

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

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THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

John 11: 30-46

Mark 14: 32-42; 15: 33-38

BL I wondered if we could look at the sufferings of Christ. It is a tremendous subject. However far we may progress in the truth it is a subject that I do not think we can ever really get away from. It is something that is to continue to affect us as we consider what it cost the Lord Jesus. He is spoken of in Isaiah as “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief”, Isa 53: 3. It would affect our hearts as we consider these things and know what the Lord endured.

We read in John. Think of the feelings of the Lord that are seen here and displayed. He was moved, deeply moved in spirit, troubled. He weeps. We are given to see that. How much the Lord endured because of man's condition. We may say He was “acquainted with grief”. Here He is “acquainted with grief”. There was much suffering that the Lord had to endure when He came into this scene because of who He was. Think of that blessed One, God Himself, coming into this scene, taking up a condition of flesh and blood. He was able to take account beforehand of the condition of things, but think how, as becoming Man, He could see at first hand how the race was affected. How He must have felt that. There are many instances, and I trust the brethren may be free to bring them in, of what the Lord endured and suffered because of man's condition as He passed through this scene. I just read this one in John's gospel.

Think of what it is leading up to, what He had to endure from the hands of a sin-hating God. Think of that moment at Gethsemane, what lay before Him. He went through in spirit what He was about to endure in actuality at the cross, and we read of that time too, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Think of how the Lord Jesus felt that at that time. In John, the ark is approaching the Jordan, the concentrated power of death was before Him.

I trust that we may get help in our time together that we may be freshly affected by the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. I think they are calculated to soften our hearts. Do you think we could get some help along these lines?

JR John would have the family in mind, and how what had come in, sin and its consequences affected the Lord, and He would understand

the effect this had on the family.

BL Yes, you see that here. There are three in this family that are spoken of, Martha and Mary and Lazarus. Death has come and that family link has been broken. Death has come in. How we see that here. The Lord allowed it to happen, did He not? He stayed away. I think what you say is helpful. John has the family of God in mind, has He not, and it is to be complete.

RB Paul, when he writes to the saints at Philippi, speaks about having fellowship with His sufferings, Phil 3: 10. Could you say something about that?

BL Well, it is not something that is to be strange to us, is it? We are to have some understanding of them and there is that which we are to enter into. There is that which we cannot enter into, but there is that which we are to enter into. But say more yourself.

RB There are His sufferings that we cannot have part in, but there were His sufferings in life. I wondered if that is what Paul had in mind, what the Lord suffered in His life. Is that what we have to have fellowship with?

BL Yes, I think so. There is that which comes in where we read as to on the cross. There is that which we cannot enter into, there is that which was unique to the Lord Jesus, but as we see what He has gone through and suffered for us, suffering would not be strange to us.

JAS Do the depths of His feelings bring out the sinless character of His Person?

BL I think so, yes. The Lord could feel things as no-one else could feel them, because of that. We can be affected by things, and we can feel things, and rightly so, but because of the perfection of the Lord Jesus He could feel them in a way far beyond that which we ever can. He feels the affront to God that sin is. We in our measure can come into that, but the Lord Jesus is supreme.

JAS I wondered that, if it is something we need to develop with ourselves, the consciousness of what these sufferings are in the sight of God. There is the sorrow of the loss of Lazarus, the family sorrow in that too, but the fact is that it was the consequence of sin. So maybe we need to look more at the depth of God's feelings when we think about these sufferings.

BL Yes, that is what I hoped. When we see what it has cost the Lord Jesus to deal with everything, what He has endured for our sakes, then we are to feel things more. I suppose it would develop holiness with us, would it?

JAG It is a way that we may have to go. The Lord, as you said earlier, knew that Lazarus was sick, and it was for the glory of God. He had been dead for four days. Do you think that the complete exercise would be that as in the family of God we have our links in resurrection, on the other side of death? He shows His feelings and the power of His love, but the intensity of His support before there is the manifestation of His power in resurrection. What do you think of that?

BL Well, when He comes, the two sisters say the same thing, do they not? They say it in a different way, but they both say the same thing, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died", and that would be true, but the Lord had more in mind. I think we see what you say as to our links in resurrection. It is not just simply life being maintained here in the same order and condition as it was before. Our links are with the Lord in resurrection, and I think that is what He is really bringing before us here, is it not?

JAG So that I do not think we can have an alabaster box before going through this exercise. Mary has His support in priestly grace as He walks with her to the tomb. Martha has the language, and we all have that, I suppose, but to be able to appreciate the feelings of Christ and how He feels is a real test as to how near we are to Him. This is the only scripture where we ever read of the Lord shedding tears apart from Gethsemane.

BL Mary affects the Lord, does she not? It is Mary that affects the Lord. Martha does not affect the Lord in the same way. Mary is the one that is going through the exercise. She is feeling it, she is feeling the sorrow, and then she would feel the joy too later on. The alabaster box is filled with ointment. It would have the two ingredients, would it not? It would have the sorrow and it would have the joy. She has gone through them both.

JR Should our exercises result in what the Lord says here, "thou shouldest see the glory of God". The distinctiveness of His glory as the Son of God comes in to view, "marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead", Romans 1: 4. Should we seek that the exercises through which the Lord may

put us are to result in a positive manifestation of His glory?

BL Well, I think the way that Mary moves in this section is very instructive for us. We can perhaps be like Martha, in a hurry for things to happen, whereas Mary is restful. She has the sorrow but she is restful. She waits until she gets this word that the Lord calls her and then she goes, and she is able to influence others. There are those that follow with her. They did not follow Martha, they followed Mary. I think it has been said that Mary is a spiritual person. She would be able to influence persons rightly so that they follow her to where the Lord is.

EJM Do you think that, when the Lord says, “Lazarus, come forth”, it is the power of the resurrection: “to know him and the power of his resurrection” (Phil.3:10), so that we are brought into liberty really, are we not?

BL Well, the family is restored, but more than restored, is it not? “Lazarus, come forth”. We have often been reminded that if He had stood at that tomb and said, 'Come forth all', all that were in death would have come forth, but for Lazarus, it was a selective resurrection.

RB Matthew, when quoting from Isaiah 53, says, “Himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases”, Matt 8: 17. Do you think Mary was close enough to Him to have understanding how He felt taking up our infirmities?

BL Yes, there is more in Mary. She has certainly got an understanding. She says the same thing as Martha does, but she falls at the Lord's feet. It is almost a rebuke from Martha, is it not, but Mary has a greater impression of who is there?

RB The Lord feels the sufferings of humanity more than any other because He enters into them in the perfection of His humanity, does He not, and He feels them more than we do?

BL Absolutely.

JW The family felt what had come in because of how it affected them, but the Lord felt it much more deeply. It says that He was “deeply moved in spirit, and was troubled”. He came to undo the works of the devil and He felt the whole situation that had come in, do you think?

