

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 303

June 1998

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THE FEAR OF GOD

Peter Buchan

Ezra 9: 3-6; Daniel 9: 18-23

I was affected by the word our brother has given us about the fear of God and I thought of the result of committal at the end of this dispensation: we are approaching it and we would be in keeping with it with God's fear upon us. I thought especially of Ezra and Nehemiah and these brethren. Ezra 9 verse showed their feeling at what they were going through. Their exercises were very real. They were released from the captivity, brought back to Jerusalem, but they were going through difficulties. They found among the brethren unfaithfulness. And Ezra is a brother, so afflicted that he goes down on his knees and rends his garments. He feels out of keeping. How could he speak to God? He cannot look up and there he is in the reality of the state of things. Now, dear brethren, I am using him as one of ourselves. The need is great of being in keeping with the time: it is the time of the evening oblation. We are approaching the end of the dispensation and may speak about it as the time of the evening oblation. At that time Ezra is thinking of something for God in keeping with what He has done for us. We think of our Lord Jesus. We sang that hymn:

Hail! Thou once despised Jesus (Hymn 28).

He is still rejected, not wanted, but some of us love Him and want to do what is right to Him. These persons here were in such a condition of things at the evening oblation, "I arose up from my humiliation" - that is what he was burdened about - "and with my mantle and my garment rent, I fell on my knees, and spread out my hands to Jehovah my God". It shows the reality of what he went through and it applies currently, that we should do what is right, be more committed to divine things because the Lord's coming is near.

I did not read it all but some parts of this chapter are very good. He says, "And now for a little space there hath been favour from Jehovah our God". That, dear brethren, is a feeling we have, some

sense that God is setting us to go on, to be more devoted, more committed. Then he says, "to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage." That is what I was thinking of, "a little reviving", and that is what we want. We have to have concern about certain things happening among us; at the same time, there would be "a little reviving". We thank God for that.

That is why I thought about Daniel. He felt the condition. Daniel was one of these men of the captivity; what a service he has done; he went through certain things and he was concerned about the reviving. We have just spoken about Ezra and Nehemiah. They were persons who came over to Jerusalem out of captivity, but here was the kind of man who prayed about it: "Incline thine ear, O my God, and hear; open thine eyes and behold our desolation, and the city that is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee because of our righteousness" - do not do that for our righteousnesses - "but because of thy manifold mercies". We are thankful for it. And he goes on, "Lord, hear! Lord, forgive! Lord, hearken and do! Defer not, for thine own sake, O my God! for thy city and thy people are called by thy name". That is how he is praying. The brethren know how I am limited to pray sometimes nowadays, but here we get the feelings, priestly feelings. "And whilst I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people" - persons are taking the blame and that is a good thing to do, take the blame because we are guilty for it. We have lost so many brethren. As he was speaking in this way, confessing his sin and the sins of his brethren, the man Gabriel comes and says, "for thou art one greatly beloved". Oh, I love this thought that He loves us and He keeps us. May blessing result from it, in the name of the Lord Jesus!

KIRKCALDY

22 July 1997

(Revised but not by Mr Buchan. This is the last time he spoke in such a meeting)

"PRECIOUS IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD"

I (i) Robert Taylor

Ephesians 4: 1-7; Revelation 14: 13

Our brother whose death and burial is the occasion of our being together today lived the last twenty-six years of his life in very severe limitation, but there are few who enjoyed more their heavenly part.

He was ever ready to speak of his heavenly portion and his Saviour in spite of the severe restrictions in his body. The testimony today is in circumstances of limitation but in no way should that hinder the enjoyment of our heavenly portion. Indeed, I would say that the acceptance of the limitations gives us a door into the enjoyment of our heavenly portion. Undue regard of the limitations may hinder at the present time our enjoying what is the hope of our calling.

Paul here is writing as the prisoner in the Lord. It is remarkable that he should write like that, but I think he does so to appeal to us, as our brother appealed to us. His body, speech, walk was an appeal to us as to the acceptance of the limitations as a door into the enjoyment of spiritual things. Paul perhaps had a chain as he wrote this. "I, the prisoner". Think of him writing the letter to the Ephesians as a prisoner in the Lord! You say, Paul you have been denied your liberty; you could have been a great man in the affairs of men. Well, he says, I have been "blessed ... with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, (chap 1: 3). The prison was no restriction for Paul. Indeed, his richest ministry, you may say, comes from the prison in the acceptance of the limitations.

Now, each of us is called to the acceptance of limitations if we are going to be in the testimony today. So many have kicked against them. They have sought an easier path, sought a way where they could express themselves and their natural abilities and their own way of life, but Paul is appealing here to us in bringing himself forward, to accept the limitations of the testimony as in reproach.

The day of display will soon come, but as rejected in Matthew's gospel, the Lord calls the disciples into Galilee, where he says, "I am

with you all the days", (Matt 28: 20). That includes today, these were the days of our brother's life as he felt the limitations of his body, that is the days in the testimony when there are great sorrow, having to part from many, perhaps being restricted in our employment: all these things are part of the limitations that lie on the saints in the testimony today, and Paul is encouraging us "to walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye have been called". That cannot be as going hand-in-glove with the world. That cannot be as allowing worldly influences to dictate my way of life and how I spend my time and where I go and what I do. Paul is saying, "walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye have been called". It is like the cloven hoof. As these clean animals trod their way, there was a mark left on the desert sand that was not like the others. There was a separate walk, a separate path, and our brother, I think, was an appeal among us as in the acceptance of limitations to accept them, not chafe under them, but to know the Lord who has placed us in these limitations and, as I say, come through that doorway into enjoying our heavenly portion.

