His servant. When he is asleep, there is something provided for him: there is food and there is water. Oh! what grace there is to revive the heart and he "went in the strength of that food forty day and forty nights." What a God he was having to do with! What a God we have to do with for the carrying through of the testimony, my friend! Christ has charged Himself to see it through and to see those who have faith in Him through to the end at the true level of the dispensation: "Arise, shine! for thy light is come", Isa 60: 1. Beautiful word that, to all our hearts today! What a word it would be to Elijah! He said, No, it is passed. God says, It is come: here it is. If he was prepared to go out, there was another who was coming in. God said, I have seven thousand. What resources heaven has! Oh, to be in touch with them! So God would give His servant food that he might come into touch with the wonderful resources of heaven. It says, "And he ate and drank, and lay down again." The first touch was not enough: God comes back again. There it is, fresh supplies, and He wakes up. Maybe there was some revival the first time. Perhaps he said, Well, it is maybe not as bad as I thought, but again overpowered, he went back to sleep, and there is the angel again with fresh supplies of divine grace. "And he arose, and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights" - beyond what was

normal. It shows how far away he had been, but oh the grace of Christ to give power to cover the distance as he went in the strength of that food to Horeb the mount of God! He comes to the place of divine resources. Oh what he saw and heard there! God would bring you into an area where He has provided everything. Horeb speaks of that, the mount of God. Abraham found it. It says, "on the mount of Jehovah will be provided", Gen 22: 14. May we come to know the power there is to carry the testimony in persons through to the end, in vitality. Well, God reveals that to His servant.

As we speak of the one in the Song of Songs, there is something different. She is revived too, thank God. It says that she was asleep. I would speak of her as an indifferent believer, who is shunning the reproach. She is a bit like a Laodicean in some ways. Maybe you have been a bit indifferent and careless as to the things of Christ and you have just settled in your own circumstances. It says about her that she had put off her tunic, retired to her bed. She had become lazy as to the needs of the testimony. And yet the Lord addresses her "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, mine undefiled." How beautiful to think that Christ has not changed His thoughts about you or for you. Maybe you no longer think of yourself in that way. But the Lord's greeting is still the same: "my sister, my love, my dove, mine undefiled." Was she not defiled? Had she not allowed the circumstances abroad to affect her affections? Yet He has the right and He uses it to greet her as His undefiled because He has in mind to restore her to that. I only point out in this passage that the way back may involve deep exercise. It did for her. We have spoken of the ones in John 21: everything was there and the way back was very easy. But if we become indifferent to the appeals of divine love the way back will involve deep exercise and sorrow. It did for her. She came to realise that she was in a false position. The word of God may come to you like that, to alert you to the fact that you are in a false position. The Lord is appealing. He was outside. He would be saying, "Open to me." She, obviously, was not in the position that He was in. Think of how appealingly He speaks, "For my head is filled with dew, My locks with the drops of the night."

That is the Lord outside. He has been shut out publicly. They may erect great churches; they may have fine music. Where is Christ? He has been shut out. "For my head is filled with dew My locks with the drops of the night", the Lord not able to get in, no place for Him. As He puts in His hand by the hole of the door, there is a little way of entrance. And what does He leave there? I think He leaves on that door a fresh touch of His suffering love. I think that would be implied in the liquid myrrh which He left on the lock and on the handles. He left an appeal of His love in a fresh way. The love of Christ for her had perhaps become historical. She would know His love and she could speak of it, perhaps, as something she knew in the past. But for Him it was ever present, and in the liquid myrrh He leaves an impression on the handles and the lock of His present love for her and the cost it was to Him.

As I have said, it involved exercise for her. It says she rose up: there is something stirred in her soul of affection for Him, but where was He? She had got so far away that she did not know where to find Him. Maybe she had not been at the meeting for a number of weeks. It would bear the application that she had missed the Supper perhaps for a few weeks and she did not know where to find Him. Where is He going to be found? Well, she rises, and it says, the watchmen found her. The watchmen are not the shepherds. The watchmen are persons who maintain the principles and they may, because of your condition and your appearance, seem harsh at times: that is what she finds. "They smote me, they wounded me." Why was that? Had she been under His shadow, the watchmen would not have found her. The watchmen were looking for enemies. They were looking to guard the city and all that was inside it, but there she is. She could not find Him and the watchmen evil-treated her. They did more perhaps than they should, but she should never have been there. Maybe you feel and many others have felt and thought the brethren had been very hard, that what persons were saying was not gracious but you should never be in the position for the watchmen to find you. You should keep under the shelter, under the influence of His love - "my dove, mine undefiled."