BL Yes, the Lord knew what was going to take place here, and He waited these days. He knew what was going to happen, but think of the way the Lord is affected by the sorrow of Mary and Martha, too, and

these persons. "He saw her weeping and the Jews who came with her weeping". That affects the Lord Jesus, not simply that Lazarus is dead but the effect that that has on the others. That is what affects the Lord Jesus here. He was feeling for us.

GG I was thinking that. The Jews think that the Lord had sympathy on natural lines, but His feelings go far beyond that. Do we need to be near the Lord and know His feelings and come to understand His feelings? Mary is in that position, is she not? She is close to Him, and she has some understanding of what His feelings are.

BL I think the Lord appreciates that, does He not? The Lord is looking for something. There is something in Mary that would be pleasing to the Lord. There is something formed in her. The Lord met a case of death in Luke's Gospel in the city of Nain, a widow bringing out her only son. The Lord had compassion there, but it is love in John, is it not? The feelings that the Lord expresses are deeper in this gospel.

JAG There may have been some unbelief, although they knew the Lord. They put Lazarus in the grave, they put on the grave clothes, they put on the stone. They knew Jesus had power to raise him. We often act like that, and then we have to take off the grave clothes that we have put on, would you say? It emphasised the Lord's priesthood, and it is emphasised on the basis of the sufferings, that is how He feels for persons in a way that no mere man could possibly feel.

BL Yes, that is helpful. He is able to intercede on our behalf. He has been tested, tried. He has gone through everything in like manner, sin apart.

RB Is Mary in sympathy with the Lord in the matter as a result of her typically feeding on the oblation? It was the food for the priest, was it not? How He was tried and tested in every way brought out the sweet-smelling savour. Do you think Mary had been feeding on that, and therefore she can understand something of the Lord's feelings and His sufferings in the circumstance that the family was being passed through?

BL Yes, I am sure that is right; so there are many ways we can feed on the Lord Jesus and the oblation is one of them. It helps us in a measure to come out like Him, does it not, as we feed on Him?

RB It would bring out body feelings, would it not? If one member suffer we all suffer. How often we say that, but do we really enter in

sympathetically with our brethren when they are suffering, suffering in their bodies, suffering with their work or suffering in various ways? Can we enter sympathetically into their circumstances with them?

BL Well, I think if we are truly affected by the sufferings of Christ and our hearts are softened in that way, we can take account of what is going on with those that we know or those that we do not know. There are so many. We would think of them all, would we not? Martha has not really taken in what the Lord has said to her. The Lord said to her in the section before we read, "I am the resurrection and the life: He that believes on me, though he have died, shall live; and every one who lives and believes on me shall never die. Believest thou this? She says to him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God" (vv 25-27), but then there seems to be something lacking in her, does there not? She is still thinking on natural lines. She is looking to the last day. The believer is not only waiting for the last day.

JD The teaching of the epistles helps us to take off the grave clothes. Do you think that would help as we follow instructions that come in as we get free of one order of things and come into another?

BL Yes, it is interesting that the Lord commands, but the Lord does not do it, He lets them do it. Lazarus does not do it himself. What would you say? Are we to help one another?

JD I cannot say too much about it, but I think there is an onus on ourselves to work out some of these moral and spiritual exercises and as we do, and as we progress in the epistles, what is individual becomes collective, do you think, when there is help from one another too?

BL Yes, because in the next chapter they made the Lord a supper. As a result of this exercise that is gone through, the family is complete and the Lord is the Centre of an occasion with them.

EJM Colossians says that He might have the first place (chap 1: 18), that He might be everything and in all, chap 3:11. The Lord puts us through these things so that He might have a greater place with us, do you think?

BL Yes, this was allowed to happen, and we are not tested beyond what we are able for. How gracious the Lord is. Think of all the support He is to them here, resulting in the glory of God.

EJM The Song of Songs says, “Awake, north wind, and come, thou south; Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow forth. Let my beloved come into his garden”, chap 4: 16. She was exercised, was she not, that the Lord might have His place, and then He says, “I am come into my garden”, chap 5: 1.

BL There is an area where the Lord can enjoy something, is there not? It is what we speak of, what is for the Lord's own heart.

JAG They have to take away the stone and expose the whole thing, and see how far this has gone. It has even gone into corruption. He is four days there, which is more than three days which is death, burial and resurrection. This is the absoluteness of death here.

BL You wonder, do you not, at the end of the section that we read, “Many therefore of the Jews ... saw what he had done, believed on him; but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done”? There is still unbelief. You can hardly take it in, can you? It is a tremendous thing that there is no question that Lazarus was dead, and that he was now raised, and yet there is still unbelief.

JAG The Lord helps us to look the thing fully in the face and see what is actually factual, death and corruption. Martha says, “He stinks already”. Well, the Lord knew that and if you take away the stone, you will certainly feel the smell, but it brings out the glory of the Son of God, the power of it. There is nothing impossible for the Lord in this area; we would speak now of moral death.

JAS The glory of God is connected with resurrection. Our brother spoke of moral death, and as we come through it ourselves we see and appreciate the glory of God.

BL Well, that is the result in view. It is what is for God.

JAG We have all had to have the grave clothes taken off us, and we would know how that is done because we have had it done, and that shows that the fullness of the gospel does that. It sets us up in life and we stand on our feet.

BL Well, it has often been said that we do not hear of Lazarus saying anything, but in the next chapter he is present, is he not?

AW Is there something of this arrived at when Martha says, “I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God”. But there is something more than that, something arrived at out of resurrection. She is a bit

more serviceable there, as you commented.

BL Yes, we may have the truth objectively before us, and we can say the right things, but do we really believe them? That is what tested Martha, was it not? Did she really believe what she said? If she believed it then what she said in verse 39 would not have come in there. “Jesus says to her, Did I not say to thee, that if thou shouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?”

MM Lazarus had a handkerchief bound round his face. That is to be removed, is it, to see the glory of Christ? That is what we want to view when we enter into the service of God to glimpse His glory. That is the Centre, is it not?

JAG It is a wonderful demonstration of power, because it is obvious that he did not walk out.

JW Romans says He is “marked out Son of God in power ... by resurrection of the dead” (Rom 1: 4). Do you think we need to have faith in what He is able to do as the Son of God?

BL Yes, it is the Son of God that the man in chapter 9 had come to, was it not? There is some doubt in these persons here, is there not? He made the blind man see, “Could not this man, who has opened the eyes of the blind man, have caused that this man also should not have died?” The Son of God, the One who opened the eyes of the blind man, is the One who takes Lazarus out of the grave, is He not?

JW Yes, I think so. I was just thinking of what He did in chapter 5. He says, “An hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs shall hear his voice”, v 28. In a certain sense we have faith as to that, but He also says, “The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard shall live”, v 25; that would be current, do you think?

BL That is helpful. Well, the Son of God is what He is on God's side. It is the title He has as taking manhood, but it is what He is on God's side. The glory here is for God. Lazarus and the family come into the benefit of it, but the end result is for God, is it not?

