

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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CONTENTS

[REVIVAL](#)

[CELEBRATIONS](#)

[PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD](#)

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REVIVAL

E.C.Burr

Hosea 2: 18-23

We have been speaking together about the question of formation and I venture to remark that the frequency with which this subject comes before us suggests that the Lord has something to say to us about it. We cannot just rest in what we have read and what we have learned and in the teaching that we have had. What we need is to get ourselves up to formation under the hand of Christ and of the Spirit, so that there is here in testimony what the Father Himself may have pleasure in.

I know I have said before, although I cannot remember where I got the remark from, that unless Christ is reproduced on the earth at the present time, the Father is worse off as far as the earth is concerned by having Christ in heaven. The great thing, beloved, is that we should be formed together before Him, and I have the impression that the Spirit will keep on at that subject. We have grown up together – most of us here *have* grown up in fellowship together, most of us here have known one another for a long time – but unless Christ is being formed in you, in the end things will decay and die out. The testimony which the Lord revived in the last century will not be maintained by knowledge; it will be maintained by life. Unless there is ministry which ministers to life and the maintenance of life, and for that matter to the maintenance of truth according to life, things will perish. A lot of us who are getting older do not want to see things perish. We want the assurance that as long as the Father's time continues, as long as the Lord leaves us here, leaves believers here, a testimony in life to the reality of Christ should be maintained. I underline that because there is so much that occurs, so much that happens, so much shortcoming, that one feels that unless there is committal to life according to Christ things will decay, and where there was once a bright and powerful and living testimony there will be only sorrow remaining.

I do not know whether one is allowed to quote the secular poet, but I have often thought of those lines that say:

‘... to see the things you gave your life to broken
And stoop and mend again with worn-out tools’.

But, beloved, the tools are not yet worn out. The Spirit is still here, the Scriptures are still here, and there is still power according to the working of God to bring about and to maintain what is of God here. For this reason, I have read these verses in this chapter and I would like to use them, and perhaps other parts of this prophecy as well, to reinforce the thought of revival.

I just make one or two remarks about this book. Hosea was an interesting man. I think he prophesied for longer than anyone else in the Old Testament. He prophesied under four kings of Judah and one king of Israel. If you look up the table in the beginning of the Bible you will find that he prophesied over about fifty years. He just went on; the kings changed, one succeeded another, and Hosea went on. The background to this prophecy is the background of today. If you look at another chapter in this book you will find what you found in this morning’s newspaper. You will find Hosea’s description of the circumstances in which he lived. He says: “swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery” (ch 4: 2). Have you read the morning paper? That is today! Swearing and lying and killing and stealing and committing adultery is the day in which we live. That is the day in which Hosea prophesied, the day in which he wrote the things that he wrote. And he does not in any way disguise the actual condition of the things around him. You will find in his prophecy as you read through it (there are only fourteen chapters) that he is bringing before you the state of things in which he prophesied.

However, there is another side of Hosea, a very blessed side; into it all, he weaves the blessings of God. He does not just talk about the stealing and lying and committing adultery, and all that kind of thing. Into his bringing out the actual, present, moral condition, he weaves “sons of the living God” (ch 1: 10), and singing

in “the door of hope” (ch 2:15). He weaves in the scripture that I have just read that “in that day, I will hear, saith Jehovah, I will hear the heavens and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the new wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jizreel”.

There is a word for us in that; do not focus entirely on failure. If you have to speak about failure, weave into it the purpose of God, and the blessings of God, and what God is going to bring out, and what God is going to bring through, and what God will have in another day. Yet God is anticipating that what he will have in another day, He will have now. He will have it.

We may speak about sonship and Paul quotes this very scripture in Romans, “And it shall be in the place it was said to them, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called sons of the living God”, Rom 9: 26. We talk about the sons of the living God in privilege; let us have sons of the living God in the eighth of Romans: “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *these* are the sons of God”, Rom 8: 14.

The history of the prophet is almost, you could say, Israel’s history. Hosea was first of all told to take a wife who was an adulteress and then, as if that were not enough, he was told to take another one who was an adulteress. That takes you right into the eighth of John. The beginning of John 8 is Hosea’s prophecy. They brought before Jesus this woman taken in adultery and they said, “in the law Moses has commanded us to stone such” (v 5). Beloved, let us beware of reaching for the stones. What they were saying is ‘Lo-ruhamah’ – ‘not having obtained mercy’. These, not having obtained mercy, brought her to Jesus and He said, “Neither do I condemn thee” (v 11). You see there ‘Ruhamah’ – ‘having obtained mercy’. That is Hosea in the eighth of John. Let us remember that if you bring to the Lord Jesus someone taken in sin, you may find that He says, “Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more”. The woman disappears but you will not disappear; you will still be there but you will be rejoicing in the mercy that He has shown you.

The brethren will remember, because nearly everyone who is here was at Glasgow last year, that our beloved brother brought this scripture before us on the Lord's Day as to the bond between the heaven and the earth. It has been said that God began with heaven and earth together and He never intends to give that up. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and at the end John says that he saw a new heaven and a new earth. God is not going to have them separated. What our beloved brother brought before us last year should remain with us. It is very difficult to remember everything you hear in a meeting but something of the atmosphere should cling to you. Like John 12, you went into the house and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. If you had called then, you went away with the odour of the ointment on you. So, you come to the meeting and you may not remember all that was said but you get some fresh impression that God is not going to have the heaven and the earth separated.

There is not much ministry on this chapter but I did find one other commentary on it. According to one interpreter, the earth is crying out to heaven and heaven is crying out to God because of the state of things. Well might that be at the present time, that the earth will cry out to God. The corn and the new wine and the oil are crying out; the earth is crying out to heaven and heaven is crying out to God. That is Romans 8, "the whole creation groans together and travails in pain together until now" (v 22). You read in the prophet that a day is coming when all that will be turned round and "the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands", Isa 55: 12. Then again in the Psalm, "The meadows are clothed with flocks, and the valleys are covered with corn; they shout for joy, yea they sing", Ps 65: 13. So that if there is a negative aspect to the scripture, there is a day coming when it is going to be reversed. Beloved, if you must dwell on the negative aspect of the present order of things, bear in mind that the brethren would like a glimpse of the day that is coming:

The crowning day is coming,
Is coming by and by.

