

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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MINISTRY MEETING

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Jim Gray

Matthew 18: 1-6, 9-14; 1 Kings 3: 5-9

I want to draw attention to the spirit in which Christians approach a meeting of assembly character. A meeting of assembly character is a very sober matter which has to be regarded with dignity and honour, because the assembly is here to represent Christ in His absence. This chapter is instruction for the time when Christ would not be here, so the representation of Him is in accordance with His mind, the dignity that belongs to Him. It is, you might say, a court of justice, the highest appeal court in the land, and there is a dignity of gathering together in assembly, distinct from all other occasions. The occasion of course where we gather together in assembly is the Lord's Supper on a weekly basis. There is a dignity attached to it and composure in all of us, which is different from our gathering in a normal setting - not that that gives us license to be other than dignified.

The first matter that the Lord draws attention to is to be in the kingdom, "enter into the kingdom of the heavens". I think we need to be persons who have practically entered into the kingdom of the heavens, and that requires that we become as a little child. That is, it is a different kind of attitude from all that is in the world around us as seen amongst unregenerate men - the believer has to act in a different way. He is entering into the kingdom of the heavens as a little child, he is dependent upon the protection of that kingdom and the benefits and rule of that kingdom; he has no will of his own, dependent on Another, dependent on the King, the One who regulates and rules in that kingdom, and that is the Lord Jesus. That is what the Lord Jesus draws attention to here. "Whoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child", - it is a remarkable word, it shows a necessity for all of us to humble ourselves, the flesh has no place in this kingdom. The Lord Jesus humbled Himself, blessed

Man, for the affections of all of us. How He set out to humble Himself, becoming obedient unto death and that the death of the cross, what a Man He is for the affections! Then He says, "whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name, receives me", that is the little child He took in their midst. Then it says, "whosoever shall offend one of these little ones who believe in me"; there is a distinction, that is one who believes; the other little child is a child who sets out certain characteristics of a little child, that it is defenceless in this world, but as entering into the kingdom of the heavens, you come into the protection of that kingdom. Here "whosoever shall offend one of these little ones who believe in me", that is a young believer, a little one who believes in The Lord Jesus takes account of the defenceless character of a little one who believes in Him, that if anyone offend him; how seriously He views it.

In the next section, "if thy hand or foot offend thee, cut it off" (v 8) - that is a line of things that we have to deal with ourselves. As has often been pointed out, you have to deal severely with yourself, but be gracious with another. Severity attaches to myself, if there is something offending me, however much I value it, if it is offending me or hindering me from representing Christ I have to cut it off. I have to respect others. So He says, "do not despise one of these little ones", these persons who are like Christ. He speaks about this in relation to little children, but there is a lesson in it for us all, for He says, "See that ye do not despise one of these little ones; for I say unto you that their angels in the heavens continually behold the face of my Father who is in the heavens". There is a lesson in this for us that we have the same spirit as the Father has towards a little one. The Lord is seeking to inculcate into His disciples the spirit that was in Himself, how He comported Himself, and He would have it in us in relation to severity in ourselves in dealing with the flesh ourselves, but graciousness in dealing with weakness. I am speaking generally here in relation to the chapter bringing out the spirit the Lord would have us to have as Christians approaching an assembly meeting.

He says, "For the Son of man has come to save that which was lost". It is not 'to seek and to save which was lost', but "to save that

which was lost" In this setting, as I understand it, He is contemplating little children before the age of responsibility, but the whole spirit of it is to be inculcated into our hearts. The Lord would have us to take on these features that are seen in the Father who is in heaven. Then He brings out the parable, "If a certain man should have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray"; that anticipates will working, the one who goes astray. It is different from Luke 15, "What man of you having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost, until he find it?" (v 4), that is the responsibility is taken by the Man, that is Christ. That would involve the Lord going into death, He took responsibility, but here the man is not viewed as responsible. "If a certain man should have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray"; he takes on responsibility, but in the one who has gone astray, there is an evidence of will working in that one. He says, "does he not, leaving the ninety and nine on the mountains, go and seek the one that has gone astray?" - what a spirit. I think that has been seen amongst us, I think the Lord would regard us as those kind of persons; we have displayed something of what I have been speaking about. It says, "And if it should come to pass that he find it" - it is not saying for certain that he will find it, "verily I say unto you, he rejoices more because of it than because of the ninety and nine not gone astray". That would be a great joy to our hearts.