JMcK Say more as to the matter of “Loose him, and let him go”. There is no reflection on the Lord's work. He had brought Lazarus back from the dead, but do you think there is something the saints have to do, and He gives them credit of having the knowledge and ability to do it.

BL I suppose it shows the condition he was in, does it not? Yes, the

Lord could have done that but He leaves it for others to do. I suppose it is so that He can loose him and let him go that Lazarus is freed, set at liberty.

RB Do you think we need to understand why the Lord remained two days in verse 6? He could have come right away but He remained two days. Do you think if we wait for the Lord in exercise we can intelligently enter into the matter when it comes up?

BL Well, the disciples were with the Lord at the beginning of the chapter, and they did not quite understand what was taking place, and why they were waiting. The Lord had to speak to them plainly. It may be that the Lord needs to do that to us. We are sometimes a bit slow.

RB But had the Lord not waited we would never have got that manifestation of Himself in verse 25. Do you think as we wait upon the Lord in exercise we come away with a fresh impression of His glory, so that we can enter intelligently into the matter?

BL I am sure that should be the case.

RB Because we really get a view of Him as the great Accomplisher of all the divine will and all the divine counsels, "I am the resurrection and the life".

AMcK It says in one of the Gospels that the Lord took His disciples, "And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things", Mark 8: 31. Do you think that would connect with what was said about being intelligent as to it? All these exercises that are passed through are for the saints to learn, is that right?

BL He showed them. He did not just tell them about it, but He showed them. Everything that the Lord did while He was here, whether it was curing diseases, making people see, whatever it was, such as raising Lazarus here, it was all showing, it is what the Lord did. They should have been able to take account of that. It was a time of instruction for them, and it all cost the Lord something, did it not?

AMcK It brought about a reproof for Peter, did it not? He did not catch on at all, but then the Lord has a reproof for him that he was not thinking of the things of God, he was thinking of the things of men. There is a reference here from Martha, "The teacher is come and calls thee" so the Lord is ready to teach, is He not, so that these things should become instilled into us?

BL Well, we should be able to take account of all these things that the Lord did and what it cost Him because it meant that He had to die, did it not? In healing these persons, the cost was that the Lord would have to die; it meant His sufferings.

CMcK Do you think it is as we are conscious of the Lord's love for us as the motivation behind His sufferings? This gospel is written by one who knew that, as he leaned on the Lord's breast and was conscious of the Lord's love for him. And Mary knew that too.

BL Yes, that is why I think it is grace and compassion which are emphasised in Luke, but it is love in John and John was the one who knew the Lord's love and he is able to write about it in a way that is to affect each one of us.

We should move on to Mark. Matthew and Mark are the pressure gospels. Gethsemane, as the place is named, I understand means 'winepress'; and it involved pressure for the Lord. In Luke's gospel it is the Mount of Olives, the place where He was accustomed to go to speak with His Father, the elevated area where the Lord found rest in speaking with His Father. In John's gospel it is simply a garden because John has the Lord before us, it is not exactly where He is, but it is who is there. But here the place is named. This is pressure like no other pressure. It is to affect us.

GG He goes away from them slightly. "He says to his disciples, Sit here while I shall pray ... And, going forward a little, he fell upon the earth; and he prayed ..." He moved away from His disciples. What would you say about that?

BL Well, as the ark approached the Jordan there were two thousand cubits, was there not? You might say that would be the eleven here; Peter and James and John went a little further on than the others, but there is still some distance. They are close enough to be able to take account of something, are they not, but there is that measure of distance?

GG Do you think it might emphasise that He was alone in that suffering, was He not? Although we can contemplate it, He was alone in it.

BL That is good, because when we come to the cross there were three hours of darkness. But here there is something which we can contemplate.

RB Do you think that the contemplation of what is in this section would help us when we are going through suffering and pressure? I oft-times wonder why the Lord took Peter, James and John. Do you think the Lord was teaching them how to behave under pressure, how to rely on the Father? What do you think?

BL They were not able for it, were they? But the Lord goes through the whole matter. Think of what was before Him, and He goes through the whole matter in His spirit; He goes through it with the Father. Satan is here too, is he not?

RB So Peter in his epistle can speak of having Christ as a model.

BL Well, we will maybe come to that later. "He prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass away from him ... take away this cup from me". That brings out the perfection of His humanity, does it not? The One who was there was a perfect Man. What lay before Him, He shrank from. It brings out the perfection of His humanity. It is the Father's will that is paramount, is it not? But yet in the perfection of His manhood, what lay before Him was terrible and awful, and He felt that. That is why He asked, but it is not possible. Think of that! Think of the love which lies behind everything, a love that took the Lord Jesus this way, because if the Lord had not gone we could not have come into any blessing at all.

JAG We actually put Him there.

BL He asks three times. What would you say about that?

JAG Well, I think it is sufficient to know the Father's will. Paul asks three times, "I thrice besought the Lord", 2 Cor 12: 8. Persevere in prayer is the general thought.

BL The Lord has His answer here, does He not? It is the only section of scripture that we have where the Lord uses the words, "Abba, Father". Think of that, He took this cup from the hands of His Father. He speaks to Him here as, "Abba, Father".

JAG He goes through the whole exercise of the three hours of darkness in His spirit, and He is ready for it when it comes. Tremendous thing!

BL He goes through it with the Father here because when we come to the forsaking it is God, is it not?

JAG “He who ... has not spared his own Son”.

AMcK It is very affecting what you say, “My soul is full of grief even unto death”. The reality of the matter was there right before Him, was it not? And then it says, “Going forward a little, he fell upon the earth”. We do not read of the Lord moving like this before, do we, but “He fell upon the earth”? Very shortly He would fall into the ground and die, John 12: 24.

BL So that He brings forth much fruit but the time that He is alone has to be gone through first. The Lord had never been alone.

JAG He is rending the cup of death out of the hands of the devil. The devil is here with all his power.

BL Yes, I think it is important to see that. Satan had tempted the Lord in all things in the temptations at the beginning of His pathway of service (Luke 4: 13), and now here we are coming near to the end of His pathway of service and Satan comes back with all his armoury. Think of the power of death. It is what Satan had, was it not? It was Satan's power at this moment here, but the Lord is going to go in and defeat him and annul him who had the might of death, Heb 2:14. Satan is bringing all this to bear on the Lord at this time.

MM So the power that is strong as death is the power of love (SofS, 8: 6), and was shown in Abraham and Isaac typically, Gen 22: 2. But for the Lord there was no substitute.

BL Abraham and Isaac, “they went both of them together”, Gen 22: 8. The Father and the Son are going on here together.

RB That is why the Spirit of God gives us the burnt-offering before He gives us the oblation in Leviticus 1 and 2.

BL The burnt-offering is first, and what is for God in it.

RB In this section, He asks that the cup be taken from Him; but the burnt-offering gives us, “becoming obedient even unto death”, Phil 2: 8.

JR What is the bearing in this section? We referred to the family in John. What is the teaching for us in Mark?