Paul is expanding on that in the epistle. He says, "with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering". These are the features of the testimony: in the midst of the confusion of the day and man's pride and arrogance, there is the lowliness of Jesus. Where is lowliness and meekness? Where was it introduced into this world? Not in Adam, not in any man, but it was introduced in Jesus, the "meek and lowly in heart". He says, "Take my yoke upon you". That is the acceptance of the limitations. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me". It is these that we learn from Him, day by day, hour by hour, step by step - "learn from me" meekness and lowliness and long-suffering, "bearing with one another in love". The passage is very rich and Paul is using his own personality, his own position as a prisoner, to encourage the saints to walk thus under the Lord, "prisoner in the Lord". He had been taken captive. His Lord meant everything to him, not whether he could do this or do that, but the Lord's word meant everything to him. He went where the Lord would dictate, where the Lord would be. In the confused

circumstances he would find where is the Lord, where is the Lord leading, where has He led? As I say, our brother exemplified this and his very presence, his very body, was an appeal to us to accept the limitations, to come into the joy of the Lord.

The passage in Revelation says, "Blessed the dead who die in the Lord". Our brother went all the way. When circumstances arose, he did not say, Well, that is enough; the rest of the time for myself. No! He died in the Lord. A simple explanation of this passage is to die in harness. Our brother did that. Only a few weeks ago he gave us a word in the ministry meeting in his limitations. He spent the last hours among the brethren in supreme happiness. He died in the Lord. He died in harness. How will we die, dear brethren? How will we finish? Will it be in the path of the Lord's will? Will it be in the acceptance of the limitations? Will it be in the enjoyment of His love because it is in the acceptance of the limitations that His love is enjoyed. "I am with you". He said that to the saints because they went into Galilee. Had they not gone into Galilee, they would not have heard His word. May we accept the position! May our brother's life, his manner of life, the way he has conducted himself, leave a fresh appeal to all our hearts, to be in the path of the Lord's will under limitations, but in the enjoyment of the Lord's presence! When His presence is known, the limitations are gone. That will soon be. It is for our brother already - "with the Lord". The hymn that we sang encouraged me to speak these words, written by a man who lost his most prized possessions. He wrote:

Whatever my lot Thou has taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul (Hymn 238)

He had something in his soul, the things of this life or even death could not rob him of. He wrote in that hymn of the Lord's comfort following deepest sorrow, and the hope of His coming which he awaited. And that is what these passages speak of, "the dead who die in the Lord". How will it be with us, dear brethren? Die in company with Him? That is what is meant, that you are in the yoke, treading alongside of Him. Precious words you would get as you

walked alongside Paul. I think of Onesiphorus going to visit him in the prison, the prisoner in the Lord, and Paul telling him all about the epistle of the Ephesians, maybe writing it when he visited him. He has left us that beautiful legacy of these epistles, a man in limitations, but he is writing of his heavenly portion which is ours to be enjoyed as we come into these limitations under the Lord. May we all do it and may it be the portion of every one of us that we die in the Lord, for Christ's glory and praise for His Name's sake!

I (ii) Jim Pye

Revelation 3: 21, 12

I feel tested in speaking but I feel that something which maybe I did not appreciate in our brother was his overcoming. Our brother has spoken about our brother's limitations and how he rose above them. It was almost as if he did not have any limitations: it was wonderful. I do not think in the time he had been local here, that I fully appreciated it until he has gone, but how wonderful it is to see one in such physical weakness and yet overcoming, prepared to give a word, prepared to give a word to the young brothers. He was always earnest in desiring that the young brothers should continue in the faith. That was mainly in what he said among us, that we should be overcomers and what an overcomer he was!

I read these verses because I think the Lord finds special joy in those that overcome. He says, "He that overcomes, to him will I give to sit with me in my throne; as I also have overcome". Do we realise how much has been overcome? The world has been overcome, death has been overcome. What a Saviour we have! He says, "as I also have overcome". What overcoming! Think of the pressures that bore upon my Saviour at Gethsemane! How terrible! How fierce! How relentless they were! Yet, did He back away? Dear friends, He overcame. There was no disciple there to support Him, or to comfort. His disciples had to draw back. We had a touch in the reading last night as to the cross. He overcame that. How, outwardly, man would have seen our Saviour, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, there, dying, bleeding. What a spectacle!

Man would say, He has been overcome, circumstances have overcome Him. But He overcame the circumstances. There was nothing too great for my Saviour. How wonderful that is! He has overcome death, the whole thing that stood against man. He has overcome it all and our brother was in the enjoyment of it.

He says, "I also have overcome, and have sat down with my Father in his throne". Our brother was an overcomer and I seek to leave that with us, that we should become overcomers. There were

those that stood at the cross, accepting reproach, accepting the shame, and yet they were not turned away! They stood there. The overcomer stands. He does not just drift away. Persons might persuade others to drift away but the overcomer stands. He will not be moved because he has his foundation in Christ. He is overcoming all obstacles because Christ is His main object. That is the Man who is in the overcomer's sight.

I read here, "He that overcomes, him will I make a pillar in the temple of my God". How wonderful these pillars! There are going to be many pillars in that temple. Many who have gone before have been overcomers, not going along with the trend, or with the stream, but standing, holding fast what they had. What pillars there will be in that temple! It is not just a brick, not just something in the wall, but it is a pillar, something that is unique, different. It would blend in, but it would stand out. In these wonderful cathedrals, you see the mighty pillars holding up the whole structure. How wonderful to be such in the temple of Christ's God. What pleasure, what joy the Lord has in those that are overcoming!

