

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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“HIS LOVING KINDNESS ENDURETH FOR EVER”

Jim Gray

Psalm 136: 1-26

The Psalmist has a great impression of the mercy of God. He can hardly wait to complete his sentence before he interjects, “for his loving-kindness endureth for ever”. That is the God that we have, dear brethren. I just touch on a few thoughts in the Psalm. We sang last night:

Awake each saint in joyful lays,
To sing the great Redeemer’s praise;
He justly claims a song from thee:
His loving-kindness, O how free.

It leaves an impression on your spirit, the greatness of the Redeemer. God is the Redeemer. Here He is in creation, the One who made things, made things for a house for Himself. Creation, the universe - is a house for God and a house for man. The tabernacle of God will be with men. It is the idea of a house, His dwelling place, but He has made it too for man. We owe to Him alone who doeth great wonders, Him that by understanding made the heavens. What understanding comes out in the heavens. Take account of the heavens. It says the sun for rule over the day, the moon and stars for rule over the night. God in his mercy set these things there in creation for man. Another has remarked but it is true anyway, ‘How would man have got on in the oceans of the world, if it hadn’t been for the sun and the moon and the stars’. It is all right while you travel from here to London on a highway; even if there are no road signs, you can make your own mark, mark out directions of roads. But you get into the ocean, go outside of the sphere of the land, how do you navigate? God in His mercy put the sun and the moon and the stars there for man, for man to navigate the globe. I am not going to proceed on the lines of navigation but it is interesting to know that. That is God’s mercy, to allow man to travel.

What I wanted to speak about was the moral side. He smote the Egyptian. He speaks here as to Israel's extrication from Egypt. As coming into the wilderness, now he says "To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn, for his loving-kindness endureth for ever. And brought Israel out from among them, for his loving-kindness endureth for ever", (vv 10,11). I would like to say to us all and to our younger people, we want to give thanks to God for His mercy, being delivered from the sin system in this world. What a thing that is! Take account of humanity, much of it entrapped in the sin system of the world. The world is a sin system, man serving his own ends, for his own pleasures and his own lusts, without God. What a sorrowful state it is, humanity, without God and without hope in the world. But here are persons who have hope, who can sing of the mercy of God. It is a wonderful triumph to be able to sing 'his loving-kindness endureth for ever'. He has brought me, He has extricated me from the sin system of this world. He has set me up and given me a power, He gives you a power to be here in the wilderness.

When you take account of the history of it, the Lord Jesus had to die. He was the One who had to die to make a way out for us. It says that, "with a powerful hand and a stretched out arm ... divided the Red sea into parts, for his loving-kindness endureth for ever" (vv 12,13). He delivered us from Egypt; the blood on the lintel and on the door post the testimony to a fact that we were not judged. What a triumph to be delivered from Egypt, not only delivered from judgment, but to be taken out of this system. When the children of Israel walked through the Red Sea, Paul says they were identified with the death of the Lord. When they walked through the Red Sea, they walked through the sea where the Lord had made a way by His death. That is what it speaks typically of. That is the believer being identified morally with the death of the Lord.

So it says in Romans 6 verse 1; "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"- that grace may abound. There you know Christ as your Saviour and you can sing of the mercy of God that has delivered you from the judgment. Now you desire to be for Christ in this world, are we going to continue in sin that grace may

abound? Paul says, Far be the thought. You are not going to continue in sin that grace may abound. There are new desires in the heart of the believer. What a thing when you come to Christ you find that you have new desires, a new assessment of things. The world around you, the town in which you live, the places where you might have found your pleasures before, you do not want to be there any more because you love the Lord Jesus. You want to be for Him. So you do not want sin to have dominion over you and the Lord gives you a power. It says "To him who led his people through the wilderness" (v 16). There is no thought of wandering. That is what has attracted me, "To him that led his people through the wilderness". There is no thought of wandering. There is a power that you get, the gift of the Holy Spirit. He would give you power to go through this world for the Lord Jesus. The desires are right; new birth brings about desires that are right, conversion confirms them. Trust in Christ as your Saviour and your desires are right. Then the power comes in the Holy Spirit, and "he led his people through the wilderness". Think of the provision of God in the wilderness, 'for his loving-kindness endureth for ever'. Think of singing that song, in relation to our daily lives as you go out on the morning and you go to school or college or office or workshop or whatever you might do. You may be tested by it as troubles and tribulations, disappointments, come, but you come home at night and you can sing 'for his loving-kindness endureth for ever'. He has brought me through, has brought you through today.

What a God He is! He has provided you with food and blessing, provides you with Christ. He gives you Christ in the Gospels, the humble Jesus. Go out in the morning with a taste that you are going to be here as the humble Jesus was here, the lowly Jesus, the meek and lowly man. The power is there in the Holy Spirit to keep your foot on the highway and to give you strength and power inwardly. Think of God providing a power inwardly. So it says 'as many as are led by the Spirit of God these are sons of God'. He gives you a power inwardly. What compression comes into that verse 16. It says "To him that led his people through the wilderness,

for his loving-kindness endureth for ever". He provided them with the manna, provided them with the springing well. A whole history comes in that is untouched in the Psalm. The Psalmist has an impression of it. "To him that smote great kings" (v 17). He is coming on to the borders of the land, near the end of the wilderness journey.