BL Well, the Lord is Servant in Mark, is He not? He was the perfect Servant, a Model for us in that, a Model for us in everything. It is not only what the Lord does in Mark, it is the way He does it. What would you say yourself?

JR I thought that as a recovered person, Mark would appreciate in a deeper way what the Lord's sufferings meant.

BL Well I am sure that is right.

JW Hebrews says, "For consider well him ...", Heb 12: 3.

BL And John, "We have contemplated his glory", John 1: 14.

JW I do not think we could consider this without it having some effect on us.

BL Well, that was my exercise that in considering these wonderful matters it would soften our hearts. When we see what it cost the Lord Jesus to deal with sin and sins, we are to be affected so that as we feel what it has cost the Lord, we are to have a greater judgment of these things ourselves.

EJM Paul would say of the sin-offering, "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us", 2 Cor 5: 21. Our feelings have to be affected as we contemplate it. He says prophetically, "The waters encompassed me, to the soul", Jonah 2: 5. He went through it in a feeling way, did He not, and we are to be affected too?

JAG We can see the absolute perfection of Christ, that we find here in complete submission. It is something like the fragrant incense on the mercy-seat on the Day of Atonement. There is no flaw and He is without blemish. It is all here, and on the cross the depth of holiness is absolute.

BL Yes, that is good. So that outwardly it may seem that it is man's hour. Judas is just about to come and betray Him, but the timing is all in God's hand, is it not? It is all in the Father's hand. The timing is perfect. "Sleep on now, and take your rest. It is enough; the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is delivered up into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us go; behold, he that delivers me up has drawn nigh." There is no delay, but it is the Father's timing, it is not man's timing. It is something else to consider in the sufferings of the Lord. Before this section He had had to tell Peter, He had had to tell them all, "But Peter said to him, Even if all should be offended, yet not I. And Jesus says to him, Verily I say to thee, that thou to-day, in this night, before the cock shall crow twice, thou shalt thrice deny me. But he said so much exceedingly the more, If I should have to die with thee, I will in no wise deny thee. And likewise said they all too." Then they all fled. The Lord was going where no-one

could follow. Think of how He must have felt the betrayal of Judas too.

Then we get His physical sufferings which come at the hands of the Romans in being nailed to the cross. I finished with Mark 15. We see the Lord here, He stood alone. At any time the Lord addresses His Father. He addressed God as Father throughout His three years of service; but, as forsaken on the cross, He says, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

AB Can you help us as to why He says, "My God"?

BL Well, it is God's righteous judgment of sin, is it not? He was bearing that. The Father does not judge. It is God's judgment, between God and man.

AB Yes, I think so, God and man. The tabernacle of God is to be with man, so that the thought of God and man goes on to eternity. So the death and the sufferings that Jesus went through took all that into account.

BL Yes, God's judgment is exhausted, is it not, completely exhausted?

JAG He has taken on man's responsibility, the responsibility of the whole race. It is not relationship, it is God and man.

GG It is often said that He measured sin's distance. That was the awfulness of sin; on the other hand it was the upholding of what was holy, what was right, all God's righteousness. It is quite a thing to contemplate that measurement.

BL That is helpful.

"Thou didst measure then sin's distance" (Hymn 298).

No-one could measure it like the Lord could and it would bring out the perfection of His humanity again. It depends on who He is as God, but He took it on as Man. He is bearing the righteous judgment of God.

JAG And He completes it, so that God has nothing more to say to sin, ever.

BL The cross is penal, is it not? His atoning sufferings are endured on the cross, but the atoning work involved that One who was made sin had to be buried, and the man that sinned was to be put out of God's sight forever. Christ's blood had to be shed. That is the atoning work.

JR Are the active sufferings on the cross distinguished from His sufferings in the grave?

BL Yes, I think that is helpful.

JAG "Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pains of death" (Acts 2: 24). Sins are forgiven but sin is condemned.

RB Do you think as you contemplate it you get a sense in your soul of the awfulness of the Lord's feelings as He was made the very thing that He abhorred? "Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin", Isa 53:10.

BL Well there is that which we cannot go into. There is that which is beyond us. In our measure, as we feel things, how much more it must have been to the Lord. It raises the question, how does that affect me?

JD I was only thinking it has been said that the Lord suffered from man on account of righteousness, and from God on account of sin. Do you think it brings out how full the sufferings of Christ were? The question for me at least is how much I have contemplated or entered into an appreciation of them.

BL Well, it is a tremendous subject. It is one that is inexhaustible and it is to affect our hearts.

DWS You get some impression too of God's feelings in the matter. Someone said He judged the thing He hated most in the One He loved the most. In the way Christ went, He took the full wrath of God and in doing so took our sins out of His sight. It is wonderful.

BL I think it has also been said that He was never more pleasing to the Father than at this moment. He was there in complete obedience and subjection to the will of Another.

MM His sufferings and work are foundational in view of securing everything for God. It was remarked earlier about the time when the Lord began to show to the disciples that He must suffer, in Matthew 16, and it is immediately after He reveals the rock on which He is going to build the assembly, and it is so that He might secure that vv 18, 21.

BL Yes. Without that He would have been in God's presence as Man forever but alone, but think of the result, what has been secured.

Well, I trust we may be affected and our hearts may be softened

as we consider that the Lord had to go this way for me.

RB Mr Darby was asked the question as to what the Lord was thinking about fallen humanity when He made this cry. Mr Darby said, 'No, He was thinking about His God' but, he added, 'God was thinking about you and me'.

BL I wondered about that. The Lord knew the answer to this, did He not, and He knew why He was being forsaken, but He asks this question. Do you think it was so that those that would hear have written it down for us to affect us as to the distance, the depth, what it involved for the Lord to be forsaken of God.

GG The words are given us in the original, the very words the Lord Himself used on the cross.

BL Yes. There are a few instances where that is the case, but here is one that stands out, the very words of the Lord Himself. So the Lord knows when the matter is finished, does He not? He had authority to lay down His life and that is what He does. The matter is complete. He knows that that cup has been drained, the very last drop has been drained, the cup of God's wrath.