And, it says, "And he shall go no more at all out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem". Our brother has no more to go out. He is at rest now, at rest in the Saviour's love. How wonderful is his portion!

But our portion is to continue steadfastly, overcoming. I read that the overcomer is like a man at the top of the mountain: he is not in the valleys. He is not pressurised by circumstances, but he is at the top of the mountain and he sees that all God's ways are perfect.

And that was our brother. He was at the top of the mountain. He saw that all God's way was perfect. He might have said, Why have I been disciplined in this way? He might have rebelled, but, no, he saw God's way was perfect. May we prove it in our daily lives, whatever may come before us, that we are at the top of the mountain, seeing that God's way is perfect. May we find more in this matter of overcoming for His Name's sake.

I (iii) Marshall Cowan

Genesis 32: 22-31; 47: 1

I just link on with what has been said as to our brother being an overcomer, thinking particularly of the value of experience with God. I suppose the greatest thing that any one of us can covet and seek to enjoy is to have positive, living experience with God. I believe our beloved brother had that. He demonstrated that experience in his life. We have referred to his disabilities and the restrictions that were his physically, and the suffering that he had in that regard, and I thought of Jacob, a very remarkable example for us. Jacob was a remarkable man who had to do with God. I would like to encourage every one of us to see that there is a very positive end in having to do with God, not to be frightened or to have uncertainty as to that experience, but to realise that we have to do with a God who is intensely interested in us, a God whom we have come to know as believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, His beloved Son, the One whom He has given that we might come into the blessedness of links with Him, our blessed Saviour God. It is a Saviour God whom we await.

We are awaiting that wonderful moment. It speaks in Titus of "awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ", Titus 2: 13. How wonderful that is! Our brother had that hope in him, a living hope, and he lived with the light of that in his soul and he waited for that moment. How wonderful it will be when we are all raptured together, when we hear that assembling shout, when we hear the voice of the Lord, "and 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; and thus we shall be always with the Lord", 1 Thess 4: 16,17. What a wonderful hope we have!

But I thought we might be encouraged to take account of Jacob's history. Jacob had already had wonderful experiences with God. He had built altars. He knew what it was to relate his experience to God, to bring God into his life. He was marked by piety in that way. He was under God's control. We know that Jacob

failed as we all do, and perhaps in many ways he was unreliable, but the wonderful thing is what God achieved in him: I think that is what we are taking account of today in our beloved brother. It is what God has secured in our brother, what God is securing in persons, and how wonderful that is! And so it says He wrestled with him and he prevailed. It is this thought of overcoming again, is it not? He prevailed. It is bringing out that there is some level of spirituality to be secured in every one of us, so we can be encouraged, whether we are old or whether we are young that God intends to reach His end in us and that there should be something arrived at in maturity. I think that was what was worked out in Jacob's life. Through all his exercises, through all the experiences he had, God was adding a little each day perhaps, a little here and a little there. And so it is as we have to do with God, that we grow in our experience with Him, and there is something added to us by way of spiritual formation, something that we should all, I believe - everyone who is a believer in Christ - covet to have, to seek to grow in our knowledge of God and our knowledge of Christ, our knowledge of divine Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. What a wonderful economy we have been brought into! What a wonderful area of blessing we have come into!

And so it says, Jacob prevailed. "And he said to him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, thy name shall not henceforth be called Jacob, but Israel". I think that is fine. A wonderful matter that anyone of us might be named as a prince of God. What a great matter! Think of Jacob, what he was! I suppose in one sense he would always be Jacob but God's end for him was that he was Israel. He was a prince, a prince of God. God was pleased to name him and what comes out at the end of his life is that he showed that he was a prince. In his further activities, as you read the history, you find out there are princely features coming out in Jacob. These are the features that mark Israel. In that sense, you might say, our brother's name was changed. I was thinking of his history, as we have said, what it was for him to have these disabilities but in them he had to do with God and he accepted them

and something was added that we could see amongst us. It was evident how our brother lived and what he lived for and it would be a great incentive to each one of us to pursue on these lines.

And so it says, "the sun rose upon him". I think it is very fine that we can all have that experience as we have to do with God. The sun rose upon him. You might say:

And heav'nly light makes all things bright (Hymn 12)

He was set forward, on his way, with the light of a new day. May we be encouraged to be like that!

And so we come to the end of his history. We find as we know - I suppose it is well-known to most here - that "Israel worshipped on the bed's head". He worshipped on 'the top of his staff'. That is the culmination of the experience he had with God. He came to that point where he became a worshipper and that is what would be in view for everyone here, everyone who is a believer in the Lord Jesus, who has been brought into the wonderful area of the assembly, that we should be worshippers and that we should be marked by a measure of power in worship, in praise and in the service of God. So here it is. Israel sets it out at the time when he died, just about to be taken, to finish his history here, it says, "And Israel worshipped on the bed's head". Well these features marked our beloved brother. I am sure they did. He was marked by power even in the weakness he had and in these last days that he had, while he was amongst us, it was evident that this spirit of worship was with him. May we be encouraged, beloved, to take on these features, to be marked and to grow in our experience with God to His glory!