These things are there to bring us back: they are all on the way, but she soon finds Him. She goes through the exercises. She may criticise the brethren for being a bit hard to begin with, but she finds in it all the reality of the love of Christ to bring her back. Every time she looked at her hands, she would see what she had gathered from the lock and the handles of the door, the fresh touches of His suffering love, to bring her back on to true ground where she can speak of her beloved, not in a historical way, but as "white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand", v 10. She is brought back into a new position. She is revived to function normally, to be in her true place among the brethren, extolling her beloved in all His beauties. Revival has that in mind. May it be, beloved brother or sister, that you find grace to go through the exercises, to find Him in a way that you have never known Him before. She says she would hold Him and she would not let Him go. That was the effect of the experience, that she would never let Him go. So there she is, she is found there extolling Him, revived in her affections, with a fresh view of His grace and of His love.

I refer to Jacob only as another discouraged believer. So often God revived Jacob, who in pursuit of his own things takes a long time to come into the fulness of what God had in mind for him, and here he is, a man who was living at the close of his life and very, very discouraged. He thought that what God had promised to Abraham and to Isaac was not going to work out. God had promised great things to Abraham and to Isaac, and to Jacob as well, and he says, Where are they? He says, Here I am and my soul is needing food. His family was needing food. And all the time it was there at hand. The word comes into those circumstances where he is that Joseph is still alive. It says "And his heart fainted, for he did not believe them." He was discouraged as looking at the brethren. Maybe they say wonderful things and they may be in the gain of them, but you maybe look at the shortcomings of the saints. That is what Jacob - and not without good ground - saw, the shortcomings of the brethren. It says his heart fainted, for he did not believe them. And the word comes again "And they spoke to him all the words of

Joseph ... And he saw the waggons that Joseph had sent to carry him." The Lord has not just left it to the brethren to revive you: Joseph sent the waggons, and it says, "And he saw the waggons that Joseph had sent to carry him. And the spirit of Jacob their father revived." It would be a touch by the Spirit of what comes directly from Christ to the believer that is unquestionable. What the brethren say may seem to you questionable at times. I do not want to discredit them for one moment, but maybe in your view, what they say is not just the fulness of things, to you, at least. But it says, when he saw the waggons, "the spirit of Jacob their father revived." It had come directly from Joseph, in type the Man in the glory. The waggons would allude to the Spirit. They would allude to spiritual ministry too, from Christ, flowing through the dispensation that can revive you. I would encourage you, my friend, to read spiritual ministry. There is nothing more reviving than to read some of the ministry that the Lord has given. It has come as a waggon, to transport you from where you are to where He is. There has been a line of spiritual ministry for a long period of time that is available to revive you. I would encourage you to read it, to make time for it. Maybe you do not understand it. Read it anyway! The waggons would mean that you will come to understand it. There is power in the waggons to transport, to banish doubts and banish fears, to bring you into an area where Joseph is still alive.

Oh, think of Jacob! He says, What, still alive, all those years, and I have been out of touch! And what had happened in those years? It had been the years of Joseph's glory in Egypt, and he had missed it. How sad! How sad for a believer to be in circumstances of poverty when all the time there has been flowing ministry of the glory of Christ exalted, the Father having loved the Son and given all things to be in His hand. There He is: He was the Saviour of the world, Sustainer of life, and the Revealer of secrets; and there is Jacob, a poor believer, far, far from it. Well, Joseph is still alive. All that has come into the course of the testimony and all that has come into it in our lives has not altered His position. He says, "I will go and

see him before I die." But he did not go to die, he went to live the best part of his life under - in type - the influence of Christ exalted.

So "Israel took his journey." I would appeal to everyone of us to take our journey. Joseph is still alive. Commit yourself to these waggons, to the line of spiritual ministry that has come into the dispensation. As soon as he took his journey, God spoke to him, "and he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac." He began to see that the promises were secured in Christ in glory: "For whatever promises of God there are, in him is the yea, and in him the amen, for glory to God by us", 2 Cor 1: 20. That is what Jacob came to see, that all the promises were centred in Joseph exalted, Christ glorified, and they are all true for the believer in Him, the Yea and the Amen. What promises He has made for us! One of them is, "I am coming to you." What a promise! We look for it tomorrow, but do not put it off: look for it tonight! He is ready to come at any time. Asaph found that when he went into the sanctuary, God was ready to give him a touch of what was inside. Well, He says, "I am coming to you." He says too, "I am coming for you." Wonderful promises to sustain the believer in revived affection until the time when He comes and the need for revival will be for ever over. The need for reviving is because of these bodies and the conditions of limitation that we are in, that is Jacob but now he is called Israel, the royal, princely man, no longer the man of disappointments and the man who was capable of deceiving, but there he is a prince, living under the influence of Christ exalted.