Peterhead

14 October 2006

R Bain, Buckie; A Buchan, Peterhead; J Drummond, Aberdeen; J A Gardiner, Aberdeen; G Gaskin, Aberdeen; B Lovie, Aberdeen; A McKay, Brechin; C McKay, Brechin; J McKay, Brechin; E J Mair, Buckie; M Metcalfe, Buckie; J Ritchie, Peterhead; D W Scougal, Edinburgh; J A Shearer, Aberdeen; A Walker, Dundee; J Webster, Fraserburgh

THE LAMB AND THE LAMB'S WIFE

Bill Lovie

Revelation 5: 1-7; 19: 6-9; 21:9-11

I seek help, dear brethren, to say something as to the Lamb and the Lamb's wife. Revelation is a book which is very interesting. It tells us what is going to take place when the church has gone. John is told, too, at the outset to write what he has seen, what he sees, and the things that are, things that have been and things that are about to be after these, Rev 1:19. That is what the book is taken up with. The things that have been - I suppose you could say we have been occupied with them this afternoon, the Lord Jesus, the way He has gone, His sufferings. The things that are - that is what there is now; chapters 2 and 3 are the things that are, especially chapter 3. The last four assemblies, as we have been taught, go on together and go on to the end. Think of the Lord Jesus looking round, looking round these assemblies, thinking of how He is able to speak to them. He has taken account of what is in them. Oh, dear brethren, what would He say if He looked in our localities? What could He commend? How He delights to commend! He does that first, does He not, mentions what He can commend? But then, too, "But I have against thee", Rev 2:20. The call is to repent. How solemn! What would the Lord say about my locality? He is able to take account of it at any instant, any moment. What is He saying? Do we need to repent? There are only two assemblies that are not spoken of as needing to repent. One is Smyrna and it might be said that that day is gone - a day of terrible persecution against the Christians, and Philadelphia. If you say you do not need to repent, you are putting yourself in Philadelphia and if you claim to be in Philadelphia, the danger is you are Laodicean. How solemn!

The book changes a little at the beginning of chapter 4. John is called to "Come up here" (v1), an allusion, I would understand, to the rapture, "Come up here". That is what we are waiting for. That is what we sang of, we are waiting for the Lord to come, we are going to hear His voice. Have we heard His voice? Has each one in this room heard His voice, heard His appeal in love in the glad tidings, "Come to me", Matt 11:28? Have you heard that? Have you heard that appeal? I believe every one in this room has heard it, but have you answered it? Because if you have not answered it, at the next cry, "Come up here", you will not be there. How solemn! And yet God in His goodness and grace is giving you a fresh opportunity now. You say, 'This is not a

gospel preaching'. No, but it is important. I happened to pick something up this morning that spoke about Noah, Noah and the eight souls that were in the ark, and the rain coming down. All these persons in the rain were going higher up, as the waters were rising, going further up the hill, further and further up the hill as the waters rose. They would say, 'I wish I was in that ark', but it was too late. Dear friend, at the moment it is not too late for you, it is not too late. God in His goodness is giving you an opportunity now. You might say, 'Well, it is the gospel tomorrow'. Who says you have got tomorrow? You have got now. Oh dear friends, think of what we talked over in the reading, what the Lord Jesus endured. That was for you, that was for me. Have you come to know Him as your Saviour? If you have not come to know Him as your Saviour, what we are going to talk about has no bearing on you. "Come up here". Are you ready for that? If that call was to go out now before this address is finished, would you be ready for it? "Immediately I became in the Spirit", Rev 4:2. What a viewpoint John gets. If you look around the scene that we are in, we take account of things, how terrible they are. Oft-times I think we have earth's viewpoint as to them. Let us get heaven's viewpoint, "Come up here, and I will shew thee ..." The church is going to go, the church is going to leave this scene, the church is going to be with Christ in glory. What a moment! And we have this book so that we know what takes place on the earth after the church has gone. But also, I believe we are to be regulated by these things now.

And John becomes in the Spirit. "Come up here ... Immediately I became in the Spirit". What is the first thing he sees? He sees a throne in heaven, and he sees One sitting on it. Whatever goes on in the earth, or has gone on in the earth, the throne is unchanged and it is unchanging, as is the One who sits upon it. What a marvellous matter, as we consider all that is going on around us, if we get a glimpse into heaven we find that the throne is undisturbed. What a marvellous matter that is, dear brethren. That is the first thing John sees. Then he sees those round about it, these living creatures. What do they speak to us of? The lion would speak of strength, a calf would speak of dependency and tenderness, a man would speak of intelligence, and a flying eagle would speak of swiftness. Now these things have to mark us and are seen in heaven. Then there are these elders, twenty-four elders. What they represent is intelligence, wisdom, experience, and all this is in complete accordance with the throne, and Him who sits on it. Can we say that? Can we say that this afternoon? Are we in complete accordance with the throne and the One who sits on it? What

is going to take place, the ways of God relating to the earth. What is going to take place is in the book and it has not been opened yet. It is written within and on the back, the fullness of the ways of God in relation to His dealings with the earth. All that is displeasurable to Him is going to be taken away. Who is going to do it? "Who is worthy to open the book, and to break its seals?" The search goes on. No one! No one was able. Who is going to take up God's desires for the earth? Men? Governments? Think of the weakness of government, think of what they try to do, what they set out to do, and how largely they fail, how largely what they do is reactive. They react to a situation or a need, and they try to deal with it after it has taken place, try to make sure things are dealt with properly and see that things will not happen again. For the blessing of men they may try to do that, but here is God's book. Is anyone able to deal with things in the way that God is looking to do it? No one. No one is found able, no one is found worthy. John weeps. I wondered about that. John knew the Lord. John knew who He was, and yet he weeps. It is almost as if he had forgotten about the Lord, but there is one of the elders, who was in the secret of it. Are we in the secret of what God is going to do? Are we in the secret of what God is able to do? The elders are. Think of what they represent. "Do not weep". Immediately a word of comfort is brought in, and then he tells him, "Behold, the lion which is of the tribe of Juda, the root of David". What a One! This is the Lord Jesus, this is the One, "the lion which is of the tribe of Juda", that is the One who is victorious, who "shall have annulled all rule and all authority and power", 1 Cor 15: 24. He shall annul it! He is the One who is the victorious One, the One who has been in death, the One who has laid down His life for you and for me, and has come out triumphant, who has bound the strong man and spoiled his goods. He has come out of the grave triumphant, risen victorious. He has the keys of death and of Hades. What a Victor!

Blest Victor, Thou, o'er every power malign (Hymn 16)

That is the Lion of the tribe of Juda.

What a One He is, the Root of David - that is His deity. That is the deity of the Lord, the Lord is God. "I this day have begotten thee" (Psalm 2: 7) relates to time, as Man. There is no begetting in a past eternity. The Lord is God, the Root of David. What a One He is! Offspring of David too, that relates to His humanity. I suppose that is what He has accomplished as the Lion of the tribe of Juda. Think of David, think of the true David. Think of what David secured for God,

and so much more the true David. “Behold, the lion which is of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, has overcome so as to open the book, and its seven seals”. How wonderful it is! The Lord is going to take up all that God has in mind for the earth in perfection.

This book is written. There will not be any bits scored out. God will not have to change anything. Man would put in *errata*, but there is nothing of that. This book is written within and on the back, and it is sealed. God has sealed it and said that is what is going to happen, and the Lord Jesus is the One who is going to open the book and everything is going to take place under His hand. What a One He is, the Lion of the tribe of Juda!