KIRKCALDY

21 August 1997

At the burial of Peter Buchan

II (i) John C.Gray

Matthew 11: 28-30; Numbers 10: 33-36

How fine it is that our sister has rest! "Come to me", the Lord says, "all ye who labour and are burdened and I will give you rest". Of course, she came to rest when she accepted in faith Jesus as Saviour many, many years ago, but it does not stop at that. I think as believers we experience rest from Jesus all along the pathway. So we have this invitation, "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened and I will give you rest". The emphasis is on Come to me ... and I will give you rest. It is a feature that arises from God's own thought, because in creation He worked for six days, but on the seventh day He rested; and He set it for His own earthly people as the Sabbath. So it is quite clear that God had in mind that men and women should share His rest. Isaiah says "The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest", (chap 27: 20). The wicked, of course, are the wicked in God's eyes, those who are still going on in their sins, and who do not know Jesus as their Saviour. But I would like to concentrate on the fact that our sister had enjoyed rest from Jesus and now after all the turmoil and troubles of bodily weakness, she has rest with Christ. She is in a place which is different; with Christ, which is paradise. The thief on the cross was told that: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise", Luke 23: 43. What blessedness that is! Complacency, delight, peace. Of course, peace is a close associate of rest and Christ has made peace. He is our peace. He has brought to us the peace of God. Some of us were hearing about that last night: "the peace of God ... shall guard your hearts", Phil 4: 7.

But then there is reference to our souls "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls". Our sister experienced that, taking Jesus and finding confidence. Inwardly, in her links with Christ, she relied on Him and found rest in Him as in the yoke. How fine that is! How delightful to think that through the troubles and testings and trials of the way in which we are as men and women, God is

fashioning us to bring out the lustre of His own work; that which goes on in secret. How delightful it is to God to see that while there was a meek and lowly Man here for thirty-three and a half years, there are now persons who are after the same order. Our sister knew the features of Jesus and displayed them, particularly kindness and help. She went in the yoke with Jesus and found rest in her soul. It is a great matter if we go the way that Jesus goes. So many try to twist and turn the way to what we want (even when we know our sins forgiven), but I think our sister accepted the yoke and knew rest in her soul. She was ready to accept the will of God. We remember it says of David "having in his own generation ministered to the will of God, fell asleep", Acts 13: 36. Wonderful thing to have confidence that if we do the will of God, we will fall asleep in Jesus; find paradise; find delight; find something which is beyond the area of the first and the old man. It is a great thing therefore to find that what looms up as difficult to us becomes straightforward. The Lord says it is easy: "for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light". Why is that? Because He takes things on. He is in the yoke with me. He goes along with me and I serve and move as Jesus moves and the will of God is accomplished.

When we look at Numbers chapter 10, we find that it is not an individual, but a company of persons who are moving out. These were God's favoured, earthly people. He had saved them out of Egypt and now they were in an area which was difficult. It represents, I suppose, the public position, the position of the testimony in the wilderness, but it is interesting to see that the ark of the covenant is there - that is Christ, Christ in the testimony. It says, "And they set forward from the mountain of Jehovah and went three days' journey; and the ark of the covenant of Jehovah went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a restingplace for them". This has been likened, as we know, to Luke's presentation, "the ark of the covenant of Jehovah", that is bringing to us the grace and the love of God and the blessedness of the manhood of Jesus; and He is searching out a resting-place for them. Think of the Lord's care in that. Think of the way in which the Lord would search out the

resting place for them; that is collectively and our sister had the privilege of having part in that. Then it says later, "And it came to pass when the ark set forward"; no mention exactly of the ark of Jehovah - just the ark, the ark of God. That brings us to John's presentation, that is the glory of the Person, who was there; that the lowly Jesus was no other than God Himself. What a privilege then to have the understanding of Him coming in and of His desire that there should be a resting-place for the saints. And then when the ark sets forward, there are enemies to be faced. Christ has faced them! He has faced death! It is like the ark going through the Jordan.

Wonderful matter that it was in the Jordan; but then, coming out triumphant! What power Christ has, providing a resting-place. So He goes in the strength and power of His own Person! "Rise up, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered". How Satan was taken aback in one sense, but totally defeated. The power of Christ is greater than all that Satan or anyone can do! What confidence that gives!

But then it says, "when it rested", that is the ark came to rest. It should be said, of course, that it was not normal for the ark to go forward first. It was intended that the ark should be protected in the midst of the tribes. So many of the tribes went forward first, then the ark in the middle and the remaining tribes followed. But this is the initiative of Christ in view of a resting-place for the saints. So it says, "Return, Jehovah, unto the myriads of the thousands of Israel". I wonder how many of us still experience the ark resting and the return to the myriads of the thousands of Israel. It is the collective position. When the Lord in John's gospel said, "I am he, they went away backward the fell to the ground". He adds, "if therefore ye seek me, let these go away", (chap 18: 6-8). Think of the protection He had in mind for His own; seeking a resting-place, but protecting His own. I am sure our sister experienced the joy and understanding of that as she faced the will of God, especially in these latter months, as our brother has said. Think of the myriads of the thousands of the saints of the assembly as we apply it to ourselves today! What a privilege it is to enjoy it collectively so if the Lord was able to protect

before His death, He is quick to come to them after His resurrection and bring peace. He comes into the midst and says, "Peace be to you". What a wonderful experience to know, in the breaking of bread, the Lord's presence in the midst! What a privilege our sister had!