These things should remain in the soul, that there is always, and will always be, a positive aspect to Christianity.

What I want to speak about especially is the corn and the new wine and the oil. These three things run right through the Bible. There is instruction there. The corn and the new wine are in Genesis and the corn and the new wine are in Revelation. What did Isaac bless Jacob with (see Gen 27: 28)? Corn and new wine. Then when Esau came later, Isaac says I have given it all to him, for I have given him the corn and I have given him the new wine. Again, when the man of God is looking at the prospects of Israel, he says, "The fountain of Jacob, in a land of corn and new wine", Deut 33 :28. That is John 4 – the Fountain of Israel is there. There was corn and new wine in John 4.

There was a Man there who had food to eat that they knew not of. How blessed that was. Somebody got the blessing because the Fountain of Israel was there in a land of corn and new wine.

You find as you read the Scriptures that every scripture is in with another scripture, and the overwhelming power of it is something that brings to you convictingly that the Scriptures are the Word of God. God has one theme through it all and that was that from this earth, which He had created, He was going to have something that would not only satisfy Him but that would satisfy man.

Now the earth – the earth! – will be filled with corn and new wine and oil. Think of that in Jeremiah, "O earth, earth, earth hear the word of Jehovah", (ch 22: 29). Think of God feeling with the earth. Think of the earth! Hosea does not appeal to the earth to hear but he says the earth *will* hear. That bears on the nature of *your* testimony in the world. What does the world hear from you?

You go about, you go to work, but what does the earth hear from you? Does it just find someone like itself or does it find somebody different, somebody even whose conduct has something to say to the world? Can you say that?

I know I have spoken of it before, and I attracted some sympathy from a mother when I said that the young people now-a-days are very severely subjected to peer pressure. She said that was just it. If you ask these brethren in the back rows what is life like, they will say: 'Well, you cannot do this because of the people you work with, and you come under pressure to do this and to do that', and nearly all that pressure is in the direction of corruption. Beloved, if you do not pray for the young brethren, start now. Pray for those young believers who are with us today. Pray for them that the Lord will keep them and bring them through for Himself. We do not want anybody lost: we do not. We want everybody here retained for Christ and held in the power of what is here.

What is your testimony like? We hear of people going away, and they say: 'We are going away because you are not evangelical enough'. What they are really trying to say is that you have of private little testimony and you enjoy things in your little company, but what about other people? I know one brother who said to someone who said that: 'Have *you* spoken to the people next door about the Lord?' You say, 'We ought to be more evangelical', but have you spoken to the people next door? Well, I have lived next door to the same people for over 30 years and they have changed, but you wish you had said more to them about the Lord.

One thing we do hope is that your conduct is some indication that you live on principles other than what marks the world around you. That is why I refer to the need of testimony in the present day. I add this, that there are two immediate areas of testimony which we usually neglect. One is the testimony I am in my own house to my wife and family. My children have gone and I have grandchildren, but what testimony am I, what testimony are you, beloved brother, beloved sister, in your own house? What testimony are you? Just some legal old parent? Do they say: 'He always said we had to do this, that or the other and he was always telling us this, that and the other'? Is your testimony one like God's who took Israel by the hand and led them out of Egypt? You speak to your children about the world, but have you taken them by the hand and led them out,

because that is the nature of your testimony in the household and you are conducting them according to the ways of God?

The other area is our testimony to one another in the meeting. We forget, I forget, that everything I say and am during the meeting is a testimony to the rest of the brethren as to what Christian life means to me. We can talk about doctrine. I have read the Scriptures for over 60 years – I probably know a little bit and you probably know a little bit and if you cannot quote it off-hand you can tell me what book it is in. But, beloved, what testimony are you? Do they see Him, or do they see someone who knows everything by the book and by heart but little by divine inspiration? What we need is life.

Now, I refer to the latter part of what I have read, that is the earth will hear the corn and the new wine and the oil. I would be very glad if even as some small result of what I say this evening, the earth will hear the corn and the new wine and the oil.

We start with the corn. The corn and the new wine and the oil go right through the Bible. The corn comes in in Genesis as everybody knows. (The Bible is better known than some of us give credit for.) The corn is what Jacob felt the need of. They were all hungry but there was corn in Egypt and he sent down to get it. We all know that history that relates the distinctive place that Joseph was to have amongst his brethren, that his brethren would come and bow down unto him; in the end, they would, but they come on account of the corn. The Scriptures go on with the corn – I think it is probable that corn takes up nearly a full column in the concordance – but where is the corn that matters? The corn that matters is in thoughts of God. Unless the grain of what fall into the ground and die it abides alone. Unless it fall into the ground ... Some of the brethren here will no doubt have seen the poem which was written by a lady for the millennium. She says:

Grain which fell to earth and perished,
Has brought forth ten thousand fold.

Ten thousand fold! Are *you* in the ten thousand?

There are interesting references in John's gospel to the death of Jesus. Of course, every reference to the death of Jesus is interesting, but what I find especially interesting in John's gospel are the references to His death which are not sacrificial, "On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again", John 10: 17. It is going out of the door of this world into another world where the Father will have that blessed Man for His own enjoyment for ever. The corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying is not sacrificial. He went into death in order that it might bring forth much fruit. Of course, you can never think of the death of Jesus without thinking of its sacrificial aspect but there are references which do not emphasise that sacrificial aspect. The grain of wheat falling into the ground and dying is more than that it might not remain alone but that it might bring forth much fruit. Beloved, are you among them? Are you amongst that people?