This Psalm does not take you as far as the land, that is it does not take you to the gathering of the saints; it takes you up to the gathering of the saints, this Psalm. It takes you up in relation to your life, your business life, your secular life, and tells you to prove the mercy of God and sing about it. Praise the One who has brought you through and given you the strength to go against the current of this world. One man could say 'Why is it believers can go against the current of this world'. It is the holy unseen, unknown by the world, protection that enshrouds the believer. That is the power of the Holy Spirit. When you are reproached in the name of Christ, "blessed are ye for ... the Spirit of God rests upon you", 1 Peter 4: 14. What a power that is! What a moment that is! It is not only receiving the Spirit initially but the Spirit's delight to give you a sense of His pleasure in you as you are reproached in the Name of the Lord Jesus. What a blessing that is! So you can sing 'his loving-kindness endureth for ever'.

Then you come to the borders of the land and there are these giants. You might say 'what do you mean by the borders of the land?' Well, you hear much at the present day about the west bank, the West Bank of the Jordan. It is the West Bank of the Jordan, but this is the East Bank of the Jordan, that is that it does not belong wholly to the nation of Israel. It was property of land on the east of the Jordan. You know what it means, dear young friend, it is the area typically where we live in our homes and amongst our relationships. There are giants to be met who would hinder you from holding your home, from holding your domestic life, from holding your family life, your relationships in family life for the Lord. All that you have, your stewardship for the Lord, is held on the East Bank of the Jordan. To use the typical teaching that is the area in which you

live and family life and domestic life, a man's household is for the Lord. He is to hold it all for the Lord. The mammon of unrighteousness, you may say money, everything is held for the Lord. Everything you have is held for the Lord, it all belongs to the Lord. And these giants, these are figurative principles that would oppose it. What would oppose that? What would keep me from holding things for the Lord. It would be self, self-indulgence. That is what one of them speaks about. Og had a big bed, a great big bed, about ten feet long. He was one of the giants and he would keep you from using things for the Lord because of self-indulgence. And the other man would energise you in relation to your own interests, fleshly interests, carnal interests. And overcoming these things, you hold them for the Lord.

What an environment the households of the saints are. I believe it is so with us in our city. I am not being critical, I am being encouraging. And you can sing in the evening in your home 'for his loving-kindness endureth for ever'. God has helped you in your family circumstances, helped you in your business and helped you to hold it for the Lord, and helped you to hold it in a manner that it doesn't overcome you. So that the man is in control of everything, the man of the house, man in his business and a young person in their own sphere or environment is to hold things for the Lord. Everything you have you hold for the Lord. What a joy that is!

So that you can then come down to "who hath remembered us in our low estate"! How God remembered us! It says in Ephesians 2, dear friend, that we were to be found in trespasses and sin. The low estate, how low could we go and God operated in your soul to bring you into the light of Christianity. What a God He is and He has elevated you, elevated you in Christ, and He has brought you into another order of humanity. Taken you out of the old Adam and brought you into an order of humanity that is in Christ. The Lord Jesus went low, a little lower than angels on account of the suffering of death; that is the Lord Jesus. How low did He go? But it has resulted in the elevation of mankind, man after Christ, the elevation of man as a race. God had in mind that the race should be elevated.

But to come into the blessing of the elevation you have to trust Christ as your Saviour. Trust in Christ as your Saviour and you can take account of the fact that you are no longer in Adam, you are in Christ. It is another race of men, completely different from the Adam. It is a race that belongs to heaven, a heavenly order of humanity. "The sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren". Well, you can take account of that and say 'for his loving-kindness endureth for ever'.

May it rest in our souls and our spirits tonight. Go home and sing about it, think about it. The God who has seen you all the way through, will be able to save you unto the uttermost, the salvation so great. He is able to save us, the One who is able to do things. Give thanks unto the Lord, to Him, to Him, to Him. You find out that in many verses, 'to Him', One who is able to do that, One who overcame the problems for you. He will be with you and you will be able to say 'his loving-kindness endureth for ever'. Give thanks unto the God of the heavens (v 26). Just before that "Who giveth food to all flesh, for his loving-kindness endureth for ever" (v 25). What a God He is! He considers for all. He will provide food for every man, you know, it is there in Christ. God would provide food too for every man. Man's maladministration fails, but here I would take it up in a moral sense. He would provide food, food for your soul. What a God who can provide food for you, bringing you into the wilderness. Our lives are fashioned in the wilderness, dear brethren, largely fashioned in the wilderness. We touch the areas of the service of God, blessed as it is; it has an effect on this too. The moral fibre in our lives is fashioned in the wilderness. You know these giants involve our thinking. The children of Israel did not proceed after eleven days journey to Kadesh-Barnea. They did not proceed into the land after the spying out of the land because they were frightened of giants, the giants in Hebron. There are three of them. Mr Coates points it out somewhere in his ministry - one represents the brotherhood of men, a copy of Christianity, in Hebron; another giant represents the desire for man to be a free thinker, not bound by any discipline in his mind, he allows his mind free scope as he says.