And we too can have the privilege as subject to the will of God of finding that not only Christ in His power has secured a resting-place, but also it can be enjoyed together. Zephaniah says, "He will rest in his love; he will exult over thee with singing" (chap 3: 17), and the saints of the assembly enjoy that now. The children of Israel will come into it in the world to come, but it is our privilege to know it now.

What a wonderful thing it is, therefore, for our brother to find comfort in the sense that our sister is at rest and also that she has found the company where, we can say, "Return, Jehovah, unto the myriads of the thousands of Israel". May it be so in the Name of the Lord Jesus! Amen.

II (ii) David Pye

Mark 14: 3, 6-9

How wonderful it is that the Lord Jesus spoke as He did in this setting and in such a way. I think it shows the appreciation He had of something that was done for Him. The challenge of it as we are here in the presence of death becomes very real. What about our lives? What have we been? What are we? If we have come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour and formed that eternal link with Him, our portion is very blessed. He has given Himself to secure us - great cost involved in that! - and He appreciates those who place their faith and trust in Himself. But in our lives we are tested in the responsible path and that is a challenge to us all, as to how much we are affected by what the Lord Jesus has done for us. He has given Himself, He has given all for us and He looks for something developing in us.

He is able to speak here as to what this woman had done. He appreciated it. It was in a very small setting and yet the Lord Jesus appreciated it because it was a hostile scene and she carried out this service in that condition which surrounded her - and it is the same today. She remained bright in her own experience with the Lord and that finds its expression in what she did in the taking of this alabaster flask, breaking it and pouring it upon His head. That was something of the joy of her own experience and appreciation of her link with that blessed One. The act was simple but how precious to the Lord's own affections.

Our sister faced the reality of death and death is sobering to us all because it lies upon all men. "In the Adam all die", but "in the Christ", as we sang in our hymn, "all shall be made alive", 1 Cor 15: 22. It is a challenge whether we have a living link with the Saviour. It is the greatest necessity in a person's life because it is that that is able to go through death and come into the full unhindered enjoyment of eternal life - and this is in Christ, where we are made alive. Our sister in the last four months of her life, particularly, has been facing death, accepting it, indeed seeking, the Lord to come for

her. It is a tremendous thing to accept the will of God for us. Our sister has displayed that with a very gracious spirit, and her joy has been in the Lord Jesus, as to what He has meant for her and the fact too that she has been able again to remember Him. That is another thing that Jesus said to His own. He said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments", John 14: 15. Now His commandments are not grievous. There is the one that is left which was given at the time just before the Lord Jesus died, when with His own He said to them when He took the loaf and broke it and gave it to them, "This do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22: 19), a simple act but one that is so precious to His own heart in that He has response for His own affections. Our sister did that and it was a true joy to her soul to do so and she lived in the brightness of it. I would just seek that something of these things would remain upon all our hearts as to our own responsible lives in testimony here because that is what is involved in what is said of this woman. She is not named, but how full was what she did! And the Lord Jesus, as we have already said, comments on it. As He says, "Why do ye trouble her?" People were bringing in things that would have troubled, but the Lord has to say that "she was wrought a good work as to me", and that simple statement has tremendous challenge in it: "What she could she has done". The Lord Jesus does not ask for a lot from us but what is wrought out in the way of experience in our souls that is very precious to Himself.

What about our own responsible lives? Is there that in them that He can appreciate, that gives an answer to Himself, a comfort to His own heart? It rejoices Him to speak as He does here as to this woman, as to what she did. Not only that, but there is the recognition of the testimony that is going through, what she had done, things worked out in a small compass in the Lord's life, but the Lord says here that what this woman did is to be being spoken of as a memorial in the whole world. That is the experience in the believer's soul. It is very precious, but the challenge is to come home to each one of our hearts as to how much that is going on in

me, in view of a yield for Himself. The words of the hymn writer are most affecting:

Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all!

What a challenge that is! In the presence of death you are brought near to it and we need to be more active in our personal testimony as to what is expressed as to our appreciation of Jesus. That is developed in the soul of the believer and it is so precious for Him to have it: "What she could she has done". May it find a greater expression in all our lives in what we can do for Him.

II (iii) James Alex Gardiner

Luke 10: 38-42; 11: 1, 13

It is very blessed, beloved, to know that the Lord Jesus is available to all, to every single person in the room. He is available to us, because Luke presents Him as a neighbour. What a neighbour Jesus is! Matthew and Mark probably have the Jews in mind initially but Luke is a Gentile. He is the only Gentile who writes in the Scriptures, and when the Lord Jesus is brought into the temple to be circumcised, Simeon says He is "a light for revelation of the Gentiles..." - that is us - "and the glory of thy people Israel", (chap 2: 32).

We find here somebody who found rest. There is a moral way to rest, beloved. The parable begins with "a certain man" who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. It is a downward path, going from the great area of privilege right down to the world. But what is in the world? - Jericho, the city of the curse. Jerusalem is the place of God's favour. Typically it speaks of the church, of the assembly, of the place where God has rest. He has chosen Zion, He says. He says, "This is my rest for ever" (Ps 132: 14), God resting in Christ, resting in Christ and the church. How beautiful that is! "A certain man", He says, "A certain man descended..." Let us, each one of us, ask ourselves, are we on that road? Have we found Jerusalem too straitened for us? The Neighbour will provide all that is needed for you to live in the liberty and joy and blessedness of what is proper to Jerusalem.