I thought in relation to Solomon taking up the responsibilities of a king, that he takes it up in the understanding that, "I am but a little child: I know not to go out and to come in", and so great is the people it says, "And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give to thy servant an understanding heart, to judge thy people, to discern between good and bad". What a spirit to approach an assembly meeting, "I am but a little child: I know not to go out and to come in". How great is God's people, how precious to Him - "cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore to thy servant an understanding heart". It is approaching the

exercises of responsibility. What a spirit to mark us that we look for divine guidance, divine help and discerning, discerning between good and bad. How dignified the judicial process is as seen in the gathering together in assembly, free from any effects of the passions of the flesh, persons who are in the kingdom. Solomon was typical of the man who is in the kingdom of the heavens; he was under the rule of the heavens seeking to govern on the earth to represent God. How responsible we are to go into an assembly occasion to represent God, to represent the Lord so that things are done in a manner that reflects Himself.

May the Lord help us in this as we consider matters. I thought it was appropriate to draw attention to the spirit of the Christian as approaching an assembly meeting.

For His Name's sake.

CONSOLATION

David Brown

Matthew 28: 20 (from: And behold); Haggai 1: 12, 13: 2: 5

We sang of the Lord 'consoling our hearts' and He would do that by His presence. He would give His own touch of reassurance at any time of trouble, any time of need, or indeed at any time. He would say, behold, I am with you all the days". Days might differ. They do differ: there are bright days, there are dark days. The Lord Jesus would give a reassurance to every believer, everyone who has their trust in Him, "I am with you". In Philippians it says, "the Lord is near". How attractive it is that there is One who is with us, who we can turn to at any time and who would give His own touch of grace in any personal troubles, in any family troubles or any assembly troubles. How reassuring to have One who is with us, "I am with you". That is presented "until the completion of the age", the whole dispensation, a dispensation in which there is One who can be depended upon, One who can be called upon, One who would give His own reassurance, His own consolation. How wonderful to have such an enduring promise, "I am with you all the days".

The Lord says also in Haggai, "I am with you". There had been weakness previously in the chapter. The prophetic word had to come in, it had to be brought to bear, and here we have God coming in with His word again, "I am with you". It is a word that comes in as an answer in this chapter, an answer to the fact that they had responded to the prophetic word. The word answering? Are we taking on the energy that was suggested in this word of Haggai, "Go up to the mountain and bring wood and build the house, and I will take pleasure in it"? The word would come. How we need to be helped in our response to it and as we are responsive to it, how wonderful to have the assurance, that touch that would be with our spirit as we would go forward, "I am with you, saith Jehovah". Not only that, He goes on to speak of what is with us, "The word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt". He gives His word - how wonderful that the word is with you, the word of God, He is not leaving, He is not forgetting, He is not abandoning us, He has His word and it is a word that He covenanted. Think of God committing Himself fully to His people, that word remaining. It is what can be depended upon, not only in God Himself, but in His word, "The word that I covenanted with you... and my Spirit", how attractive that the Spirit of God remains among you. How we can be reassured. We can move forward in the testimony among whatever might distract us or disturb us, that "my Spirit remains among you: fear ye not". The Lord would give His word today and His assurance and He would say "fear ye not". He has all our matters in His hand. How wonderful that we can be so fully dependent, and not only dependent upon His power, but conscious of the tenderness with which He would say, "I am with you".

May we be encouraged, for His Name's sake.

(iii) GOD'S WAYS

Robert Trotter

James 5: 11; Job: 1: 1, 37: 11 -17

These verses having in mind God's ways with us. It says in James, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and seen the end of the Lord" - it is a wonderful thing the Lord's end with us. "He that has begun in you a good work will complete it unto Jesus Christ's day" (Phil 1: 6) - "and seen the end of Lord; that the Lord is full of tender compassion and pitiful". I feel I cannot say much about these verses, but feel that there is something in them as to God's ways with us, each one of us. What a way it is! Sometimes we do not understand God's ways. We sang in our hymn of the Spirit "helps us here to understand".

But I would have to say that there are times when I can hardly understand. Things happen, beloved brethren, that you cannot understand, but it says - "the Lord is full of tender compassion and pitiful". How wonderful that is, to have Him with us in the way. What a thing that is to treasure, to have the Lord with us, as has been said, "I am with you all the days".