And the other one represents the confidence that relates to philosophy, the mind of man, confidence relates to that. Mr Darby points out that you find the philosophers are very sure of their ground. Some of these scientists have had hypotheses about evolution and all that. They are very sure of their ground. That kind of mind has to be displaced in you and me. And the power of the Spirit of God is the power to displace it in the believer to root out the giants. Caleb was a man who dealt with the giants, a man who wholly followed the Lord. We need to deal with these things in our mind. Mr Taylor said an interesting thing once; he said 'There is a power for the principle of elimination'. That is you do not entertain certain thoughts in your mind, you eliminate them. The power to do it is the Holy Spirit. You can't do it in your own flesh. The mind would be occupied with Hebron in relation to what it becomes under Caleb, centre of a place where Christ has the first place in all things, the centre of heavenly fellowship, that is Hebron. The fellowship is on heavenly ground, built seven years before Zoan in Egypt. It is greater and better than anything this world can provide. May your heart thus be linked up with the God and be able to say 'for his loving-kindness endureth for ever'.

EDINBURGH

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“WHERE ART THOU?”

Jim MacFarlane

Luke 19: 1–10; Mark 10: 46–52; Luke 10: 30–37

I think we can say with some confidence that God is interested in where you are; your location tells a story. When Adam sinned – and how often we return to these early parts of scripture which give us an outline of the way in which God set things on and how man failed in regard of them – God’s question to him was, “Where art thou?” Gen 3: 9. His location was a direct consequence of his moral condition and his moral condition was such that he could not sustain the presence of God. He had put a creature in the garden and it was evidently God’s desire that he should have communion with Him. God came into the garden and because of what Adam had done and because of his moral condition, he placed himself where he felt more comfortable than directly in the presence of God. His son did the same thing. He killed his brother and in the course of God’s dealings with him in regard of that he “went out from the presence of Jehovah”, Gen. 4: 16. We are told where he went and of the activities in which he engaged.

There are many examples of the way in which a person’s location is an indication of how they are. How often have preachers used the fifteenth chapter of Luke’s gospel! The sinful things in which the younger son wished to engage could not be done in the Father’s house. He did not take the property that fell to him and engage in the things that he wished to do in the Father’s house. He had to move to the far country and his location told very clearly where he was morally before God.

God is interested in raising this question with every one of us: where are you? You might say that God does not really need to do that because the scripture tell us that “The eyes of Jehovah are in every place, beholding the evil and the good”, Prov 15: 3. It is interesting to see once again how a place and a moral assessment on the part of God are so closely linked together. So God knows

where we are; He knows where everyone is. But, nonetheless, He chooses, I think, in the glad tidings to raise the question as to where you are and it perhaps would cause you to reflect on your moral condition because the surroundings in which you find yourself would highlight to you your own moral condition and would raise questions about how suitable you are for the presence of God. Ultimately that is the only thing that matters. The younger son in Luke 15 eventually came to himself and immediately he had to consider how he would present himself before his father. So these questions are raised with everyone: Where are you? What is your condition? How do you stand before God?

We have read three passages of scripture which all refer to Jericho. Two of the people are in Jericho and one is heading in that direction. Jericho represents the world of mankind apart from God and the touching thing is that, in spite of its history, the Lord Jesus was prepared to go into Jericho and to encounter those who needed the service that He alone could give. It says in the first section that we read, "And he entered and passed through Jericho." In Mark chapter 10, it speaks of Him leaving Jericho: "and as he was going out from Jericho," he met the blind man. The Lord Jesus was not going to remain there. It was not an environment for Him, but in the surpassing grace of God that continues to be represented in the glad tidings, the Lord Jesus was prepared to come close to people who were in Jericho and He was prepared to transform their lives.

Jericho has an interesting history. It is a place which is symbolic of the condition of mankind and, if people live there, it tells us something about their moral condition. Jericho was the first place to be dealt with by the children of Israel when they went into the Land of Canaan. God could not be served there. Egypt was not a place for the people of God. In Scripture it has the character of arrogant, proud self-sufficiency and you see that writ large over much of the present activity of humankind. There was no prospect of God being served in Egypt so He took His people out and He brought them through the wilderness for a period of forty years with many lessons learned in the course of that journey.