So the man is met by "a certain Samaritan". You can try religion, the priest and the Levite. The man was robbed, so obviously he had something to take, you might say, evidence of assembly features with him. They stripped him, robbed him, left him in a half-dead state. That is what happens, beloved, when you start on that downward road, the descending road. But, oh, beloved, the Neighbour is available. "But a certain Samaritan journeying came to him". This is the new covenant. Have you ever heard of the new covenant? It is not demand; it is supply. He binds up his wounds.

He does not ask him any questions. He does not interrogate him. Binding up his wounds, he pours in oil and wine. He sets him on His own breast and takes him to the inn. That is another divine provision. These sections that I have referred to are loaded with divine resource, all under the hand of the Neighbour. He puts him on his own beast. Think of that? He walks alongside of him. Very blessed to have the Neighbour walk alongside of you and carry you on His own beast, prove the wonderful kindness and grace of Jesus! You did not deserve it. Who did deserve it? Thank God for recovery! That is the day we are in when we are learning (and the Lord would teach us and instruct us) how to live in Jerusalem, how to live at the level of the assembly. So he is in the inn and there is the innkeeper there and the man has been healed. It has often been said, and rightly said, that while Luke is medical, he is not exactly surgical. Healing is in mind. You have been wounded? Who has not been wounded? Healing is available under the hand of the Neighbour.

So it goes on in the moral sequence. The Lord says, "Which now of these three seems to thee to have been neighbour of him who fell into the hands of the robbers? And he said, He that shewed him mercy. And Jesus said to him, Go, and do *thou* likewise". Very blessed to move as Christ has moved!

Now, we come on to what our brother has been speaking about, because Mary finds rest. Martha is burdened and heavy-laden but she has not come to Christ. Maybe you are like that; maybe I am like that. It says she was "distracted with much serving". She is not thinking straight. We need to have our thoughts adjusted beloved and brought into line with God's. She virtually says to the Lord, You are not paying attention to me. Look at all I have to do! Martha was "distracted with much serving" but Mary finds rest. She sat at His feet and listened to what He had to say. She does not intrude her own thoughts, her own ideas, her own burdens, into the situation where Christ in His headship is being experienced. Mary sat at His feet. Oh, how blessed that is! It is available to all. There is room for every single person, every single Christian, at the feet of

Jesus, and He is prepared to speak to every single one because He is not partial in that sense. He loved the assembly and gave Himself for it, not part of it, but all of it, and as we move on this line, beloved, we will find out place at His feet. Listen to what He has to say! Do not intrude! Weigh up what He has to say! You will find that you have chosen the good part. God puts it on your responsibility and on mine. It is a wonderful thing that God has never abrogated man's responsibility, so that you are responsible and the Neighbour has the means to help us not only to fulfil that responsibility but to overcome it and to go on to the enjoyment of the great things of God. So she sat at His feet.

These women in the gospels are extremely interesting persons. We have read of Mary in Simon the leper's house. In the previous chapter there is a poor widow who valued the treasury. She casts in two mites and all these stones and buildings have to come down in the presence of such moral glory. I would commend this to each one of us. Choose! You have to weigh it up. Go into the sanctuary!

Put your ideas into the balances of the sanctuary! Weigh them up, in that sense, in the presence of God, and choose the good part! Be definite! Think of choosing! And it will never be taken from you.

Think of the blessedness, beloved, of eternally enjoying the presence of Christ and listening to His word, and what flows out from that is bound to be testimony! So the next thing, when we experience this, is that we need to become like Him. We need to pray. It is very interesting the number of times that the Lord Jesus prays in this gospel in the holy dependence of His manhood, and somebody has caught on. This is the extension of Mary. The disciple says, "Lord, teach us to pray". He will teach us to pray, beloved. We need to learn to pray and in our prayers we are expressing our own needs, our own desires, our own appreciation distinctively of God and whatever it might be we need, and in that situation, amongst other things, personality emerges. You have taken on Christ in some measure and what is coming out are the features that are proper to Jerusalem.

Then you are asking for something. You are in need, and it goes on to say at the end of the section, "How much rather shall the Father who is of heaven... ". That is what we need. Have you ever asked for more of the Holy Spirit? It is given to you. "How much rather shall the Father who is of heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" There is power to overcome every single obstacle.

Every true heart, every pure heart, every heart that calls upon the Lord out of purity of affection will find guidance and direction and power and resource to live at the level of Jerusalem. That is what this Gentile physician has in mind and so he closes his gospel with an allusion to the fact that the temple was filled and they never ceased praising and blessing God.

How wonderful that is! The method of the teaching is very wonderful, but it is to be experienced in our souls. Then I am sure, like our sister, we will find rest and upbuilding and change taken on as we sit down at the feet of Jesus and listen to His word, because we are looking upon the glory of the Lord with unveiled face.

May the Lord comfort and help our beloved brethren and all the relatives! We are glad to see everybody here today. And so is the Neighbour. The Neighbour is available to every single person. It is up to you and Him. It is up to you to choose whether you want this part or whether you do not want to go further than the inn, whether you want to remain on the Jericho road. It is entirely your matter.

He is not forcing anybody. But the appeal of His love and the attractiveness of what He sets forth is to draw our hearts into the blessedness of what is in God's mind for us. May the Lord bless the word!