May it be the portion of all our hearts, to come into the light, and the joy of the place that Christ fills, not only for God's glory and praise, but for our satisfaction and glory too! May it be so for His Name's sake!

WITNEY

28 September 1996

AT A BURIAL

(i) Robert Renton

Romans 14: 8-9; 1 Thessalonians 4: 14 (from "those who...") -18

I noticed that the title "the Lord" is emphasised in these passages: three times in one verse in the first passage "the Lord" is mentioned, five times in three verses in the second passage "the Lord" is stated. The first passage says, "it is to the Lord we live". The personal pronoun "we" belongs to ourselves, believers, and these passages I have read relate to us. The way is open for every person, man and woman, boy and girl, to be a believer in the Lord Jesus. When it comes to death, that is all that really counts. No matter how we have progressed in the world, whether we are a believer or an unbeliever, death fixes our destiny. We have a wonderful Saviour to present. Our beloved sister early trusted the Saviour, and I commend Him to anyone here who has not taken this vital step.

It says; "if we should die, it is to the Lord we die: both if we should live then, and if we should die, we are the Lord's". I wonder if everyone can say that they are the Lord's. What an inestimable favour to belong to such a glorious Person as the Lord Jesus. Today He is presented as Saviour, and He is available today. I feel the urgency of the moment. It says, "... if we should die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ has died and lived again, that he might rule over both dead and living". What a place the Lord Jesus has! The domain of death, He is over it! Those of us who know Him, He reigns in our hearts, He is a glorious living Saviour!

In this second passage it speaks of "those who have fallen asleep through Jesus". Our sister has been put to sleep through Jesus; that is, Jesus personally has had to do with putting this loved one to sleep. How tender, how wonderful! What a privilege to be a believer in the Lord Jesus. Then we read, "For this we say to you in the word of the Lord, that we" – emphatic - "the living, who remain to the coming of the Lord, are in no way to anticipate those who have fallen asleep; for the Lord himself, with an assembling shout...".

Beloved brethren and friends, this is just about to take place. The imminence of it is known by us and cherished too and looked forward to by us as believers - "the Lord himself". He will not send an archangel, He will not send an angel. Believers in the Lord Jesus are so precious, He is going to come Himself. I would like to emphasise that and also the imminence of it. There is nothing now left to take place. The next step is at the right hand of God when the Lord Jesus Himself will descend from heaven. What a day that will be for the believer, but, oh, the horror for an unbeliever who will be up for judgment. Now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation. "The Lord himself, with an assembling shout, with archangel's voice and with trump of God..." Every believer will hear that shout. Our sister, who will be laid in the grave in a short time will hear that voice, and myriads, millions will hear that voice, a voice of authority, a voice of power, what a voice that will be! "And the dead in Christ shall rise first". "The dead in Christ"- what a title! "The dead in Christ shall rise first"; they will have priority. They have gone through the article of death; we have not as yet. They have gone through the article, and they will be the first to rise, "then we, the living who remain" - believers, those of us who are alive when the Lord comes. "The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living who remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air". What a meeting that will be. We are awaiting that moment. Believers will hear the shout, unbelievers will not hear the shout, but believers will, and we will be changed and we will be with Christ, as we sang in our hymn, which is "very much better", "and thus we shall be always with the Lord", with bodies of glory like His body of glory. The prospect for the believer is wonderful! Divine love has devised it, and we are just now waiting on that moment when we shall hear the shout and we shall be with and like Christ for eternity. The passage finishes, "So encourage one another with these words". Those related to our sister are much in our thoughts and much in our prayers, but the comfort is that our sister is with Christ which is "very much better". So encourage one another with these words, and comfort one another. We need comfort, dear friends. We loved our sister for she served the saints

well and she will be missed, but her portion is now in bliss. What a triumph for God! May we be encouraged, for His Name's sake.