The scripture that I read in Job shows the kind of man that Job was. As I understand it, Job did not suffer because of His personal failure. This verse brings that out. It says, "this man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and abstained from evil". How he was a person to uphold! I know that once matters began to weigh upon him things probably changed, but this is the kind of man that Job was. I think that God delighted in him, delighted in the character of the man, what he was characteristically. It says that he was "perfect and upright and one that feared God and abstained from evil". We know, of course, that later on it says of Satan, "And Satan answered Jehovah and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?" (v 9). I think that God allowed this to happen. Job went through terrible circumstances, physically too, and did not even have His wife's help in it. She says, "Curse God and die", but the man goes through. God brings him to an end. And reading through the book, you would

never think that he would reach it, but then that is God's ways with us, beloved brethren.

In chapter 37 it speaks of the clouds. We know something of the clouds. The hymn says:

The clouds ye so much dread

We know that it goes on to say that they are big with mercy, but then sometimes, as we are going through things these clouds weigh upon us and weigh us down. It says here, "Whether he cause it to come as a rod" - personally maybe I could understand something of that - "come as a rod or for his land, or in mercy". How wonderful these matters are. I just wanted to call attention to them.

Again it speaks in verse 16, "Dost thou know about the balancings of the clouds" matters are balanced, some may not like that word, but God balances things. I know that, He balances things. It is not all black; it may look that way, but it says, "the wondrous works of him that is perfect in knowledge?" we can leave things in His hand. How great He is! We know what the end of Job was; God gave him twice much. I think that brings in the balancing. What is before us may weigh us down, may look black, but God can work. It says here, "or in mercy". May we be encouraged by these things; Job's history is so interesting, he goes through so much, and he seeks to vindicate himself, but then God through one person - his three friends did not help him, in fact they aggravated matters, and we can do that too - but there was one, Elihu, who put him in touch with God. That is what we need to do. His three friends turned in on himself, they had him occupied with - himself, but Elihu had Job occupied with God Himself and His end.

May we be helped as to these things, for His Name's sake.

Edinburgh

13 February 2001

PRESERVING LIFE

Geoffrey Bailey

1 Kings 3: 6-9, 23-28; Genesis 41: 4,5

Just a short word in relation to these two scriptures relating to the preserving of life. This is a well known scripture in Kings and we see in it the simple yet profound wisdom that God gave to Solomon, one who was not presumptuous in any sense. He says "I am but a little child: I know not to go out and to come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people". I think

Solomon had the secret in these few words when he gives God to understand his apprehension of His people, "thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people". Beloved, God has chosen you and me, and He has set us together with a view to life being manifested amongst us. Solomon was there and he had been put in the position of eminence, he had responsibility and to each has been dealt a certain gift, and there are persons in localities of responsibility. Solomon acknowledges the responsibility that had been placed upon him, "a son who sits upon the throne of David". That great king, that man whom God chose, David; He set aside Saul, a man of demand, a man who thought for himself, a man who took the best for himself, God set him aside and gave it to David, "a man after my heart", Acts 13: 22. How God would portray for us in the scriptures the kind of man that pleases Him. It says in verse 10, "the word pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing". Solomon could have asked for many other things; he got them nevertheless, but on the basis of his humility and acknowledgment of the place that he had been put that he had been put in, a place of responsibility.

The first test is a remarkable, one, two women, two children. One dies, and both claim the living one. You might say it is an intractable problem, but the kings says "Bring me a sword". How wisdom comes into the situation. Solomon says, "Bring me a sword ... Divide the living child in two". I do not think Solomon ever had an intention of doing that. He was in a place of responsibility but he sets a test

and discerns the motherly features. Think of how it speaks of Timothy, "he will care with genuine feeling how the saints get on", Phil 2: 20. Solomon brings to light the true mother, these true sympathising features. She says, "give her the living child and in no wise put it to death". She was its mother! I just felt led to read this scripture because these things can enter into our experience and can be very difficult and yet the solution is to find these features which seek for the preservation and the prosperity of the saints. It goes on to say, "And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to justice". God would delight in that: God delights to manifest that all various wisdom - which He has and it is conferred on a person who is prepared to be lowly, "I am but a little child".