But what ultimately God did was to bring them in to the land of His promise and it was a very rich land. Egypt yielded its fruits according to the ability of mankind to harness the Nile, but the land that God brought them into was a land that was completely different. It was a land that flowed with milk and honey without any particular contribution from mankind. It was provided by God. One of the impressions to be gained from reading the book of Deuteronomy is the enormous abundance of this land into which Moses was taking the people. The system of sacrifice which God required made substantial demands but these were going to be easily met because of the tremendous abundance of this land and it would not require human ingenuity to produce this: this was the land that God was providing for them.

But as soon as they got into the land, Jericho had to be dealt with. It stood in the way of the people entering into the fulness of what God had in mind for them. God in His power can bring his people out of Egypt but what symbolically is represented in Jericho must be overcome too. The priests and the ark circled it for seven days and on the last day it was circled seven times. They blew with trumpets, there was a shout from the people and the walls of Jericho came down. Salvation is not only from a system that is oppressive, as represented by Egypt, but it is introduction into the fulness of what God has by way of life, and what stands athwart this, as represented by Jericho, must be overthrown.

The moment of its overthrow is mysterious. If it had been the story of a conventional military operation, pursued by the people and supported by God, sapping the walls and pulling them down, we could have understood that, but Jericho collapses in a different way. I think the key to it is what immediately precedes in crossing the river Jordan. The people crossed the Jordan, but what is so significant and important is that they did so because the power of the Jordan was overcome and it was overcome by the ark.

The ark is a type and it is symbolic of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is spoken of in rather distinctive ways. Several times it is referred to and some of its titles are remarkable: the ark of the covenant of

Jehovah, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth and a number of others; powerful, distinctive typical references to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who of course, is *the* theme of the glad tidings. The triumph of the ark in the passage of the Jordan comes just before the collapse of Jericho and provides the basis for that remarkable campaign against the city of Jericho. The river Jordan overflowed all its banks at the time of the people's passage through it and this refers to the powerful way in which the Lord Jesus went into death and met every righteous requirement of God. There was not a drop of water in sight when the people went through, speaking clearly of the way in which the power of death has been broken, and access given to the blessings which God has in His purpose for mankind.

Just as the priests' feet went down into the river, it disappeared completely. It is mysterious and the word of the cross, of which it is a symbol, is a mysterious word. We may be able to comprehend something of the sufferings endured by Christ from man, the abuse, the contempt, the mocking, the physical cruelty: these are things that perhaps we can begin to understand a little. But there were three hours of darkness which were not from the hands of man. During that period something far more mysterious was taking place than the ark going into the river Jordan causing it to go right back to the city Adam. It was then that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished everything that was required by God. At the end of these three hours of darkness, He said, "It is finished". It was a work which was complete. He went into the grave to remove for ever from under the eye of God the whole order of man which had sinned, and His resurrection was the clear indication of the perfection of the pleasure of God in all that He had accomplished. God was satisfied and the power of death was gone completely. The word in the glad tidings is that the whole value and benefit of this becomes available to everyone by faith in the accomplishments of Christ, faith in His Person and acceptance of Him as Lord. This, typically, preceded the fall of Jericho: all that was symbolic of the triumph of Christ in

overcoming evil, in triumphing over the power of death and in giving the people entrance into life of a new order in the land.

Now, what stood immediately in the way was this city of Jericho and I think if you have some understanding of what preceded in the passage of the Jordan, then perhaps it is rather more easily understood that it did not require a conventional military approach to bring down Jericho.

The ark was there and it was vitally important. It was carried round the city, but the priests blew the trumpets and there is in that some representation of a celebration of the triumph that had taken place previously at the river Jordan. There was a celebration of it in the face of what typifies the whole world system, and eventually the people were engaged in the same celebration themselves; on the final day of this action it was the celebration shout that brought the walls of Jericho down. One household was saved because the householder, Rahab, had placed her confidence in the God of the children of Israel and she comes into the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Himself in the wonderful ways of God's gracious and merciful dealings with mankind.

Joshua said at that time that should the city of Jericho be rebuilt, there would be a curse upon its builder and that is what happened. Man looked at a naturally desirable situation, which Jericho had, and it was rebuilt. The curse was that its foundation would be laid in his firstborn and its gates would be set up in his youngest, and that is exactly what happened if you read the history. The city of Jericho, which represented those aspects of the system that stood in the way of the full enjoyment of what God had in mind for his people, was rebuilt because of natural calculations and the curse was suffered. I think that Jericho thereafter would be characterised by this.

Now, of course, the work of Christ has changed things generally; man is held provisionally in reconciliation with God. There is a "propitiation for our sins; and not for ours alone, but also for the whole world", 1 John 2: 2. The curse was borne by Christ. But

nonetheless, I think, we would see in this city of Jericho something that represents the consequences of man continuing to live in arrangements which completely ignore what God has accomplished, and we live in a world like that.

I would like to speak of the way that the Lord Jesus came into circumstances like these and dealt with people in them. We have read of instances where the Lord Jesus came to Jericho. For those who might see some parallel with their own situation in any of those three of which we have read, note how the Lord Jesus came right into these circumstances Himself and how He came in with the fulness of His blessing. You say, into Jericho with blessing? Yes, right down into these circumstances. The city of the curse? Yes, He was prepared to be right there.