(ii) David C. Brown

2 Corinthians 12: 9; 1 Corinthians 1: 25,27; Revelation 2: 9 - "rich"

For many years the Lord has worked in our beloved sister, whom He has now taken, in weakness. He would impress us with these years of weakness naturally, weakness in body and in mind; yet we can think of the divine operations, the divine care and the divine concern throughout it all. Paul here in Corinthians speaks about his weakness, and he receives a word, and it is a word that would come to each one of us now as feeling weakness - how weak we feel in the presence of death - "My grace suffices thee". How much sorrow and suffering there is in this world. Men are unable to restrain evil. Think of death - men unable to restrain that power. Where is there going to be comfort? Where is there going to be any answer to it? "My grace suffices thee". There is a Man who is in glory now. He has known weakness. (What weakness He has known!) But he is able to supply you and supply every one. He has supplied our sister in her weakness, "My grace suffices thee". Think of these years of silence; yet the Lord's grace was sufficient, sustaining, blessing, working out what was for His will. I remember a reference at an earlier burial to the Lord: "His winnowing-fan is in His hand." There is treatment that each one of us needs, the threshing process. Our sister went through that in severity: processes in her life through which what is of God should come to light, that what is of the flesh should be put to death. But then we think of the gentleness of the Lord; His winnowing-fan refers to a gentle process that has proceeded with our beloved sister, and now the Lord takes to Himself what is perfect, what is good, the good grain. The chaff is removed, anything that would not be according to Him is removed, and what will stand up, what will be received to Himself when He comes will be in its perfection. "My power is perfected..." There is what is perfected in the saint, in the believer. We think of the touch, the gentleness, the wisdom of the divine touch that He should have what is perfect, that the Lord should receive to Himself in due time the perfect fruit.

In the beginning of 1 Corinthians we see the wonder of God's operations, the wonder of God's ways: "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men". If we look at the way in which the testimony of the Lord is in this scene, if we look at the way in which the Lord takes His people, if we look at the sufferings and the sorrow and the pressure, we might say naturally, 'Could God not have taken an easier way, a better way, a stronger way'. And then we learn as we go on that what seems foolish to us - "the foolishness of God - is wiser than men"; "the weakness of God" - amazing expression that is - "the weakness of God is stronger than men". Of course this scripture is bringing before us especially the cross of Jesus. Where was weakness seen like at the cross of Jesus? God coming in, God coming in nearness to man, rejected by men, rejected by His own people, hung upon a cross - humiliation, shame, weakness, God's wisdom; God's wisdom, beloved, God's power coming in in that way,

"Through weakness and defeat

He won the meed and crown" (hymn 24)

Through weakness and defeat He secured my blessing. Through weakness and defeat He defeated the power of Satan, the power of death. He rose, raised by God's power; the wonder of it all! Beloved, do you thrill as you think of the weakness of God and the foolishness of God? It is not the way you would have taken, it is not the way I would have taken, but it is the way that God has chosen to take. And it continues, it continues in the testimony. We see how the Lord spoke to His own, those who were His at that time, as a "little flock" (Luke 12: 32). The testimony continues still, small, weak, not prominent in this world, in weakness, in foolishness. Those who do not know God may think things said today are foolish, they may think that there is weakness in it, but it is the divine side, it is God's side, God's power and God's wisdom; they shine through in all the pressure and the weakness.

I was affected in looking at Revelation. It was not what I started to look for when I looked in Revelation. There are other references in these letters to the churches. He says to one,

"strengthen the things that remain" (Rev 3: 2). That is very important, "strengthen the things that remain". If there is weakness, then it is for us as in God's power to bring in strength. He says to another assembly, "thou hast a little power" (chap 3: 8). Wonderful that God would link on with the little power that they had, but here He looks to a suffering assembly and says, "I know". To most of the other assemblies He says, "I know thy works ". But to Pergamos He says here, "I know thy tribulation..." They are going through sorrow, they are going through suffering, they are going through difficulty; He says "I know". "I know thy tribulation and thy poverty"; what poverty we feel in the face of death. What can we bring in? There is nothing we can do to answer to it. Do you feel weakness, sorrow, tribulation? He says, "but thou art rich". If you know Jesus, if you have trusted in Him, if you have the word from Him, if you have a link with the power that is in Him, "thou art rich". Are you rich, rich towards God? Are you rich in riches from God, something that is going to last eternally, something that is never going to be taken? How wonderful it is that in spite of weakness, poverty, tribulation, He would say, "thou art rich ". May we know what it is! All these things are to be practical in our lives, and we can find comfort in them at such a time as this. For His Name's sake.

EDINBURGH

Burial of Mrs Hannah Brown

ZEPHANIAH - JEHOVAH'S HIDDEN ONE

John Gaskin

He will joy o'er thee with singing
He will surely rest in love
Will exult o'er thee rejoicing
He the mighty One above.

In His pity He redeemed thee
Made thee conscious of His care
How He loved thee and esteemed thee
Thee on eagle's wings did bear.

Said that He would freely love thee,
Unto thee His peace would give,
And with joy and gladness bring thee
In His Father's house to live.

Oh what promises of blessing
He would graciously bestow,
On His treasured own possession
On His loved ones here below.

Thus His goodness and His beauty
We acclaim in joyful song
Worship honour praise and glory
All are His, to Him belong.

ABERDEEN