Yet when John looks again he does not see a lion, he sees a Lamb. Think of the suffering character of what the Lamb speaks to us of, “the meekness and gentleness of the Christ”, 2 Cor 10:1. Think of what a lamb portrays to us, what is defenceless, what is meek, what is untainted. The Lamb speaks to us of that. That is what John sees, “a Lamb, standing, as slain”. Think of what we have been occupied with already this afternoon, the way the Lord Jesus has gone for us, the Lamb. Think of what was lamb-like, “he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and was as a sheep dumb before her shearers, and he opened not his mouth”, Is 53:7. Think of what the Lord Jesus endured at the hands of men. We did not go into what happened at the court of Pilate before the chief priest and the Jews. Think of what He endured in a lamb-like character. Think of who He was, the Root of David. Think of who was there. “He opened not his mouth”. Our brother referred to Peter in the reading, He left us a model through suffering. The Lord is a model for us in everything. How He is a model for us in suffering! How quickly we feel we have been hard done by, how quickly the flesh rises up in us to justify ourselves, and the Lord is a model in suffering. Think of the way that He went, “he opened not his mouth”. Think of that time, standing before these men, how He accepted it all. He had to go that way because He had to carry out the work of salvation and redemption, “a Lamb standing, as slain”. Does it affect your heart that this is the One who has gone that way, and who is the One who is going to open the book? “A Lamb standing, as slain, having seven horns”; it speaks of the perfection of power, seven horns. The Lord was crucified in weakness. Outwardly it was weakness, that was what was outward. Morally, of course, there is no weakness in the Lord Jesus but outwardly He was crucified in weakness. There is no weakness now, seven horns, the

perfection of power. All that God has in mind is going to be carried out in power and in perfection. "The seven Spirits of God which are sent into all the earth"; seven eyes, which are able to take account of everything perfectly and carry it out. Oh, what a One He is! That is the Lamb and all that His suffering speaks to us of, and He is going to have a vessel that is suitable to Him in that character.

That brings us to His wife. Think of the Lamb, and the Lamb's wife. The assembly is the Lamb's wife, and how suitable it is as we consider that the One who has suffered should have one who is able to answer to Him on the line of suffering. How suitable that is. Do we consider it? How much suffering there is at the present time. We spoke of the church at Smyrna earlier. We might say that day is gone now. We are not persecuted in that way any more, and yet there are areas where such persecution is continuing. I know of an Iranian, a believer, a Christian. He has been in this country for many years and where he comes from in Iran there have been Christian believers for almost two thousand years. There have been believers, Christians, in that place since before there have been in our own country; and they are being persecuted. If they do not convert to Islam, some of them are being slain. These things are still going on. Think of the way the Lamb's wife is being formed at the present time. She is being formed in suffering; so these things continue. I wonder how much that word to the overcomer in Smyrna means to these people, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give to thee the crown of life", Rev 2:10. What an encouragement! I suppose you could say the history of the testimony, the history of the assembly, has been marked by suffering. Many of the apostles were martyred. Think of the age of the martyrs. In the last century or so brethren have known what it is to have financial hardship. Think of the present moment with many passing through suffering in their bodies. Why? It is so that this vessel is prepared to be suitable to Christ as the Lamb's wife. It is not the wife of the Son of God, it is the Lamb's wife. So there is suffering, her suffering. Paul says to Timothy, "Take thy share in suffering", 2 Tim 2:3. Think of what the Lord suffered supremely. We do not have to suffer much compared to the way that the Lord suffered. "Take thy share in suffering". Suffering is something that we shrink from. I feel tested even to speak about it. How little I know about it. Suffering is something that naturally we would shrink from, but we are exhorted to take our share in it so that these features that are suitable to the Lamb may come out in us at the present moment. These things are being formed at the present time.

In chapter 19, “rejoice and exult... for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready”. What is wifely is going on now. The Lord is absent from this scene; the Lord is in glory: the Lord is installed there in glory. What a place it is! The assembly is here on earth. It is the time of His absence, the time of His public rejection. That is now, but His assembly is here. That which is precious to Him is here. Being a believer in the Lord Jesus, and being under the shelter of His precious blood, having the gift of the Spirit, you are part of that vessel, the assembly; you are part of it. So here the time is coming, “the marriage of the Lamb is come”. We enjoy a wedding. Naturally speaking it is a time of great enjoyment. We look forward to going to weddings. Here is a wedding. Is everyone here in this room going to be at it? If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus you will be at it. If you know the forgiveness of your sins, you are going to be at it, but not only at it, dear young one. You will form part of this wonderful vessel that is the bride. Think of that. You are not there simply as a guest, you are part of this vessel that forms the bride. How wonderful! What a moment, and yet we can know something of it now “Let us rejoice and exult ... for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready”. In the scripture we read that readying has taken place, but at this moment she is making herself ready. She is not going to be taken unawares, she is making herself ready. “And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and pure; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints”.

It says in the note that it is actual righteousness, it is not imputed. There is that which is imputed. As being a believer in the Lord Jesus, righteousness is imputed to you, but this is practical righteousness. What does that mean? What does practical mean? That means it is what is worked out now, the bride is making her wedding dress now; that is what Mr Coates says, Vol 3 p198. Have you got part in this? We should have part in it, each one of us should have part in it. You may say, 'Well, I am not sure that I am able to do very much'. The dear young ones go round and speak to the brethren after the meetings. Why do they do it? Because they want to, because they love the brethren. Yes, but more than that, they do it, I believe, because they love the Lord Jesus and all that He has done. You may say, 'That is the simplest thing'. The youngest one here can do something like that. That is a stitch in this wonderful garment. Dear brethren, I believe something as simple as that would be a stitch in this garment. The older we get the more responsible we are. Sometimes we do things

because we feel we have to do them. That is not what is looked for here. The righteousnesses of the saints is what you are doing because you love the Lord Jesus, it is not duty. The motive behind it all is love. Think of the love that has been displayed to us. How does it affect our hearts? Are we able to answer in any way, in the smallest measure it may be: a cup of cold water to a thirsty one, a prayer for a needy saint? These are all stitches in this clothing. You may say, 'There are times that I do not feel that the brethren appreciate me'. You do what is right, you go on in love for the Lord. You may even go further than that. Perhaps you may say that you have been badly treated. You do what is right in love for the Lord.

Another matter of practical righteousnesses is partaking of the Lord's Supper, I believe. The Lord has desires that we should be there, and partake of the Supper in the time of His absence. It is the time of the Lord's absence, we are looking forward to Him coming again. This day will be gone, this day will be forever over, the opportunity will be gone. We will be forever with Him, and how wonderful that is. But at the present moment weekly, let it not become ritualistic with us. Sometimes perhaps we can be like that, but each time we partake of the Lord's supper I believe that is another stitch in this garment. How wonderful!