I just thought in Genesis - we read it not long ago - Joseph says, "I am Joseph your brother whom ye sold into Egypt ... God sent me before you to preserve life". Think of all that entered into Joseph's experience, how he came into prison, he was fettered, unjustly imprisoned, how he went through privations. But God was with him because there was that which was right and that which was pure with him. He was sent out seeking the welfare of his brethren. That was the occasion when the brethren said, "here comes this dreamer", that was the occasion of Joseph being taken, he was seeking the welfare of his brethren. Oh that we might seek the welfare of our brethren! It may involve cost, but Joseph was able to say here that, "God sent me before you to preserve life". What a preserver of life he was, a sustainer of life. May we be affected because the Lord Jesus, most supremely so, he came in a lowly guise and if the princes of this age had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (see 1 Cor 2: 8). The One who was the Originator of life, Peter says, "ye slew". The Lord Jesus gave His life that we might live. May we live in the light of that supreme sacrifice and may there be these desires with us to preserve life amongst the saints that none may be lost.

May it be so, for His Name's sake.

Edinburgh

6th February 2001

FAITH

John Brown

Hebrews 11: 1; Romans 10: 17; 8-10; 3: 21-26; S: 1-2; Ephesians 6: 13-17

I would like to speak to you tonight about faith, about why you need it, how you get it and about the blessed Saviour in whom your faith has to be.

Without faith we have nothing. We sang:

Faith, too, that trusts the blood through grace,
From that same love we gain;
Else, sweetly as it suits our case,
The gift had been in vain.

(Hymn 1)

The last line is very sobering. So I would like to speak to you about the necessity of having faith in God. I do not want to bring insecurity into any soul here, quite the opposite, because with faith in Christ you are on sure ground. My desire is that you might be on that sure ground. If you do not have faith in the Lord Jesus, faith in God, faith in something outside yourself, then you have nothing. You have nothing to hold on to, nothing to stop you slipping and sliding with every passing circumstance.

Now, what is faith? It is not a creed. If you were to ask a Moslem, what is your faith? He would say, I believe in Allah and in Mohammed his prophet, and would go on to say other things, and that would be his faith. If you were to ask a minister of the Church of Scotland, what is your faith? he might, although maybe not so much nowadays, recite the Westminster Confession of Faith. Every minister of the Church of Scotland before being ordained is supposed to sign up to the Westminster Confession of Faith. I know that some have done so and they are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, so that is not what faith is. So what is it? Well, the scripture is very plain, it is the conviction of things not seen. Now that is what I

want for myself and for everyone in this room tonight, the conviction of things not seen. There are many voices in this world and many theories, and some of them very attractive and very, very plausible. But faith is the conviction of things not seen. It is something that is secure and sure in the heart of the believer, the conviction of things not seen.

You might say, if that is what it is, I do not have that conviction in my heart. Maybe you would say that tonight. I trust that everyone here will, by the end of this preaching, have the conviction if they do not have it now. You might ask, How do I get it? It may be that, like me, you have grown up in the Christian circle. That is a very great blessing but it may just be that you have heard the gospel over and over again, and the terms of the gospel have become familiar to you, and that is all. It is a blessed matter that the gospel is familiar to you. But, underlying this familiarity with the terms of the gospel, there needs to be this conviction that you can fall back on when the enemy attacks, as attack he will.

So, I want to tell you how you get faith. Romans 10 verse 17 tells you how you get it. "So faith then is by a report, but the report by God's word", and in verse 5, "the word of faith, which we preach". Now I have a great responsibility, standing here tonight, having been asked to preach the Gospel. I have a responsibility to present to you "the word of faith", "Faith then is by a report but the report by God's word". Maybe you have grown up listening to the gospel. Thank God for everyone who has done so. be it for me to denigrate that at all, because faith is by a report and the report by God's word. As listening to the gospel, listening to what God would say to you in the gospel, oh that you might just realise Who it is and what it is that you must have your faith in. "Who shall descend into the abyss? - that is to bring up Christ from among the dead. But what says it? The word is near thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart". How often have you heard the terms of the Gospel? Every person in this room tonight has heard the gospel many times. The children have heard it hundreds of times, the adults have heard the gospel thousands of times. The word is near you. You know the terms of the Gospel. My

desire for myself and for everyone here is that as well as the terms you might have the conviction of things not seen. So that "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, thou shalt be saved". It is simple. You do not have learn the Westminster Confession of Faith. All you have to do is to believe that there is a Man alive heaven who was dead once, that precious Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you believe that He came here? People believe that you can go to Roman historian, Josephus, who wrote the history of the Jewish wars. He wrote about a man called Jesus who appeared in Palestine during such and such a period and gathered many around Him and then was put to death as a criminal. Josephus gives a few lines in his history of the Jewish wars to Jesus. It is accepted as an historical fact that He came here.