KIRKCALDY

1 April 1998

At the burial of Mrs Frances Gardiner

III (i) David Hutson

Mark 14: 6-9; Acts 16: 30,31; 22: 10 ("And - "Lord? ")

I believe our beloved sister would have this commendation from the Lord, "What she could she has done". We have valued her part among us her interest in what is proceeding among the people of God, as far as is known to us. Any of us who have moved at all in service have found that our sister has been very interested in what has proceeded and we are assured that she has followed us with her prayers. What she could she has done. It would be a challenge to us for the word today is not for our sister - she is now "with Christ ... very much better", Phil 1: 23. Her work is completed and the work of God in her is completed, but the word is for us and would be a challenge to us as to whether it can be said of us that what we can, we have done. It is not, as is sometimes said in the world which would rather minimise it, she has done what she could, but the emphasis is on "she": what she could she has done". It would be similar to the word of the Lord Jesus in relation to another, "Well done, thou good bondman" Luke 19: 17. She has now, in that sense, entered into the joy of her Lord. What it is to be in the presence of Him whom she has served and loved! Death cannot separate her from that love. She is now in the unclouded enjoyment of it, not hindered by the limitations of the weakness of the mortal condition, awaiting a body of glory like unto His own body of glory.

But, as I say, the word is for us: Have we done what we can? Are we doing what we can in service to Him who has done everything for us?

There is one thing that we must do - (what we do is a matter for Him, as one would seek to come to - "But to each one of us has been given grace according to the measure of the gift of the Christ", (Eph 4: 7), so that we have grace for whatever the Lord would have us to do). Our sister first of all embarked on this pathway of service to the Lord Jesus by doing what she must do and what we must do: "... What must I do that I may be saved?", a cry of desperation from this man. I trust it has been a cry which has gone from every one of

our hearts. "What must I do that I may be saved?" This is something which we must all do: "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved" believe on a blessed, living, glorious Man who is on the other side of death, having broken its power, having taken the condition of blood and flesh in order that He might go into death and annul him that had its power so that we might be set free. What a word it is for us if we have any doubts as to our salvation: "Believe on the Lord Jesus", blessed, glorified Saviour, ready to receive any who would turn to Him for present and eternal salvation.

But then there is another man, the apostle Paul, Saul of Tarsus as he was at the time he was arrested by the Lord in glory, and here the word is, "What shall I do, Lord?" I trust that this may be a question which arises in all our hearts as a result of our being together. We take account of our sister as having done what she could and then there is what we must do to embark upon this pathway of pleasing and service to the Lord Jesus, and in that pathway we would seek His direction. We would seek for each one of us the many services which are open to us, simple, some of them, others, perhaps, beyond some of us, but nevertheless something for everybody. I trust that as a result of our being together today there may be something stimulated in our hearts, stimulated in our affections for that blessed One who has done everything for us that we might be asking Him this question, "What shall I do, Lord?" He will provide the grace that we should do it to His glory and for His pleasure, that in the end He may be able to say, "What he or she could, he or she has done". Amen.

III (ii) Andrew Burr

Ephesians 2: 10

I am impressed, as we often are at occasions like this, with the character and quality of God's workmanship. I want especially to follow what has been said, by noticing the correspondence that we see between the works of His people and His own work in them.

The apostle in writing to the Corinthians speaks of God's work as "wrought" work. It is striking that the Lord speaks of the woman of whom we have heard in the same way: "she has wrought a good work". We are accustomed to thinking of what God can do in wonder-working power, how the universe in which we are was summoned into being with a word. God has the power to do that, but His work in His saints is wrought work: "Now he that has wrought us for this very thing is God, who also has given to us the earnest of the Spirit", 2 Cor 5: 5. Wrought work takes skill and time. The idea is especially that it is done to a pattern. I am impressed to think that the woman of whom we have spoken was working to the same pattern as Jesus, working to the same pattern as God Himself. I think we can say it of our sister as well. She had an understanding of what the pattern was and her work was to that pattern. It was wrought work, and wrought work, as we know, is to last. It is usually undertaken in indestructible materials. So is God's work and so is the work of which we have heard: "Wheresoever these glad tidings may be preached in the whole world, what this woman has done shall be also spoken of for a memorial of her", Mark 14: 9. That is indestructible work, and the same goes, I am sure, for what our sister has done among us.

Our brother has observed that her work is completed and, as he said, and it is in a sense true, God's work is completed. I would like to suggest, beloved, that there is also a sense in which God's works in our sister awaits completion. There is one more act of God's work to conform her and us and all His own "to the image of his Son", Rom 8: 29. Our sister's body lies now in death but when God's work is finished she will live in a body of glory that is like His

own body of glory. That will be a body which, according to that passage in Corinthians, is a fit repository for the wrought work. The body in which our sister has been has become too limited to express that work fully. It requires a body of glory fully to display what God has wrought in each one of His own. It is a very wonderful thing that the Workman who will make that transformation is the same whose work is going on in each one of us. It is the same Workman whose work is and should be expressed in us and in our works. How wonderful that is beloved. What a part it is of the great privilege of Christian fellowship, wherever enjoyed, that we are in the company of people in whom God is working and where that work is coming into expression.

I recall one more passage: Paul says in Romans that "all things work together for good to those who love God", Rom 8: 28. Paul says "we do know". We do not always live as if we know it. Sometimes perhaps we do not always live as if we believed it, but it is true. A very important thing goes along with that, which is that no workman's work is to be judged until it is finished. Our sister's work can be judged, in that sense, because it is finished, judged with divine approval. But God's work in each one of us, including our sister, awaits completion, as I have suggested. The full glory of that work will then be seen. We may then see that things forgotten, things discounted, things regretted, things that have caused disappointment and many other emotions working them out will be among the "all things" that feature in God's finished work.