You are doing what you do in love for the Lord, and that comes out in expression in what you do to the brethren; how we act with one another may be the way in which it comes out. Whatever we do, it may involve suffering. We are not to shrink from that. We are not to be taken aback by it, dear brethren. So this wedding garment is being made. How suitable it is! Do we enjoy that every Lord's day? "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready". Think of what we are making ready for. Are we making ready for it tomorrow, so that we can enjoy union with Christ? The marriage of the Lamb, can we touch what anticipates it - perhaps fleetingly, perhaps just for a moment? We can touch it, and we do touch it. What we have in Revelation is actuality, but how we can enjoy these things now. "The marriage of the Lamb is come". You know, this is not display, this is what is for Christ Himself; this is what is for the Lamb, the Lamb's wife. This is what is for Him. There are others that are going to be here, other families, I think, "Blessed are they who are called to the supper of the marriage of the Lamb". There are other families in heaven that are going to be there. What a wonderful time! We are going to be there as

part of this wonderful vessel. How wonderful! Everything that is here is pleasing to Christ, everything is pleasing, everything is in complete accordance with His own desires, everything is suitable. The washing of water by the word that has taken place in the present dispensation has had its effect. The judgement seat is past for each individual who is part of the assembly; they have looked back with Christ on all the way, and everything is in complete accordance with Him. There is nothing on her save what is pleasing to Him. What a moment! Think of what is for God's own heart, think of what is for His own heart. Think of this vessel which is a complement to Him as the Lamb. These things are to be gone through now. Are we able for it? That is the question I raise with myself.

What we come on to in chapter 21 is the time of display, "I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the Spirit". John was already in the Spirit. Here is a further matter, "he set me on a great and high mountain", what elevation! Do we know what elevation like this is, and to be able to take account of this scene? What a scene it is! It is a scene of display. You know the Lord Jesus, the Lamb: "I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife", the one who is in complete accordance and suitability to the Lamb. 'I am going to shew it to you', the angel says to John. It is going to be shown to a wondering world. She is going to be the vessel of administration in the millennium, a thousand years of rule. The assembly is the holy city, Jerusalem. He is going to administer for a thousand years. She is qualified to do it because she is the Lamb's wife. She has known what it is to suffer. She has known what it is in the time of the Lord's absence to be standing for His rights, and now she is fitted for display. What a moment! Think of the Lord, think of the delight that this must be to the Lord. The Lord is the Lamb who opened not His mouth, Acts 8:32. Think of that! Are you looking for vindication? No. He was vindicated when He was raised by the glory of the Father. He was further vindicated when He was taken up into heaven and installed in glory, and here is this public vindication. How long has the Lord waited for it? He is still waiting for it. Oh, what a wonderful matter this is. Here is display. Here is where all that has been formed in suffering in the present time is going to come out in display. How suitable this vessel is to the Lamb. Oh, dear brethren, are we being formed by this at the present time? Are we able to endure sufferings, how many and varied they are, so that we are suitable to come out as the Lamb's wife? The beginning of the chapter is the eternal day. It does not speak of the

Lamb and the Lamb's wife there because what we have is the tabernacle of God, it is God dwelling with men; but the time of display, what it will be.

Well, dear brethren, I trust we know something of these things, and I trust that we are able to endure suffering. As we look on the Lord Jesus as the One who is the model and as we look forward to what lies before us. Indeed, we are looking for Him to come. How patiently the Lord Jesus is waiting. How patient He is, waiting to see His church complete in His presence. The Lord is waiting for that, and we should be waiting, waiting patiently too for this moment when He is going to come out and reign, reign “from the river unto the ends of the earth”, Ps 72:8. What a time! And the assembly, the Lamb's wife, is going to be there as His bride, wholly suitable to Him, reigning with Him. Oh, what an answer to His suffering!

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

Peterhead

14 October 2006

WITH ME IN PARADISE

John N Darby

Luke 23 v 33-44

It is good to have from the mouth of the Lord Himself the testimony received by the malefactor on the cross: "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise". His hope had not gone so far as that. The grace of God always goes further than our thoughts. We are so used to judge His grace according to our own hearts that we have only a very poor idea of its extent. Everything is concentrated in this scene: the certainty of salvation, the iniquity of man's heart, and the work of Christ in the heart.

The world took pleasure in putting Jesus as low as possible. His goodness and mercy, having caught the attention of the Jews, became their opportunity for making Him as despicable as possible, to the point of putting Him on a level with malefactors. His claim to being the Son of God also provoked their insults. They could not deny that Jesus had saved others, but the natural heart hates the gospel, and when they see Jesus on the cross they mock Him, whilst recognising that He had saved others, because He did not save Himself. The world always seeks the appearance of success. If we wish to be Christians we must take our part in being despised by the world. Jesus was the holy and faithful witness, which is why He was put in the lowest place, even though He was God's elect. "Holy and faithful" are the two names also given to each Christian and in taking them on we share Christ's place. Even one of the malefactors takes the opportunity to mock Him. The most miserable of men, whom the world would tread underfoot, place Jesus in a position to be the object of their contempt. Even one dying could despise the Lord Jesus. Look at the natural heart of man when it is laid bare by the cross of Christ!

The Son of God is despised by the world, but it is on the way to paradise and He does not want to enter there alone. He made the cross the gateway to paradise, because He wanted others to enter with Him. Coming down from paradise, His will placed Him on the cross where men nailed Him, but there He gave His life in love so that sinners might find salvation and enter paradise with Him. People in the world think it is only the righteous who enter, but if only the righteous entered, would that have given any joy to the Lord's heart? What refreshed His heart was being able to say to the malefactor, "shalt thou be *with me*".

He comforted the heart of the malefactor, but He also comforted Himself by saying "with me", because He did not come to save the righteous but sinners. The malefactor would not have been able to enter there, nor been at home there, had Jesus not been with him. The poor malefactor is the consolation and the reward of Jesus' soul on the cross.

It is said that a malefactor was saved on the cross so that no one need despair, and that there was *only one* saved so that no one may be presumptuous. But no one can be saved in any other way than the malefactor, and none of those listening to me tonight have shown as much faith and piety as this malefactor. He does not seek any other relief than to be with Jesus in His kingdom. He is occupied with his sins, with the grace of Jesus and with the joy of being with Him, and not at all by his own suffering. The unbelieving malefactor says, "Save thyself, and us." He thinks only of his current miserable circumstances on the cross and wants to be taken out of them. His companion rebukes him severely. The conscience must be *awakened* in order to rebuke sin, to speak with boldness to a sinner of the sin that we have ourselves committed. A washed conscience is needed even more. Peter denied the Saviour; later, he accused the Jews of the sin that he had himself committed in much more disgraceful circumstances (Acts 3). He said with a loud voice in front of all the people, "Ye denied the holy and righteous one". To rebuke sin in such a way when we are sinners ourselves, we need a purified conscience. It is easy for one who believes himself to be righteous to rebuke sin, but the converted malefactor recognises that he is as guilty as the other one. He already has the beginning of wisdom, that is, the fear of God and with this fear men's opinion is of little importance. The fear of God replaces the fear of man and frees us from concerns about the world's opinion of us and our reputation here - because there is no sadder bondage than that of one's own reputation.