I knew of a humanist in Edinburgh who said, 'The bones of Jesus lie somewhere in a grave in Palestine'. Do you believe that? I do not. Jesus is no longer in the grave. He is in heaven, He is alive. That is the conviction of things not seen. Oh, believe in your heart that God has raised Jesus from among the dead. The resurrection of Jesus from among the dead is the cornerstone, the foundation, of what I believe in. I do not know about you. You will have to answer for yourself. Who and what I believe in is founded on the resurrection of a Man who was dead and who did lie in a grave in Palestine. He was put in that tomb after being executed as a criminal as Josephus recorded. But He is not there now. I believe that, and that for me is the conviction of things not seen. You see, you cannot argue for faith from logic. I suppose some of us have tried to do that. Faith is not logic; it is not illogical, but it is not logic. You cannot take a rational man and argue with him and as a result produce faith in him, because faith is the gift of God. As we said yesterday, He has dealt to each a measure of faith. From that point of view it is a sovereign gift of God, but it comes by believing, by believing that Jesus is no longer in the grave. He was here as a Man and we will speak in a minute about what kind of Man He was, but Jesus is no longer dead. He is alive. That is the foundation, the kernel, the crux

of Christianity. If you have that in your heart, you have the conviction of things not seen.

Oh, what a difference it makes! Consider the disciples at the end of the period of Jesus' public service. They were frightened when the crowd came into that garden in Gethsemane. They ran away. They were dispirited. Peter went into the palace of the high priest and he denied the Lord. What a dreadful thing that was for Peter to do, the man who had said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God", and then he failed. As far as the public testimony of Jesus was concerned, it ended with failure, an execution on a cross, on a hill outside Jerusalem. Was that the end? No, it was not. Jesus came out of that tomb. Jesus was raised from the dead and I believe that. I want you to believe it. I want you to have a living link with that blessed Man, where He is now, at the right-hand of God.

Now, what an effect His resurrection had on these disciples. Take a look at the history at the end of the gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles. There was Peter denying his Lord in the palace of Caiaphas. Three times he denied Him. First of all, he was challenged about Him and he said, 'No I have nothing to do with Him' and someone said, 'Yes you have, you have a Galilean accent, you are one of them', and he said, 'No I am not'. Three times he denied the Lord and then the cock crew. Jesus turned round and looked at him and he wept bitterly. Jesus was raised from the dead and He appeared to his disciples, what a difference it made. They were re-energised by the power of resurrection life. So the man who denied Jesus thrice in the palace of Caiaphas repented, just a week or two later he was standing there in the street of Jerusalem preaching Him, and three thousand were converted on one occasion and five thousand converted on another. What made the difference? The resurrection of Jesus made the difference. What a glorious thing it is that we have a risen Saviour. What a difference He makes to the lives of persons like Peter, poor failing Peter, who denied the Lord and then he repented and preaching now he was preaching in power. What made the difference? The resurrection of his Saviour, his link with a risen Man. Oh what a glorious thing it is, the

resurrection. When they came to roll the stone away, the tomb was already empty. It was already rolled aside as a witness to the fact of the resurrection, to the fact that Jesus was already out of death. What a glorious thing it is that God has raised Him from among the dead. Believe that, and you will be saved. Let your affections be touched, dear friend, let it work in your heart, for with the heart is believed to righteousness. Strange thing, you might say, how do you believe in your heart? You might have thought it might have said with the mind is believed to righteousness but what a difference it made to Peter's affections. Peter stood up there and he represented his Saviour in that preaching in Jerusalem. His heart was outflowing towards his fellow Jews, towards those men who, only a few weeks before, had put his Saviour to death. Indeed he could say that to them, he was very bold, "the originator of life ye slew. Peter challenged them with that. What a difference the resurrection made to Peter. What a difference it can make to you and me. I desire, dear friend that your faith may be in a risen Man.