One aspect of the death of Jesus is that people who are in the gain of those non-sacrificial aspects come out of the experience of that death different from the way they went in. I think we should be exercised a great deal as to whether our hearing of the preaching of the gospel, week by week, has left us in the same cold state that we were or whether it would form us into a new condition of life, which is demonstrated especially amongst those with whom we walk. The believer's having to do with the death of Christ has to do with his eternal salvation, but what it also has to produce is somebody walking in newness of life. So that if you once had had to do with Jesus you are a different person thereafter.

Have you ever noticed a change in yourself? You look in the mirror every morning and you say: 'Same person as he was yesterday!' But, you have heard the gospel and there was somebody different from what there had been before – somebody in whom God had worked for His own pleasure and for eternity.

May I ask the young people – all this bank of young people at the back – have you had such an experience with Jesus as made you different afterwards? Have you? I ask you. Suppose I said Stand up all those to whom Christ has made a difference. Would I

get everybody on their feet? I would love to. That is the corn of wheat going into the ground and dying in order that it might bring forth much fruit. It brings forth fruit after another order altogether: a different kind of person in the same evil world, maintained here on a new basis of life, maintained in the power and life of the Holy Spirit of God and kept in the power of that life.

Beloved, the preaching should make a difference to us. I know I have said this before and I hope people will not mind if I repeat it, but one thing that perplexes me is that we go to the preaching and, if I may use the expression, the preacher may preach his heart out. He may do that, or he may just seem feeble and totter along from one scripture to another. (As I said somewhere the other day: you do not need to apologise if you read several Scriptures for the preaching. They are all there and it is the Word of God). The preacher may even just say: '... and then it says', '... and then it says', '... and then it says'. But you have been to the preaching of the gospel, which has to do with eternal issues, and immediately the preaching is over and the brother has said Amen and sat down after his prayer, people start talking to each other. They are wondering: 'Who is that that has come in this evening?' or 'Where are we going to go for tea?' and all that kind of thing. Beloved, you have been to the preaching: you have had to do with the status of souls for eternity.

It may be someone is going on to death and you are engaged in a semblance of Christianity. Beloved, get serious! The corn of wheat fell into the ground and died and brought forth much fruit and that fruit as far as you are concerned will not be fruit of the old. It will be fruit of another order altogether and you will be different because you will have realised that you have sprung out of the death of Christ.

We come next to the new wine. What is the new wine? It is the ministry of Jesus on earth. He said that new wine has to be put into new skins. The new skins come out of the death of Christ. If we get some grasp of the Scriptures it is quite easy to transfer thought from one thing to another. The new skins come out of the

corn of wheat falling in to the ground and dying: the much fruit is the new skins, and that fits with the ministry of Jesus and the new wine.

Young people have you read the Bible? Have you read the gospels right through? Can you go through Matthew from the 'book of the generation of Jesus Christ, Son of David, Son of Abraham' to the end where, "I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age?". Can you grasp Matthew like that? Have you begun with the glad tidings of the Son of God and finished up at the end of Mark with power to be here for him? Begun in Luke with writing up a history because somebody else had remembered it and told you about it and come out in the temple, praising and blessing God?

Have you begun with the Word became flesh, and, as our brother told us yesterday, ended up with broiled fish? Have you touched these things? The gospels are simple. The simplest gospel of all is John's gospel. You can remember John. John was very considerate; he virtually confined each chapter to one subject. You will not find it in Luke, and you will not find it too much in Matthew, but you will find it in John that virtually every chapter is confined to one subject – and the ministry of Jesus is the new wine.

The new wine does not come into old skins. It comes into new skins which correspond with much fruit and they will fill, and fill, and fill with the ministry of Jesus. And lest anyone might say you have forgotten the ministry of Jesus glorified I remember that it has been said that John wrote last to show that the ministry of Paul had its foundation in the ministry of Jesus. And you have Paul enclosed in John, because there was more because He was glorified, and because the Spirit came, and because there was something new here in the Spirit of God.

Beloved, get filled with that new wine of the ministry of Jesus. Do not be put off with that oft-quoted remark that the gospels are strong meat. You will find them quite simple. The gospels are full of Jesus. Beloved, are you? Have you read the gospels until you are full of that new wine which is Jesus Christ here, come in flesh and available to fill you – all of you. I appeal to young people

whether they have had such a touch with Christ that they find that they are entirely satisfied with Him.

Satisfied with Jesus I would be
Finding joy and satisfaction all in Thee

The many, many hymns that I know! They are not in our hymn book but many of them have something really pleasing and valuable.

Get filled with the new wine, He is ministering it still. He ministered through Paul; he ministered through Peter; he also ministered through John and James and Jude and through all these different men that are in the Bible. Sometimes He will minister to you through one of your brethren and He will give you something from them that tastes just like new wine, that you never tasted before – now for two thousand years, vintage wine, what comes to you from Christ, because He is ascended.

Peter, in the Acts, immediately denies that they were filled with new wine. They heard the disciples speaking after the Spirit came and they said, “These men are filled with new wine”. Peter says that this is not new wine; this is the Old Testament that we are on. This is not the ministry of Jesus. This is what the Spirit of God said by the prophet Joel. This is the day that Joel spoke of when ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh’. But Peter really went on almost at once to say that they could have the new wine if they wanted it. He went on to say, “He will give you the sure mercies of David”. And they taste just like new wine. Beloved, these things are worth while. The corn is easily digested; the new wine is stimulating and enlightening and then the oil.

Everyone will tell me that the oil speaks of the Spirit. The Spirit as the oil is greatly needed amongst us.