The first one of whom we read is Zacchaeus. It says that Jesus “entered and passed through Jericho.” What an action of grace and that grace continues until now. The gospel is still preached here and preached in multitudes of places because the grace of God continues. “And behold, there was a man by name called Zacchaeus, and he was chief tax-gatherer, and he was rich.” He seemed to have things going for him, as we say, and, according to the concordance, Zacchaeus is the Greek version of an Old Testament name that means ‘pure’. So perhaps in human terms he was well favoured. He came from a fine line. He was rich. He did have one limitation however; it says he was little in stature. Even those who appear to be prospered in human terms have their needs and their uncertainties and Zacchaeus needed a little assistance. Most libraries carry self-help books for people’s uncertainties and insecurities, because such difficulties are so general among mankind, even among those who are apparently most favoured. Zacchaeus used his own ingenuity to overcome his limitation. He was operating in the way which was characteristic of an inhabitant of Jericho.

Then Jesus came along and things were transformed. Instead of having to turn to his own resourcefulness to make up for an acknowledged and felt condition, the Lord Jesus attended to it

immediately. It was the first thing He dealt with. The Lord Jesus said, "make haste and come down", and then added "for today ... I must remain in thy house". The Lord Jesus was passing through Jericho but He was not going to remain there. He said, "for to-day I must remain in thy house." Jesus could not remain in Jericho and He has no place in the world which it represents. However, he would speak to you in the same terms as those in which he spoke to Zacchaeus, saying, I will come into your circumstances and I will remain with you for to-day. In other words, I will remain with you during the present period of divine grace. You will not be left to get on with your life as best you can, using the same sort of resourcefulness as you have employed up until now.

As He came into his circumstances Zacchaeus was transformed. His own activities were completely changed by the activity of the Lord Jesus. I do not think he had made himself rich by regularly giving half of his goods to the poor and returning fourfold if he had taken anything by false accusation. We speak about people being converted. This is what happens when someone is converted. It is a transformation in his life. His whole style of operation becomes completely different.

"And Jesus said to him, To-day salvation is come to this house, inasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham." Perhaps Zacchaeus's name indicates that he had had some sort of connections with earlier, honourable characters in the Old Testament. What the Lord Jesus does is to put him into an altogether more noble line. He speaks about salvation coming to his house "inasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham". He puts him into the line of faith. The Lord Jesus does not ask him if he is exercising faith. I think He saw it and was willing to recognise it by saying that this man was a son of Abraham. And he gets the word that "the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which is lost." The Son of man is the One who will ultimately have universal dominion. He comes into this man's life and he is saved in the fulness of all that this title means.

So to anyone who might have the impression of having done relatively well in the world but who still has to admit to the unease and uncertainty of being numbered among the lost, the Lord Jesus would present Himself for acceptance by faith. To those who receive Him, He would minister the fulness of grace and give the wonderful experience of conversion.

In Mark chapter 10 there is a very different man: "And they come to Jericho, and as he was going out from Jericho". This was the Lord Jesus passing through Jericho and on the point of leaving it. As we have said already, it was not the place for Him and a time will come ultimately when He will no longer be available to those in it. The present period, to which we refer as the day of grace, will not go on for ever and we have here the Lord Jesus on the point of leaving Jericho. "And as he was going out from Jericho and his disciples and a large crowd, the son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus, the blind man, sat by the wayside begging." Bartimaeus's name means something very different from Zacchaeus. If Zacchaeus means 'pure', Bartimaeus, again according to the concordance, means 'son of the unclean'. This was someone who was right at the opposite end of the social spectrum. Imagine going through life with a name like that, 'son of the unclean', and being blind and sitting by the wayside begging! It is a picture of man, in his ultimate desperate extremity. I do not know what he would have got by the wayside. It is not a fruitful place. Elsewhere in the gospels the Lord Jesus gave the parable of the sower, when the seed fell by the wayside and did not prosper there. It is where human traffic flows. Mankind is caught up by this and the seed, which speaks of the word of God, does not thrive. Here was a man who was living not only in Jericho but also in this environment where, you might say, the word had no prospect. There would appear to be no hope for this man. "And having heard that it was Jesus the Nazaraean, he began to cry out and to say". I think this man had those stirrings which result from the work of God that gave him to understand that Jesus the Nazaraean would be One who would have the capacity for a condition even such as his.

Bartimaeus referred to Him as Son of David. Son of David was a term of great distinction. Jesus is presented to him as the Nazaraean, however, associating Him with a place of reproach, and conveying reassurance of the favourable disposition of the One who was willing to come into humble circumstances. In addressing Him as Son of David, however, he makes clear that he understood Christ's capacity to deal with a condition as desperate as his. So he knew He was the Nazaraean, he knew He was the Son of David, the One in whom all hopes for the Jew were centred and in addressing Him as Jesus, he knew Him personally. "Jesus", he says, "have mercy on me." What we would desire in the glad tidings is to present Christ personally to you as Saviour as well as providing you with the salvation that He has secured to which you have access by the exercise of faith.