I would like to speak to you now about having your faith in what that Man has done. I read in chapter 3 of Romans where it speaks of having faith in His blood. What a way Jesus went! A real Man, a blessed Man, the Son of God in His Person. What a story it is; the coming into this scene of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. What a stoop from heaven, that stoop into manhood, touching humanity at its lowest form; He emptied Himself. What a work was the work of Jesus! "All have sinned", it says in this passage, "and come short of the glory of God". You need the blood, dear friend, you need faith in that blood. We sang:

Faith, too, that trusts the blood through grace

Do you trust that blood? Oh that everyone here might have their faith in Jesus and trust in the efficacy of what He has done on that cross. He was executed as far as men were concerned, put to death, a criminal's death with a thief on either side of Him and then buried. But He is alive now, and God is eternally satisfied with the work that He did there.

We spoke a little this afternoon of the suffering that pressed upon the spirit of Jesus as He did the work that had been committed to Him. The Father had committed the work to Him, and Jesus did it. You can have your faith in that work. God is satisfied with Jesus and with what He did there. It speaks of the whole scope of the work of Jesus. He gave His own body on the cross. He died there for me. Oh that you might be able to say that, and have faith in the Person and in the work of Jesus. What a work that was, these three hours when He bore every single one of the sins that I have committed. I will speak of it personally, every single one of the sins that I have committed. I cannot remember half of them but Jesus bore them all. Every one of them, in His own body. What did that mean for Him? You think of the number of persons that were in His heart. The hymn says:

Borne in Thy heart through death's dark tide.

Oh, dear friend that you might realise the magnitude of that work on the cross and have your faith in it. What the Lord Jesus did there He did for the pleasure of God and what he did there was for your blessing and for my blessing. So these sins which otherwise would stand between me and God were borne by Jesus. I believe that God cannot point the finger at me now. You ask, can you say that? Yes, I can, because what Jesus did there He did for me. I want you to have that faith and to be able to say 'He did it for me. He died for me. He bore my sins in own body on that cross'. Paul said it, and I trust that you might be able to say it too.

Let these three hours of darkness affect you afresh, when the sun was darkened on the whole face of the earth and Jesus bore that awful judgment of God against sin. Then the three hours being ended. He bowed His head and delivered up His spirit. Men did not take Jesus' life from Him. When the soldiers came to break their legs, as the cruel custom was (oh the brutality of crucifixion), they found that Jesus was already dead. He had delivered up His spirit. Men crucified Him, but He went there Himself. We have often been reminded that He could have gone to heaven from the mount of transfiguration, but did not. He went that way of suffering love and He went that way for you. He said to Pilate that He could have had

twelve legions of angels if He had wanted. He could have stepped down from that cross. Think of the jeers of the Jews who should have appreciated Him as their Messiah. Those to whom He came, His own and they received Him not. They said "He is the king of Israel, He saved others, let Him save himself". The mocking, the scorn, that was that was piled on Jesus as He hung there with the nails through His hands and feet, suffering for you! Oh that you might have your faith in that precious work.

He died; He died for you and for me. In a final act of wanton brutality, one of the soldiers who had come to break their legs, and seeing that Jesus was already dead, plunged his spear into the side of the dead Saviour and forthwith there came out blood and water. "Whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in His blood, for the showing forth of His righteousness, in respect of the passing of the sins that had taken place before". Oh how many sins have there been in my history, but they have all been washed away, cleansed by that precious blood. Oh the work of Jesus on that cross; we shall praise God throughout all eternity for the work of Jesus on the cross. I desire that you might come tonight and put your trust in Jesus. You will come to Him one day. You can come to Him tonight as a Saviour. If you do not, I have to tell you that you will come before Him as a Judge and He will judge the living and the dead.

Tonight you can put your trust, put your faith in Him. There is no other, I do not want just to speak others, I want to speak of Jesus. He is worthy of your unmitigated faith, your undivided faith. Oh that you might put your trust in that blessed One. It speaks here of the "showing forth of His righteousness in the present time so that He should be just". That is God: God is just. You say, 'Can God be Just? Passing by all these sins I have committed'. Yes he can, because of the work of Jesus.