What is the difference between the Spirit as water and the Spirit as oil? The Spirit is spoken of as both. The corn, the new wine and the oil! But what is the oil? That is the Spirit of God. The water has a great deal to do with the Spirit making a present application to us of the death of Jesus and producing a response in order that we might be purified. The Spirit as oil is what makes

things easy to work. I thought of this; I went out of the house door and tried to turn the key in the lock but it would not turn. I had to come back in again, took oil and oiled the lock. The oil makes things work easily. The oil did not change the lock. All the bits were there, the same as before. I did not change the key. But the oil made it easier to work. May I suggest, dear brethren, that we need the Spirit as the One who makes things easier to work. The great lubricating power of the Spirit of God. It comes in in our relations with one another, the Spirit as the One who makes things easy to work. It is easy to illustrate it from Scripture for there is one Spirit. You have the one Spirit and I have the same Spirit and so things are easier to work.

Do not let your relationship with your brethren get rusty. You may find, then, that even the oil will not make it easier to work and you have to be able to take things apart to see where the real fault is, for the proof is the oil. In our relations with one another let us use the oil. One thing it does is to prevent our making mountains out of molehills, although that may seem a mixed metaphor. Because of the Spirit of God there are easier-to-work relations; it is easier to speak to one another about Jesus, because of the oil which you have, and which all the others have. It makes it easier to work.

Beloved, we need the oil: we need the corn, the new wine and the oil. They not only work for revival; they work for easy working together amongst the brethren. They are very productive.

Think of that day spoken about in Revelation chapter 6: it says, hurt not the oil nor the wine. Hurt not the oil! A choenix of wheat for a denarius, and so on – but hurt not the oil! Please do not hurt the oil. Please keep things lubricated among us. Please keep things in easy relations. Please keep the grit out of the machinery. Please keep relationships easy to work. That is what the oil does.

Now, I want to speak about revival, and these things bear on revival. They bear on the third day of Hosea 6. There you will see that “on the third day He will raise us up”. On the third day you will find that there is corn and new wine and oil in abundance. In

chapter 1, Hosea takes as wife, Gomer, and they have a son and God says, "Call his name Jizreel because I will visit the blood of Jizreel upon the house of Jehu. I will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease". Think of that! That was awful. God says He was going to have them under His own hand.

In chapter 2, where we read, you have Jizreel and it means something else. In chapter 1, God is very searching. In chapter 2, the heavens will hear the earth, and the earth will hear the corn and the new wine and the oil, and they shall hear Jizreel. In that day, God will sow. I trust I live long enough to see it, to see God's sowing amongst us in order that there may be another vital crop for Christ secured here.

The two names, Jizreel in chapter 1 and chapter 2 mean different things: in chapter 1, the sowing will be judgment; in chapter 2 the sowing will be blessing and there God will bring it to you. Do you not long that you might be there in that day when God sows?

Pray for it! We go around, we see meetings getting smaller. You know that we are not all the believers that there are in the world. (I trust everybody realises that). When we speak about "all the saints" in Ephesians 3, it is a job to know who they all are, a job to stretch your mind out. Paul does not say for nothing to the Corinthians, "Let your heart also expand itself". You take in all the saints. God will sow. Beloved, may it be so.

Do you want it? Do you long for it? Are you just clinging to broken pieces of the ship, looking for lifebelts? Beloved, pray for converts. If God sows there will be a crop, and it will be like that corn of wheat that went into the ground and died. It must not abide alone and it will produce fruit for God. I long to be there on that day when God is sowing, not judgment, but God sowing a crop that will enlarge a sense of His glory in the mind of every one of His people. May it be so!

Are you concerned about revival? Do you think that things might just go down that slope? The testimony is not going to go down a slope. It is going to be here, and God will sow and God will

reap something that is for His increasing glory in a world which may still be marked by stealing and swearing and lying and killing and committing adultery, but in that you will find that you shine as lights in the world because of what is sown.

These thoughts have been quite simple. I commend to you the reading of the Bible. You will find in it much more than you thought was there. I ventured to read the scripture in Hosea because I was asked to give an address here and the scripture came to me. I know we had it last year, but it has not grown old in the passing year. It has not got rusty. We can look at it from another point of view.

I long to be there when the earth hears the corn and the new wine and the oil and God sows in blessing that, as it says in Malachi, you would not be able to contain. Do you not want to be there as I do? May the Lord help us.

DUNDEE

14 August 1999

CELEBRATIONS

Dr Robert Gardiner

Luke 22: 1-6; 12: 16-21; 14: 15-24; Psalms 149: 1-4

At this time of year it is party time! It doesn't matter where you go out there, there are some arranging parties, some going to parties, some coming from parties, many with sore heads after parties and a good many with sore hearts. I have read about four parties tonight.

When you have a party, it is because you are celebrating something. And these poor souls who are having their parties, are supposedly celebrating something. They are supposedly celebrating the birth of my Saviour, Jesus. In their celebrations, they do not remember that, when He was born, there was no room for Him in the inn, only a manger, 'a lowly cattle shed'. All the party-goers in the inn had no time for Jesus. Whatever they would be celebrating that night in the inn, they said there is no room for Him in here. Put Him out in the shed. My friend, if you get down to it, you will find that these party-goers are not celebrating the birth of Jesus; they are pleasing themselves. "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die". The other thing you will not hear them saying is anything about the Name of Jesus. Oh they love to speak or sing a carol or two about the lowly, beautiful babe that was born in Bethlehem. There is nothing wrong with that, perfectly right and legitimate; it is all in the Scriptures anyway. But what you will not hear them saying is "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for He shall save his people from their sins", Matt 1: 21. Oh no, they won't quote that because they wouldn't be celebrating then. But they might repent. They might be brought to their knees. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for He shall save his people from their sins".