"And many rebuked him". People like Bartimaeus are disregarded in the world. These are the forgotten, the downtrodden, the underclass. They are least inconvenient when silent. But Jesus did not respond to him in that way. "But he cried so much the more, Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus, standing still". We will refer shortly to the Samaritan who was journeying and he represents Jesus moving here with the steady, dignified, forward movements of the Son of Man and yet He is willing to stop at the cry of this poor soul.

"And Jesus, standing still, desired him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying to him, Be of good courage, rise up, he calls thee. And, throwing away his garment" – I suppose it was his only possession but he put his confidence completely in the Lord Jesus Christ - "he started up and came to Jesus." "What wilt thou that I shall do to thee?" He asks him for an assessment of his own condition. "And the blind man said to him, Rabboni, that I may see." There is a requirement in the glad tidings that you consider your own condition and this man knew where he fell short. There must be repentance towards God. That means that you take some account of your own state and realise that it makes you utterly unsuitable for God. You come to a judgment of it and you set yourself in another

direction. This man's direction was to be set by Jesus. It says that he "followed him in the way."

"Go, thy faith has healed thee." That is a wonderful, gracious touch too. It was the power of the Lord Jesus that had healed Him. Our late brother Mr Grant in Dundee used to remind us that the disciples raised the dead but it was only the Lord Jesus Himself that could give the blind sight. This man had an encounter with Christ and it had a consequence for him that he could have got nowhere else. Even in the power that the Lord gave to the disciples there was never a service such as was rendered to this man here. "And Jesus said to him, Go, thy faith has healed thee." It was the power of the Lord that had healed him, but the Lord Jesus would say to him, your faith has done it. How would the man feel after that? From being one of the downtrodden, the outcasts, he would have a sense of being strengthened and encouraged in his pathway by this word from the Lord Jesus, that his faith had healed him, and he applies that energy following Him. I think that Zacchaeus and Bartimaeus cover the whole range of those who live in Jericho and if Jesus can deal with the extremes, He can meet every intermediate situation.

Chapter 10 of Luke refers to someone who is not located in Jericho, but whose direction is towards it. It is not a good direction to have. The man in this chapter was taken to a point of even greater extremity than Bartimaeus. They "went away leaving him in a half-dead state", so that anything he did possess was taken from him violently. He had no garment to cast away as Bartimaeus did, because he had been stripped by the robbers and the wounds which had been inflicted left him helpless. The position of anyone with Jericho as an objective is exceedingly perilous.

There is no human remedy for this. I suppose to see a priest and a Levite coming along would be the very best prospect a man could have in such a situation. These were the people who, because of their nominal association with holy things, might have given hope of the exceptional resources needed by this extreme case. "And a certain priest happened to go down that way, and seeing him, passed on on the opposite side". There is no human

answer, even from the most likely source, to the situation of someone who has met the consequences of being on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Jericho. There was a Levite and he was at the spot and he “came and looked at him and passed on on the opposite side.” No doubt a few thoughts would have passed through his mind. He may have pondered it further as he headed in whichever direction he was going. He may have spoken, when he reached his destination, about what he had seen and he may have philosophised on the character of things on the Jericho road, on the deterioration of society and so on. People write columns in the newspaper about this sort of thing but, philosophise as they may, there is never an effective remedy.

The poor man was found, however, by the Samaritan who was journeying. The Samaritan is not said to be going towards Jericho or towards Jerusalem. He was moving on a different plane. He is typical of the Lord Jesus Christ and He was moving in a way that was directed by the will of His Father and He had the capacity to deal with this man. He was stripped of everything as a result of his experience and here was someone who came along with the resource to meet his needs where he was and the resource to take him to a place where he could be sustained. We are emphasising the importance of place and there was a place to which this man was brought. He was brought to the inn. It is not given a geographical location. It does not belong to this earth. You will not find it on the map. But he was brought into circumstances where he could be sustained by One who is identified as the innkeeper in type. The Holy Spirit of God, who has all that is required until the Lord Jesus returns to take all those who are His to be with Himself. How complete is the blessing, even for someone who was heading towards Jericho, as he submits to the service of the journeying Samaritan.

I desire that these words might show how there is salvation for everyone because I think everyone is encompassed, whether it is those who live in Jericho, of someone who is headed in that direction. My desire is that you would lay hold of what is provided by

the work of this wonderful Saviour and have a sense of being brought into the fulness of all that He has provided for your sustaining. May these things be for the encouragement and blessing of us all for His Name's sake!