"We indeed justly". When some chastisement comes upon us we excuse ourselves, blame our circumstances. The malefactor recognises that he deserves the shame and the terrible chastisement that has come upon him. Do we have in our hearts such grace, truth, fear of God and self-judgement? The malefactor has the truth in his conscience, and moreover his heart is subject. To be shown up in front of everyone as a malefactor is not easy to bear. A truly broken heart can only show great subjection in such circumstances. "But this man has

done nothing amiss". In the court of the high priest, Peter had not dared to say this. The disciples who all fled had not dared say it. How did the malefactor know it? Had he been His companion? No, but he had a knowledge that comes from the Holy Spirit and which, by a ray of light in the soul, makes us know the character and the life of Jesus. He saw that, as being of God, Jesus was without sin. He was a good judge of this because from the moment that God teaches us there is a certainty in the heart, a clarity of view, a moral clarity. When the Holy Spirit teaches us and the conscience is awakened, Jesus makes Himself known and justifies Himself to our souls. If the malefactor had compared Jesus to others, with the high priest for example, he would not have been able to judge Him. We cannot judge God's Word. It is the Word which judges us; we are judged by the perfection, by the light, by Christ. In one word, we do not need to be told what the light is when we possess it. From the moment we have the Word, we are blind if we cannot say, "this man has done nothing amiss". We cannot be persuaded that we do not see, when we do see. When God gives us eyes and the light, we have a perfect certainty.

"Lord..." How did he know that Jesus was Lord? The high priest did not know it, but the malefactor recognises Him as such. The *Lord* on the *cross* - this throws light on all that you are. It can only be explained by the perfect love of God towards sinful man. Why would the Lord be on the cross if the world walked as it should? There is then some great disorder. The Lord on the cross gives the lie to everything that the wisdom of the world invents but it also announces the truth that God is love, even for sinners. It is a great fact in which I find the great love of God who takes up sin.

"Remember me". The affections of the malefactor are completely changed; he forgets his misery and desires just one thing, that Jesus should remember him in His glory. He recognises that Jesus is the Lord who will come again in glory. To desire that Jesus should remember me implies confidence in Him. Conscience had spoken previously, but when it finds itself in the presence of the infinite love of God, it is not troubled by sin. The soul finds confidence and asks Jesus to remember him. Jesus had taken possession of the malefactor's heart, because he could say: the Lord is beside me; sin placed me on the cross; love placed Jesus there. The malefactor is confident that he will be the object of Jesus' love when He returns. If our heart is not broken and we have no consciousness of sin, we seek pleasure and a

better situation in the world, but when we are judged before God all these other things disappear. There is a manifestation of a love so great that the heart, affected by the love of God, leaves its preoccupations. It is when you see that you are guilty before God that you desire to be the object of the love of Jesus.

Jesus' response puts the seal on all the Spirit's work; it shows us that the work of Christ is so perfect that the malefactor can, through faith in the Lord Jesus, enter paradise today. The malefactor was not expecting anything before the coming of Jesus in His kingdom, but he learns that he is accepted according to the complete acceptance of Christ, who, after having put Himself on the same level as the malefactor, entered into paradise according to the Father's acceptance.

Jesus says, "with me". This is even greater joy than simply being in paradise. Jesus has acquired rights for Himself. He has won us to be with Him, to have the same life, the same glory, all that He acquired as man. Such is the efficacy of the cross of Christ!

When we understand the truth that Christ died for sinners, our soul is able to enter paradise. It is possible that we may not enter straight away, that we have a difficult path to tread, but by the efficacy of the blood of Christ the sinner has the same right as Jesus and the malefactor to enter into paradise. We are as clear of sin as this man in the presence of God. There are not two Christs, nor two different efficacies of His blood.

We have seen in this passage the heart of man who despises everything, even if he is a crucified malefactor. We have seen the work accomplished in the heart and the perfect certainty which the work of Jesus gives: 'today thou shalt be with me'!

Beloved, may the fear of God replace the fear of man in your hearts, and may Jesus be your light, your salvation and your joy!

Translated from "*Le Messager Evangelique*"

THE THINGS THAT JESUS DID

G. Allan Brown

John 21:24 - 25

I was touched in the hymn we sang together by the fact that we could say of Jesus “of Thee we ne’er would tire” (Hymn 447). How many things He did! It just came to mind as we were singing of these wonderful things that He did. Think of that woman in Luke 7. He says, “Her many sins are forgiven”, v 47. Surely we could put ourselves in that place, those whose sins have been forgiven. That is one of the great things that He did, in some ways the greatest, because it involved His death and suffering, it involved the abandonment and all that it was for the Lord Jesus to be forsaken of God on the cross! That was one of the things He did.

He healed the blind man (Mark 10: 50-53). That is another thing that He did. How wonderful that one who had been living in a world of darkness should come into the joy of light, and the first person that that man saw was Jesus. What a thought that, like ourselves who were in darkness morally, when the Lord touched him the very first thing that came into his vision was the glorious Man who had met his need and brought light and joy into his life.

Then there were also those who were bereaved. Think of that family at Bethany when their brother died. It was hard to accept, was it not, that he had died? Even the disciples found it hard when the Lord said, “Lazarus, our friend, is fallen asleep”, but “Jesus... said to them plainly, Lazarus has died”, (John 11:11, 14). What a bereavement that was, and who could find the answer to it? It is another one of the things that Jesus did: He raised Lazarus, and brought peace and joy, and a kind of life that had never been known before, into that household. How many things Jesus did!

Think of the lepers He healed and persons He met in their infirmities. Even late at night when everyone else had gone away and it was time to go to bed, time to sleep, He was still working there, even at night. It says that they came to Him and He healed them all (Matt 8 v 16; Mark 1: 32 34). What a wonderful Person Jesus is! That is just the simple touch that has come to me as we have been singing that hymn,

“Jesus, of Thee we ne’er would tire!”.

How many things He has done! How great He is! What a wonderful

Person we know! Can that not fill our hearts, dear brethren? Because He is going to fill our hearts, fill our lives, and fill our souls eternally. Think of that eternity itself! It says in the verse that we read that the world itself cannot contain the things that Jesus did. What has He done in your life? What has He done in my life? Think of the ransomed myriads who will fill eternity. They will all be able to tell you about things that Jesus did to them. I think eternity itself will be filled out with the recounting of these wonderful things.

John says, "I suppose that not even the world itself would contain the books written". This earth, this world, is not all that big really. We maybe think it is a big place, but when you look at the universe in all its immensity, this tiny world is not all that big. But even if you could imagine I have sometimes thought of this, though it might seem facetious to say it but if you could imagine this world with books and books and books piled up over the whole face of this earth, how many millions of books would there be piled up on the face of this small planet? And yet the things that were written in them would not be able to contain the things that Jesus did. What a wonderful Person Jesus is! That is just a simple impression that I have, but I would like to leave it with the brethren:

"Jesus, of Thee we ne'er would tire!

There is just so much in that blessed Person that He will fill eternity!

May He fill our hearts now!

Edinburgh

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