The first celebration that I read about was an awful celebration. I want to paint this picture tonight to sober you. I want you to realise that if you are partying with people who do not know Christ you might well be partying with people who have been in the company of the betrayer. Because Judas was one of the twelve. The Lord Jesus said "If it had been an enemy, I could have borne it,

but it was thou, a man mine equal, mine intimate, my familiar friend ...", Ps 55: 13. That was Judas. And here is Judas, having been three and a half years in the company of the Lord Jesus, seeing all that He was doing, His undoing all the works of the devil in men and women wherever He met them. Here he was now, Satan having entered into his heart, here he was, and he was offering a way, an agreement, that they might take Jesus and crucify Him. It says "Then they rejoiced". What a basis for a celebration! What a basis to rejoice! My friend, would you rejoice alongside them? If you are a sinner and you do not know Jesus as your Saviour, according to the Bible you are classed with these awful people. They rejoiced that they had come to an agreement how they could take Jesus and crucify Him. There is another side to that story. When Peter preaches at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles he says "Given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men have crucified and slain", Acts 2: 23. Men in all their wanton awfulness, in all their hatred against the Lord Jesus, they were the ones who put Him on that cross. They were the ones who said "crucify, crucify Him", Luke 23: 21. But God had foreseen all that. "Given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by wicked hands have crucified and slain." My friend, God foresaw what man would cruelly do. And God knew that if these self-same men, and you and me, were ever going to be saved, there would have to be a sacrifice, and that sacrifice was Jesus. Let me remind you that this is the Man who moved about this scene for thirty three and a half years. For thirty years unknown in a certain sense, moving about His business, moving about His day to day duties, exemplifying perfection. Jesus had never an imperfect thought. He never said an untoward word. He never did a wanton deed. And then for three and a half years demonstrated the love of God to men, when He met men in all their need. When He met men blind, lame, halt. He could meet them wherever they were, however they were, the lepers, the fevered, it did not matter what condition men were in, the deranged, the one who was going about without clothes on, one held in chains, the Lord met them all and in loving grace. He put out His hand and touched them. "Be thou cleansed". Remember too a

woman coming, “if I should only touch His garment I shall be healed”, Matt 9: 21. In such a crowd, nobody noticed – crept in and nobody noticed. I love to think about that. You think about all those crowds of people, and here was one poor woman and she was needing a saviour. She crept along and touched the hem of His garment and immediately she was made whole. Remember the old hymn:

She only touched the hem of His garment
As to His side she stole,
Amid the crowd that gathered around Him
And straightway she was whole.
Oh touch the hem of His garment
And thou too shalt be free,
His saving power, this very hour
Shall give new life to thee

My friend, this is the gospel! Man celebrating, and rejoicing when he’s doing his worst; God doing His best, by providing a Man. A Man at Calvary,

“Look unto Me”, the Saviour cries
Behold upon the tree

My friend, He is available for you tonight. He is not on the cross now. He has shed His precious blood, and remember, without the shedding of blood there is no remission. The blood had to be shed. That soldier in his cruelty took a spear and “pierced His side, and immediately there came out blood and water”, John 19: 34. And that blood is the necessity for us tonight if we are going to know what it is to have our sins forgiven. Are you washed in the blood?

“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”, Isa 1: 18.

My friend, that blood of Jesus is still as efficacious tonight as it was when that soldier pierced His side. It is as available tonight as it ever has been and tonight God is pointing you to the blood and He says “When I see the blood, I will pass over”, Exod 12: 13. Oh how many myriads of persons have claimed that blood for themselves, and they

have found that God has justified them and given them peace. And so, my friend, that is the message of the gospel – when man was celebrating and rejoicing, doing his worst to put Christ on the cross, God was providing on that same cross, a perfect sacrifice that we might be saved. I commend Him to you. He is the greatest man that has ever lived. He is the greatest man that *will* ever live. He is the only man that is worthy of bowing the knee to.

I read the other scriptures to demonstrate other kinds of celebrations. You find when we get to Luke 12 that here is a man who is not exactly a betrayer, he had been blessed of God in a certain way. And have not we all! Even if we are sinners, God has blessed us in a certain way. He has blessed us by giving us the opportunity of being here tonight to hear the gospel. But He has blessed us in other ways. And this man had been blessed, he had been prosperous and now he sits back and does a little soliloquising, speaking to himself, discussing with himself. ‘I have all this food, fruit, what am I going to do? Build another granary! Store up my food, my fruit and say to my soul, “Soul, repose thyself, eat, drink, be merry”.’ That is man. Even men who have heard the gospel are like that even some men who have accepted the Saviour are like that; “Soul, repose thyself, eat, drink, be merry”. God says “Fool!”. I do not think God was being hard when He said that. I think He was being gracious to this man. He was just trying to draw his attention to the fact that he had no wisdom, he was just going on thinking about himself and he was foolish. Oh, I do not want anyone to go out of this room foolish tonight. I do not want anyone to go out tonight, God having to say “this night thy soul shall be required of thee, and whose shall be what thou hast prepared?” That never-dying soul! The man was interested in his body. He said “soul” , but that was what he was really meaning, just me, the ego, me. He didn’t realise that he was going to have to meet God, and he was going to have to say to God. God was pointing to him, saying “Fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee”. Now dear friends, it is a word to all of us. What are we living in? Oh you say ‘I am not one of these people that have denounced Christ and put Him on the cross’.

What are we living in? What are we producing for God? This man was producing for himself. All his thinking was around himself. And if you analysed the thinking of every man and woman in this world, it is all around themselves. Tonight it is the opportunity to change tack. Stop celebrating your own wilfulness. Stop celebrating your own superiority. Stop celebrating the very fact that God has been good to you but enjoying it away from God. God wants you near Him. He wants you with Him. He wants you to celebrate in His company.

And so I come to the next party, and there you find the Lord Jesus talking about a celebration. He calls it a supper, another celebration, a supper. You marvel at the way the Lord kept appealing to people, do you not? There He was. He was God, as Man. He was the Creator of the universe. "By whom also He made the worlds" it says in the beginning of Hebrews. And here He was, in condescending grace, appealing to men and women when He was moving about during those three and a half years. And so it says a great man made a supper and invited many. No takers. It must have been some party that nobody wanted to go, you would say.