So Jesus went that way of suffering, He died. He shed His precious blood and then He was buried for me. This is the meaning of baptism. What I am, the state in me that has caused so much trouble, so much displeasure to God, is put away in the burial of Jesus. That whole order of man was put away for ever in these three

days and three nights, as the prophetic scripture say, in the heart of the earth. Then, as I have already said, He was raised from that tomb, raised for my justification. Do you know that, that Jesus was raised for your justification? Do you know that Jesus was raised for you? He shed His blood for you, He was buried for you, and He was raised for you, raised for your justification. So God is just, and justifies him that is of the faith of Jesus. What a wonderful thing it is to be of the faith of Jesus. I thank God that I can say that I am of the faith of Jesus and trust that you can too.

Now, in chapter 5, we read, "Therefore having been justified on the principle of faith we have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ". There is no other source of peace. The best that this world can give you is the absence of strife and they call that peace. But it is not real peace because the cause of the strife has not been dealt with. Only Jesus can give you real peace. Have you peace towards God? Can you come to Him on your knees in your bedroom and speak to God and know that there is no cloud between you and Him because of what Jesus has done, because of that completed work? What a wonderful thing it is, being justified by God on the principle of faith.

That was the light that shone out at the Reformation. For centuries men had laboured in darkness, trying to find a way of salvation. Men had stumbled here and there in the Dark Ages trying to find a way of salvation, locking themselves in monasteries, flagellating themselves, hardly eating anything, up at all hours of the night for rituals of prayers and penance and all of these things, and it availed them nothing. Certainly, there was some light in that darkness. Bernard of Clairvaux knew Jesus. He wrote, 'Jesus, the very thought of Thee'. He had that light but generally there was darkness. Then came the Reformation and the light of justification by faith shone out. Oh that you may have it, justification by faith. Not justification by anything you can do or ever could do but in what Jesus has done and in what He is to God. It does not depend on you: it depends on that blessed One. But you have to believe, you have to put your trust in Him. You might say, well if God gives a

measure of faith, perhaps He will not give a measure of faith to me. But the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ is towards all.

So the gospel tonight goes out and no one can say that God does not have me in mind for salvation. No one can say that because the gospel is "towards all". John chapter 3 verse 16 shows that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever". That "whosoever" includes you, me and every single person. There are six thousand million people in this world tonight, and not one of them can say this is not for me. God has salvation, justification by faith, and peace in view for every one. It is available to you by putting your faith in the Person and work of Jesus. So it is by Him we have access by faith, "into this favour in which we stand and we boast in hope of the glory of God. Faith is the way into all that and into all we have enjoying this weekend. We have spoken of many wonderful things and the Spirit has helped to open my mind and my heart to the wonderful things of God. The foundation for all of them is faith.

Well, I turn now to Ephesians 6, because I want to speak about the shield of faith. You may be a believer, dear young friend. You may know what it is to put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. You have said earlier in your life, I believe that Jesus died for me, you have accepted Him into your heart. And then the enemy comes along and he throws one of these inflamed darts at you. That word means fiery. There is a burning tip on it and he throws it at you. The enemy did that in the Garden of Eden, he came to Eve and he said to her "Has God said?" That was an inflamed dart of the wicked one and it went home. Well, dear friend, you have the shield of faith, indeed you have the panoply of God. We read about standing in this favour in Romans 5, and here is how to stand. You take to yourself the panoply of God so that you may be able to withstand in the evil day. We are in an evil day now; we are in a day where the enemy would seek to deflect us from the faith that I have been speaking of. The apostle has written many wonderful things to the Ephesians. Now he says, "Stand therefore, having girt about your loins with truth, having the breastplate of righteousness, the preparation of the

glad tidings on your feet, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit", and then it says, "besides all these, having taken the shield of faith with which ye will be able to quench all the inflamed darts of the wicked one". So, the next time the enemy says to you 'Has God said?' use the faith which God has given you and say, I believe in the Lord Jesus. How the enemy would love to use circumstances to turn us aside from our links with God. The enemy would use these things, these inflamed darts, to get into our hearts and undermine our faith. But it is the shield of faith with which you "be able to quench these inflamed darts. Have no doubt about it, you will be able, if you use the faith God has given you. He has given you a measure of faith. If you have put your trust in Jesus then God has given you a measure of faith. Use it; use it as a shield. You will be able to quench these inflamed darts.