EDINBURGH

9 April 2000

THE GREAT SUPPER

John C. Gray

Luke 14: 15–24

It is a great matter, that God has made a great supper. We read in Matthew 22 that it was for the celebration of the marriage of His Son, that is Jesus, that He made a great supper, and invited persons. The sad thing is that in the setting of this scripture the many who were invited and declined were the Jews. That is what this scripture really means. God invited them: “And he sent his bondman at the hour of supper to say to those who were invited, Come, for already all things are ready.” But they declined.

It was not just the Jews that declined. Men through all generations have declined or excused themselves, putting it politely. God has gone to such an extent in the glad tidings to do everything possible that we might be saved for eternity and yet, will you refuse it? The Jews were told, everything is ready. The Lord Jesus came here, ministered the kingdom of God in three and a half years of public service, and died on the cross. He suffered and died, shed His blood, that is, He gave His life - we will speak about that in a minute – then went into the grave, and then He arose from the dead. What a wonderful triumph that was, God raising Christ from the dead! That was one of the greatest miracles that has taken place on this earth. These different miracles that the Lord Jesus did were wonderful matters; all that He did in restoring and healing people, but the great pointers in the way in which God has come to secure you and me were firstly the incarnation, that God Himself became a man, and secondly that that Man, Jesus, has died on Calvary's cross, and thirdly that He rose from the dead - the triumph of Christianity! Now He is in glory. God has received Him up in glory, right into heaven itself. Wonderful climax!

So all things are ready, but are you ready? Has everyone here put their trust in Jesus as their Saviour? Has everyone here their ticket assured for eternity? It is a very solemn thing. The Jewish nation had every favour from God and there are persons also

in the western world who have heard the glad tidings for generations and generations, because God sent the glad tidings largely to the western world and, like the Jews, most have declined it. Now, will you be among those that will decline it because there is a very solemn statement made at the very end “that not one of those men who were invited shall taste of my supper.” That is very solemn. It means that persons who are not saved will be lost.

Now I do not think that persons who listen to the message of God’s free salvation would really want to be lost, but God is laying this supper out as a celebration in view of the forthcoming marriage of His Son, that persons might be ready with a wedding garment on. Of course, Luke does not tell us about the wedding garment: you have to read Matthew 22 – read it when you go home – to find that you require a wedding garment on, that is your fitness in Christ by believing on Him.

Everything is ready then, so we get the guests in. We are having a few marriages this year amongst the company that we are identified with and marriages are always going on generally, I suppose. You just picture it that if you sent out a hundred invitations to guests to come to the wedding, what would happen if one hundred declined or excused themselves? What would you think? You would not be very pleased. Your daughter might not be very pleased either nor her future husband. What do you think God feels? Do you think God is pleased with every excusing? The word is the same as Hebrews 12, the note tells us, as the word given by Moses on the mountain: “they ...declined the word being addressed to them any more”. They “declined the word”. ‘It is not for me’. That is what people in the world will tell you: Christianity is not for me, I am not religious. But it is a matter of life or death, do you not see? Whether you are going to enjoy the celebration of this supper for which God has made every preparation or whether you are going to be left outside and lost. People do not see it that way. Do you see it that way? Are you sure about your salvation - every one of us?

We have to examine whether we have a real living link tonight with Jesus, whether my link is steady, constant, whether my link is in

life. It is a wonderful thing that Jesus came and the things prepared and ready are to bring us into life. These persons were wanting to go on with things down here which are attached to a system that is characterised by death, because all these things eventually will pale off and die. Whether the land or the yoke of oxen or the wife, each is attached to a scene that is characterised by death, but Jesus wants to give you life. God wants to connect you with a scene and a company of persons that is marked by life. The Lord Jesus says in relation to the flock in John 10 that He is “come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly”, John 10: 10, and immediately after that He speaks about His death: “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep”, (v 11). So the things made ready require the death of Christ. Oh what God has gone through in giving His only beloved Son that things might be ready!

I would like you all really to *think* about this: whether you are going to enjoy the company of Jesus in the celebration of this supper-feast or whether you are going to go away tonight and say, No, I have this reason for not believing in Jesus; I have that reason, I will leave it, I will forget, I will just leave it aside, I will not bother. Is that what you would think? How terrible to think that about things that God is offering. He is offering you the very best, forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, offering you justification. He would justify you, not just forgive you by faith in the blood of Jesus because the price was paid in the giving of Jesus' life. That is how we come into life because He gave His life, but God is justifying me because not only does He have the blood of Jesus before His eyes but He has raised Him up. How wonderful that is! How it warms the heart of every believer! You see warm faces here that trust in Jesus and enjoy being justified before God. It is part of this supper, part of the things we enjoy. Men make a great lot of food and the kind of food they eat and get chefs to cook the best and do this and that so that they can enjoy their food. *But what about my soul?* God has a supper that we might come in and enjoy these wonderful things in reconciliation. Our brother was praying for the gospel in the house about being reconciled to God through the death of His Son. That is,

it has cost God the death of His own Son. Do you think He did not love His Son? Of course, He did. Never was one loved so much as the Father loved the Son, and yet He gave Him that He might die for me. Has He died for you? Can you say your sins are forgiven? Can you say you have the gift of the Holy Spirit, because the invitation here is into the house. In the house we find that God is there, God is dwelling: it is God's house. "That my house may be filled", He says. God wants His house filled and it will be filled, but will you be there? Oh, I plead with you, dear friend, that you might think seriously of it and make sure that you will be there.