Fancy being invited to a celebration and nobody wanted to go to it. Why? Because of the man who was providing it. That is why. They did not want to go because it was Jesus who was providing it. "A certain man". There is only one certain man in the scriptures. It is Luke's gospel we are reading you know. You know about Luke?

Luke, accurately acquainted, set out with method, that is Luke. He doesn't use words higgledy piggledy. He set it out with method. And so he says "A certain Man". My friend, there is only one certain Man and that is Jesus. And here He is, providing a supper. He sends out an invitation. Ah, I bought some land, need to go and have a look at it. Bought five yoke of oxen, I have to go and prove them. I have often wondered what these people would have done if they had gone and found that the five yoke of oxen had been lame and tottering about with BSE. And what would the man have done if he had found the field was full of nettles? He would not have been celebrating, I am assured. But these were the puny excuses that they made. And another could say "I have married a wife". He doesn't say "Please

excuse me”; he just says and “therefore I cannot come”. As if that was a real good reason. Did you ever hear anything so audacious?

Did you ever hear anything so ridiculous? He is invited to a celebration and he does not say to his wife “come on, let us go to the celebration”. No, no: he says to the man “I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come”. The puny excuses that men make, when you analyse them, when you take them down word by word and have a real good look at them, they are worthless. Then He says “go out, compel them to come in”. The halt, the lame and the blind, the people He has met in such need, He says bring them in. And that is what He is doing tonight. He is looking at people who have needed a saviour and found a Saviour and He is bringing them in.

And then they say, “it is done and there is still room”. You know, there is still room. This house has been filling for nearly two thousand years. Have you ever thought about the number of persons who have been converted in two thousand years? A man said to me he had been to China last year, and when he came back he said “its awesome, a billion people. They could send a million men to war and never miss them. Awesome.” I tell you there will be some people filled with awe when they see the thousands upon millions of people who have answered the call of love and come to the supper. Will you be among them? Will you share the celebration with Christ? Compel them to come in. Oh, my friend, the Lord Jesus tonight is appealing to you, in a compelling way. He is appealing in a way that you will have no resistance, no excuse. That you won’t go out of that door tonight and say ‘I will not put in my lot with these people at all.’

Where is this supper anyway? Ah! I was at this celebration this morning. What a celebration! We started with half a dozen people. Seven to be exact. In flesh and blood. Around a table with emblems on it. We sung a hymn. The celebration started. But wait. The bread was broken. There was an increase in power. The Lord came in. What a difference! Hearts awakened, responsive. It was not seven people in a meeting room in flesh and blood. It was the myriads of Ephraim and the thousands of Manasseh. All in the

power of the Spirit. Linking on with one another in response to that glorious Man who had given Himself for us, but now a living Man, Prince, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The One who was worthy to have the first place among His brethren. Were you there? Did you break bread this morning? Oh you say 'I am young enough. I'll wait for a while'. Just let me appeal to anybody that did not. You have an opportunity now to cast your lot with those that rejoiced in celebrating His supper and leaving these other celebrations of men that have no time for Him.

What happens then at the Supper as it proceeds? That is why I read that verse in the Psalms. Because there you get the inside story. "Hallelujah! Sing unto Jehovah a new song". See, it was new people, in a new environment, singing a new song. "Behold I make all things new". "Sing unto Jehovah a new song, sing his praise in the congregation of the godly". Oh you say, 'you are taking high ground'. Why not? Do you want me to go along with those who are grovelling down here? He has taken me from the dunghill, and set me among nobles. The Psalmist has just changed the words, "and set me among the godly". "Let Israel rejoice in his Maker; let the sons of Zion be joyful in their King. Let them praise his name in the dance". My friend, if I take you back to another celebration in Luke 15, there was a young man who was what is called a prodigal. He had gone into a far country and dissipated his living, living in debauchery. And then his father found him. He found him at the moment when he came to himself. And we all, who were at the celebration this morning had at one time come to ourselves. The Father had found us. He had given us a ring, shoes on our feet, the best robe. He had killed the fatted calf. And there we were, making merry! That is a *real* celebration. That is the celebration that goes right on into eternity in the Father's house. That is the celebration where you sing unto Jehovah a new song, where you praise His name in the dance. My friend, the gospel has a message that is a way beyond any other message that has ever been presented in the universe. It is a message of hope. It is a message of joy. It is a message of eternal blessing and present enjoyment with those that

know God and Christ as their Saviour. I commend it to you, my friend. Time is short. But time now is available for every one of us once more to recommit ourselves to being with Christ, celebrating His perfect work and going with Him into the presence of the God who pre-ordained that He should come and secure us for all eternity. Be with Him in the presence of that self-same God, known to us as our Father, and there to sing that new song forever.

May you accept the terms of the gospel. May you accept the *Man* of the gospel. His loving heart and healing hand are outstretched to you tonight for your eternal blessing. May it be so, for His Name sake.

Now let us sing "Oh what a Saviour is Jesus the Lord" (Hymn 169).

GLASGOW

December 1998

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

Paul Johnson

Psalm 51: 5; Ecclesiastes 7: 20; 2 Peter 1:16,17; Acts 2: 36; Acts 10: 38; 2 Corinthians 12: 2; Ephesians 1: 6

"Behold, in iniquity was I brought forth, and in sin did my mother conceive me." This speaks of the condition in which one is brought into this world. Of itself, this does not speak of sinfulness – that is, it does not speak of sins committed so that one is guilty – but it does speak of the condition in which man is found, man born of a woman, born of natural generation. This would include everyone. What I wish to bring out here is not the thought of guilt, but the fact that one is born as mortal. Mortal is the condition of man because of sin. Death was brought in by sin. I want to distinguish between sin as a condition and sin as guilt. Sin as a condition applies to infants as it is said, "in iniquity was I brought forth." That is human nature, which is fallen, but it is not guilt. I think we need to consider man in both ways, as born of a woman and mortal and then also as being guilty.