What a wonderful thing faith is. It is the basis for everything. It is the basis for the service of God. We sang that hymn this morning:

By faith we see
Jesus with highest honour crowned

I was confirmed by it as we sang it at the end of the meeting when our hearts were swelling with praise to God. So, faith is the underpinning of everything we have, faith in a risen Man, faith in His work. May we be strengthened and encouraged and grounded in these things so that we might not be moved about and so that we might have our hearts expanded. May it be so for His Name's sake.

Bexley

October 2000

THE MAN OF GOD'S APPOINTING

John Spinks

Genesis 4: 25,26; 5: 18-24; Isaiah 53: 7-10

We have been reading in Genesis locally, a very interesting book which gives the origin of things. It is always an important principle in God's ways, to go back to the origin. We were reading last week of the wonderful pronouncement that God made about the seed of the woman. Whenever sin came in, immediately the pronouncement was made, not exactly a promise but a divine pronouncement, that "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall crush thy head and thou shalt crush his heel", Gen 3: 15. It was looking forward of course to the Lord coming in, true Seed of the woman, the Lord coming in to humanity in that way, to undo the works of the devil, to bind the strong man, to annul him who had the power of death. What a wonderful thing it is to think of the Lord coming in to this scene in that way.

So as time goes on Eve acquires Cain. She says about him, "I have acquired a man with Jehovah" Gen 4: 1. Possibly she thought that this was the promised seed, but it was not so. She had to wait. She found that Cain was not what she had been expecting. And then Abel is born; he was the seed of the woman, the true type of Christ, the One who came to die. That is why I read in from Isaiah 53 where it says that, "He was cut off out of the land of the living". I think that speaks of Abel, the man who suffered and died, and the one who suffered for righteousness. That is what it brings out in the New Testament where we find that "he obtained testimony of being righteous", Heb 11: 4. He was righteous, while Cain was of the wicked one. We find in Genesis the beginning of these two lines. I think that Abel represented a suffering Christ, the One who came to suffer and die. He was the true Seed of the woman. He came here to die, to take up the liabilities of the race, and He was cut out of the land of the living. How affecting that is; the only One who had the right to live is the One who was cut off by death. Then it goes on to say, "Who shall declare his generation?" No one could do that; it stands unique, that blessed perfect humanity of the Lord Jesus as coming into flesh and blood conditions in order to remove the man who offended and cleanse the whole universe from sin.

I think that we have to see that there is an aspect of the Lord that no one else takes part in. "Who shall declare his generation?" What a generation it was, of His own order. But then I thought it was encouraging to see that in verse 25 of Genesis 4 we get Seth coming in. Eve says, "For God has appointed me another seed instead of Abel". I think Seth represents Christ as the Man of God's appointing. Abel represents the man who has been cut off by death and Seth represents the Man who has been appointed by God. I think it is Christ in resurrection. And then we find that as soon as Seth comes on to view, we get his son mentioned. The seed is connected with persons here in the scene of testimony, linked livingly with a Man out of death. I trust I am making this clear, as these thoughts come into my mind. I believe that the true seed of Christ is found here in a suffering position. When Christ died on the cross, the enemy thought that that was the end of Him. He went out in humiliation and death. But the beginning of Acts shows that God has appointed Him instead of Abel. Christ was cut off by death, cut off from the land of the living, but the great testimony in the beginning of Acts is to the Man of God's appointing. Peter says, "God has made Him, is Jesus whom ye have crucified" (that would relate to Abel) "both Lord and Christ", Acts 2: 36. I think that is like Seth, the man of God's appointing. And it is very interesting that whenever you get Seth coming, you get Enosh mentioned, which means weak mortal man, and then people began to call on the name of Jehovah. So that there is an immediate link between a heavenly and glorified Christ, and a feeble and oppressed people here, a people who are not going through in their own power but call on the name of Jehovah. And it culminates in Enoch, a man who is able to be taken away from this scene. I think it is a great thing to see that there is a very wonderful moral link between Seth and this generation that follows and culminates in principle in Enoch, a man who is taken up into glory.

That is the present position. The saints are here in weak mortal conditions but there is a living link by the Spirit with the Man of God's appointing, and it is going to culminate in a people who are going to be

taken out of this scene to the place where they belong. We need to see the way in which God works in order to bring about His great thoughts so that Christ, the Mann who has been set aside, is still represented here in glory. May the Lord encourage us thoughts, for His Name's sake.

Grangemouth

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