What a prospect there is before us! Now we are in the presence of the great Workman and His works. We can look at one another and see features that will all come out when the finished work is displayed. May He bless the word!

III (iii) Eric Burr

Genesis 35: 8

There are very few burials of women recorded in Scripture. There are a lot of burials of men: the books of Kings and of Chronicles are full of the burials of men, individual men, some kings, some buried with honour, some buried with less honour; but the number of women who are buried is very small. It may be that as we bury another woman, a sister in the Lord, it again has something special to say to us. There is that remarkable verse later in this book where Jacob speaks, and about the cave of Machpelah he says, "There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebecca his wife; and there I buried Leah", Gen 49: 31. That is a remarkable verse about very remarkable women - Sarah, typical of Jerusalem above, which, as Paul says to the Galatians, is "our mother" (Gal 4: 26), Rebecca, a type of the church, Leah a type of the church, distinctive women. This verse singles out another woman, evidently not of the same distinctive character, not, you might say, someone who was prominent, but someone who has her capacity and her service recorded for us. She was Rebecca's nurse. One thing that has struck me in what has come before us already this morning is that there have evidently been remarked characteristics in our sister which have lessons for us all. That is a great thing: it should be true of every believer, that their life has characteristics in it which are a lesson for us all. What has come out this morning is that the life of our sister and her service and her activity is a lesson for us all. May that be true of us all that what we are is a lesson for all!

I refer to this verse in regard to her being Rebecca's nurse, not that Deborah was what you might call a sick nurse, but she was a nurse that cared. She was a person who cared for others. She cared especially for Rebecca. She reminds one of Phoebe in Romans 16 verse 2, "a helper of many", but she cared and she had evidently watched over Rebecca for a long time. You find her in chapter 24 and she was someone who cared. The fact that she is

described as Rebecca's nurse takes one's mind to other references in Scripture because God was a nurse. It says that "he nursed them in the desert", Acts 13: 18. Think of that, God nursing people in the desert. Every day for forty years God nursed them and you might say that sometimes the nursing was severe and sometimes the nursing has to be severe, but there was the care and the protection and the bringing through. Who was it, for instance, that saw that their garments did not fade and their shoes did not wear out? It was God who nursed them in the desert.

If we look for the characteristics of nursing, the first one in whom we find it is God. He cares for every one of us every day and all the time, as I say, not just as a sick nurse, but we need nursing even in our best times. In our prosperity we need nursing. We need care and sometimes we need a kindly word and sometimes we need a corrective word, but the nurse has that. It is a characteristic of nursing that the nurse knows exactly what the present state of the patient requires, not that I speak of Rebecca as a patient or of the brethren for whom our sister has cared as patients, but our sister cared for others. Always if there was somebody to be cared for, our sister cared. She set out the characteristics of a nurse. And Paul says to the Thessalonians, "as a nurse would cherish her own children", 1 Thess 2: 7. Our sister was not married; she did not have children. But she cared for others, you might almost say, day-by-day. Sometimes we have observed her caring day-by-day, day after day, caring and putting herself out, taking on, you might have thought, even more than was needed, almost going to excess in care. It would be unnecessary to recall the names of those for whom our sister has cared but the distinctive character of this woman is that she was buried as a nurse, she was buried as one that cared. It is interesting, if you look at Mr Darby's comment in regard to Phoebe in Romans 16 where he translates the scripture that she has been a "helper of many" is very similar to what he says in translating the word for the Spirit in John 16, one who comes alongside to help, the characteristics of the Holy Spirit seen there.

Therefore, if I might add a word now: it is to the effect that we might nurse one another, that we might look after one another, whatever Christian company we are in, we might look after one another, look after those that we are with, see that they do not go astray, see that they are kept in the way, see, so far as we can, that they are clothed with those beautiful garments with which the Lord and God clothe us, see that these are not tarnished and do not wear out, help people to see, as it says in Ecclesiastes, that their garments are always white (chap 9: 8), help people to see that they keep in the right way. The nursing is a detailed thing. It is not a chivvying thing; it is a comforting, caring thing. It takes account of need as it observes it and helps others to go along. Think of God as He says in regard to Ephraim, "And I it was that taught Ephraim to walk", Hos 11: 3. It was God who nursed Ephraim, God who nursed Israel, God who has nursed me and has nursed you and the pattern of that is to come out in every one of the Lord's people, that there is that diligent care for one another. Paul says in regard to Timothy, as will be well-known, that he had "no one like-minded who will care with genuine feeling how ye get on", Phil 2: 20. That is the characteristic of a nurse. You might even say, in that verse, that it is the characteristic of a male nurse, but the service of nursing is open to brothers as much as to sisters.

I just add this today, because what has come before me and what has been said already is that there have been characteristics in our sister which should be continued amongst us and from which we may learn and in which we may find a pattern. May the Lord help us! These things are very simple: they are the pattern of Christianity.

Fellowship implies that we care for one another. Fellowship has other bearings as well, but one aspect of it is that we care for one another. Therefore, I say let us find that, when others are mentioned of considerable distinction, like Sarah and Rebecca and Leah, there is somebody who filled out a humble service. These other women do not have particular moral characteristics attributed to them, but Deborah has a particular moral characteristic - you might even say, an insignificant woman, but Rebecca's nurse. She died and she was

buried in Bethel where Jacob had the most profound impressions in relation to God and in relation to his course.

May we reflect on what has come before us this morning and may we find pattern in it, for the Lord's Name's sake!

LONDON

9 April 1998

At the burial of Miss Joan Pouncey