I think Ecclesiastes would help us in that. "Surely there is not a righteous man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." Here it is not a question of being born in sin; it is not a question of the nature; but a question of the deeds: "... there is not a righteous man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." Romans tells us the same thing: "for all have sinned", chap 3: 23. It is not merely that all are born in sin and shapen in iniquity, but "all have sinned" and "there is not a righteous man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." That could not be said now nor could it have been said when the Lord was here because there was a righteous Man on earth. But apart from the Lord Himself, what is written is "all have sinned". There is not one exception.

So we see man, not only mortal, but now we have sinful man. We have man as a sinner, and as a sinner, he is guilty. I am sure that we all have passed this way. It is necessary to do so. I do not think anyone will lay hold of the glad tidings until He sees that man is not only a sinner but he is a helpless and a hopeless sinner. That is his

nature. I have just been impressed recently that it does not make any difference what colour of skin and what features outwardly that human beings have. They are the same all over the world. You will find violence and corruption everywhere. One would think that one might find some race of persons somewhere who are all righteous, but you can travel the whole world and never find any such race, even though they have different cultures. Many want to blame evil on the culture. They point to a race of people who were deprived and did not have this or that, but you can go to the most privileged and most prosperous country and you will find violence and corruption, regardless of where you go, and what the race, what the background. One can scan the whole world and he will find such a variety of cultures, even in the same country where persons are reared after a certain fashion and others in an altogether different way, yet all turn out to be sinners. All have their part in violence and corruption in some way, though we cannot say all do so to the same extent. We can be thankful that it is so as God has in human government given a restraint on violence and corruption. Where governments are legitimate, that is, they are governing according to God's intent, there is a certain restraint, for which we can be thankful, but violence and corruption is still there. So there is none righteous and the whole world, as we read in Romans, becomes guilty before God. This is man as mortal and sinful.

I would like to turn to some passages that speak of another Man! We read in 2 Peter 1, verse 16: "For we have not made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, following cleverly imagined fables, but having been eyewitnesses of *his* majesty." I read this to bring before us the Person. This verse has in view the future, but verse 17 refers to the past: "For he received from God the Father honour and glory, such a voice being uttered to him by the excellent glory: This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight." This was said to Him at His baptism when the heavens were opened and this voice said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight", Matt. 3: 17. It is wonderful to think that God could finally look down on a man on this earth with delight. We only touch a little

of the evil which is going on in man here and frankly I do not wish to take in the evil of the world. But God takes in the whole scene of man in this world. He finds One on whom His eye could rest with delight. I may have mentioned this but I am going to mention it again that it is remarkable that this delight was expressed when the Lord was not in public service. This was given at the beginning of His public service. He had been here for thirty years but He was not involved in public service. Sometimes persons get occupied with service as if that is all that God is looking for, but here was a Man after God's own heart. He was a Man who was everything that God ever desired in man. That question, "What is man...?" (see Ps 8 :4) is answered in this Man. Consider this Man who even though He was not in public service, everything He did all of His thoughts, His desires and His interests were centred in God. He had no other object before Him; He had no other desire than the word of God.

Man was intended to be for God. Man would never have been created if it were not that God desired to have man for Himself and, He desired to have One who could delight Him. Angels did not satisfy the heart of God in this regard. I think I am right in saying that angels were created before man, but they did not satisfy the heart of God. If they had, He would not have created man. But angels did not and could not, only man could. What was in the heart of God, the desire that He had for man, we can see fulfilled in the Lord Jesus. I think we can see this more and more as we go on – that His delight was in man. David raised the question, "What is man...?" The answer is God's man, Christ Jesus. He is the One of whom God could say, "in whom I have found my delight."

In the book of Acts we have some very interesting expressions concerning God's thoughts of Christ: "Let the whole house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him, this Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." We can say that the Lord Jesus is God's accredited man. The world discredited Him: "whom ye have crucified", but God has given Him the highest place. As God's accredited man He is, "both Lord and Christ"; the One "whom ye have crucified", the One that man rejected. He is not only the One who

was for the delight of God but He is the One whom God now accredits and to whom gives the highest place, "both Lord and Christ."

The verse in Acts chapter 10 verse 38 reads "Jesus who was of Nazareth: how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power; who went through all quarters doing good, and healing all that were under the power of the devil, because God was with him." Here is a Man that God can be with. We know that when Adam was turned out of the garden, it was not only that he could not be in the garden, but God could not be with him. Before sin came in God was, in a measure, with him. He could speak with Adam but now God was not with him. Now we have a Man here in this world of whom it says, "God was with him." God could not be with sinful man, He could not be with mortal man; but here is a Man in whom He is delighted. Here is a Man whom He has accredited and here is a Man that He can be with because He is everything that God ever desired in man. He filled out the thought and the desire that God had for man, thus God could be with Him, as He was here in this world. We read that He had power; "healing all that were under the power of the devil, because God was with him." I do not think that could be said of any man other than the Lord Jesus except, those who are now "a man in Christ". But this was said of Him *personally*.

In Acts chapter 13 there is another verse I would like to refer to in this regard, that He was a Man in whom God found His delight and a Man accredited of God; a Man with whom God could *be*. In this reference we see what He has accomplished! Note verses 38 and 39: "Be it known unto you, therefore, brethren, that through this man" – (emphasis on "this man") – "remission of sins is preached to you, and from all things from which ye could not be justified in the law of Moses, in him every one that believes is justified." He accomplishes what no other man could ever accomplish. Regardless of how great a man Moses was and others used of God, there was no man who could do what "this man" has done. So it says: "that through this man" (and this man only) "remission of sins is preached". How wonderful this is!

This is the glad tidings. The glad tidings are associated with "this man", not sinful man, nor mortal man, except as they are the subjects

of God's grace. The glad tidings are connected with "this man", the Man who was for the delight of God; the Man whom God accredited, the Man with whom God was. All of this is fulfilled in Him!