It comes to this that people excused themselves and went away and so places were vacant and the master of the house says, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring here the poor and crippled and lame and blind." Are you prepared to take that place – "poor and crippled and lame and blind"? It is like what the Lord Jesus said in the sermon on the mount: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for *theirs* is the kingdom of the heavens", Matt 5: 3. Are you "poor and crippled and lame and blind"? It is interesting that these four conditions are the kind of people that you invite into your house (see verse 13): "But when thou makest a feast, call poor, crippled, lame, blind": these are persons who have *accepted* the glad tidings, persons who have *accepted* that they went on in self-will, and were really crippled, that is they acknowledged that they were sinners, but now they are saved. Call them in! God is calling you in tonight on that basis, that you might repent towards God and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. God has made the glad tidings simple for everybody to follow and understand: "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from among the dead", Rom 10: 9. That is what this kingdom of God is: "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." It is those who acknowledge Jesus as their Lord, a new Master.

How long have you served Satan and sin? Oh how many years I served Satan and sin, but Jesus is now my Master because I believe in Him. I put my trust in Him. I follow Him. Is that what *you*

do? What a thing it is to come to Jesus and believe in Him. And then confess Him. Believe in your heart first as a secret transaction between you and God, but then confess Him. That is public, so you tell your neighbours, tell your father and mother, tell your friends.

Thus a testimony is spread. Come into the kingdom of God, a system of rule and organisation with love at the centre. There is no system, no kingdom in this world, where you can eat bread and find love because all is marked by hatred because it is marked by sin, but when you come into the kingdom of God, it is a kingdom of love, a system where Jesus is the centre and where He is loved, where God is loved. Do you not want to come into that to enjoy being forgiven, justified, reconciled to God, and made a son of the Father? God wants you to be that. He does not want you to be a tool of the devil. He does not want you even to excuse yourself to carry on an easy idle life here. He wants you to be compelled to come in. Oh I wish I could compel persons to come in!

“Go out into the ways and fences ...”: that is the next stage. It was not just that there were the poor and crippled – that might refer to the Jews as the testimony went out, firstly by the Lord Jesus, who called in persons who were prepared to acknowledge that they were sinners. It says that the tax-gatherers and sinners were coming to Him. They believed Him. The Pharisees and scribes who knew Moses’ law and knew the prophets and were listening to it in the synagogue every week missed it because they did not believe on Jesus. Then after Jesus was raised and glorified, the testimony went out by the apostles and the people refused that too. They refused it in Jerusalem: James was killed, Peter was imprisoned and Stephen stoned. And God turned to the Gentiles. He went to the “ways and fences”, that is other nations in order to “compel to come in”.

Will God compel you to come in tonight? It is not that God is using force. In church history there were persons that went out with the sword and all sorts of physical means to force people to join the church. That is not the idea at all. The compelling to come in is to persuade you by love to come in: “For the love of the Christ

constrains us”, Paul says to the Corinthians (2 Cor 5: 14) in a different setting, of course. Oh can I constrain you tonight, compel you to come in?

God says, “that my house may be filled”. Do not be left outside. It is a terrible thing to be left out! It is imperative that you come in repentance. Just say to God that you are a sinner. Tell Him privately; tell Him now, if you like, in your heart; find Jesus as a Saviour. He is waiting with His arms outstretched to receive you and bless you, as one forgiven. Have faith in the blood of Jesus! How great these things are in the gospel! What richness it brings! Then there is the blessing of the Holy Spirit in the house. The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost. It says, “it sat upon each one of them”, (Acts 2: 3) and it “filled all the house”. Think of God coming to dwell here in believers. Our lives are changed, because forgiveness makes you different and you have a new Lord in Jesus, One who loves you, One who cares for you, a Friend, a Shepherd, One who can take your hand and make sure you are going the right way as a Friend, One who can as a Shepherd lead you out and go before you to show you the way.

Oh, dear friends, could I compel you to come in? “Compel to come in”: it is God’s word, compel by love. God enjoins all men everywhere to repent. Why does God enjoin you to repent? - because He does not want persons to be lost and come under judgment. Such is God’s love, His desire is for all men to be saved: “compel to come in, that my house may be filled”. God has arranged for us to be in good company, the company of Himself, to know God as our Father, the company of the Lord Jesus, the One who will be eternally a man, and the Holy Spirit; “He shall be with you for ever”, John 14: 16. What company to have! And then the company of all the saints! How can you stay outside? “Compel to come in, that my house may be filled”: what a supper it is! May everybody enjoy it for His Name’s sake!

DUNDEE

2000