I read this verse (see 2 Cor 12: 2) because I wish to make the transition from God's Man, Christ, to "a man in Christ" because that is the way man can be viewed too. We have had mortal man, sinful man and God's man and now "a man in Christ". You could never have "a man in Christ" apart from the work of Christ on the cross. You could never have "a man in Christ" until there was remission of sins, justification and sealing of the Spirit, and it applies to "every one that believes." I want to emphasise the expression "every one that believes" because of what applies to "every one that believes". They are justified, their sins are remitted. They are sealed with the Spirit and they have a place in Christ. This enables us to make the transition from God's man to "a man in Christ". God's Man is Christ Jesus Himself but "a man in Christ" are those who believe.

I might turn to Ephesians chapter 1, verse 6 "to the praise of the glory of his grace," – I emphasise that word "grace" because the place we have "in Christ" is all of grace – and we read "wherein he has taken us into favour in the Beloved:" He has taken us into His favour in the Beloved One. We stand in all the favour of that One who is beloved of God. It is "to the praise of the glory of his grace". It is all of grace. Often we preach that one can be delivered from the wrath to come; delivered from sins and the power of sin – but this is an aspect of the glad tidings that perhaps is not often brought out, that God has, "taken us into favour in the Beloved." This is more than meeting a need. It goes beyond that. We were mortal persons, but God removed our sins by the work of Christ. Not only are our sins forgiven and we are justified, but we are taken into His favour in the Beloved One, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So this is "a man in Christ". We have had Christ, the Man of God's delight and pleasure and approval and who has finished and completed God's work, but now we have "a man in Christ", and we have it again in the second chapter in verses 4 – 6: "but God, being rich in mercy," – so we have two things, grace, the glory of His grace,

and then "rich in mercy" – "because of his great love wherewith he loved us." Think of all these terms that are used: grace, mercy and love! Wonderful, are they not? What a contrast with violence and corruption that fills the earth! What a contrast with what is in the heart of sinful man, and what is filling this earth with it! Wonderful to read of these expressions of grace and mercy and love: "because of his great love wherewith he loved us, (we too being dead in offences,) has quickened us with the Christ, (ye are saved by grace,) and has raised us up together, and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." Think of that expression, "in Christ" – at the end of verse 4 of chapter 1 we read "that we should be holy and blameless before him in love."

Well, "a man in Christ" is not only a position as we read, "raised us up together, and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies...", but it is also a condition "that we should be holy and blameless." This brings us into accord with God so that we are not only "in Christ", but *like* Christ, holy and without blame. Such is "a man in Christ". Someone might ask, how can I be "a man in Christ"? You cannot develop it. It is what belongs to every believer on the Lord Jesus Christ. One who comes to God through Christ, receives Christ as Saviour so that he is justified and sealed with the Spirit of God, he is brought into all of this so that he is now "a man in Christ", and "a man in Christ" is before God, as it says here, "holy and blameless."

Notice at the end of chapter 1 verse 5 we read, it says, "according to the good pleasure of his will." It is not according to our need. What a believer has as "a man in Christ" is not just meeting our need, it is according to His good pleasure. It is in accord with what God wanted. Not only did He have a Man in whom He could find His delight, a Man with whom He could be and whom He could accredit and a Man who would do all His will, but He desired that we should be in Christ as "a man in Christ". It was "the good pleasure of his will", His great desire, that man should be in Christ before Him; taken into all the favour of that One and in accord with Him as, "holy and blameless before him in love." These expressions are almost

overwhelming when you think of them: love and grace and mercy and holy and blameless and favour; what wonderful expressions! One would marvel that every one who hears the gospel would not be anxious to receive it.

We know that apart from a divine work in each soul, none would receive the gospel, but the gospel goes out to all and the blessing is available to all those that believe. The place that God has given us so that we have this wonderful setting out of the grace of God, "a man in Christ", belongs to every one of us who believes. What an upgrade it is from mortal and sinful man to be "a man in Christ". This is the answer to the question raised, "What is man...?" Our focus would be on God's Man, the Lord Jesus, and to "a man in Christ". This is God's great thought in regard to man. It was never God's thought that man should be mortal. Sin brought that in: "...even as by one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death...", Rom 5: 12. It was never God's thought that man should be guilty and lost, but His great thought for man is seen in the Lord Jesus Christ. As one thinks about it one can understand why God delights in man, not sinful man, but delights in that Man. Those who are now in Christ Jesus before God, are in divine favour as "a man in Christ". How blessed to be in the favour of the One who is the beloved One and the One who is the delight of the Father.

Our Lord Jesus has the pre-eminence – we would never take that away – in divine favour, but we are in the favour of Christ. We read, "taken... into favour in the Beloved." This is the measure of the favour into which we are brought before God. It is in the Beloved. We could not be in divine favour in any other way than in the Beloved. Man could not be in divine favour apart from being in Christ. He is the One who stood in the favour of God, He is the One who was to the delight of God. As to those who are now in divine favour, it is "in the Beloved" and it is through His work by the grace of God and the mercy of God. All of these expressions would impress afresh upon us that to make the transition as it were from mortal and sinful to be "a man in Christ" required not only a Man here to the delight and pleasure of God, but a Man who would complete the work of atonement. One

who would make it possible to take those who were mortal and those who were sinful and give them a place of acceptance; a place in divine favour. It could only be through His sufferings, the bearing of our sins, the putting away of sin, and then going into death and coming out as being raised up and taken up into the glory. As to those of us who are in Christ we read that He, "has raised us up together, and has made us sit down together..." While this is a collective thought, we can enter into it individually as well, knowing that every believer has part in this and is open to all today in the gospel. The glad tidings, would announce this. It is not only that our sins are put away and guilt is absolved and we will never go into judgment, but this is what we are brought into so that we can be "a man in Christ". It is all of grace and all of mercy and all of God's work. May He bless the word!

DENTON

18 April 1999