

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 12

March 2008

CONTENTS

“Make Me a Sanctuary”

Robert Taylor
Page 1

Restoration and Renewal

Ben Eastwood
Page 21

The Day of Grace

John Speirs
Page 12

Prayer

Robert Trotter
Page 25

The Effect of The Life of Christ

Jim T. Brown (Grangemouth)
Page 28

“MAKE ME A SANCTUARY”

Robert Taylor

Exodus 25: 8-9 to “thereof”

I use these verses as an appeal to us from the Lord of glory, despised and rejected by men. Here He is saying, “And they shall make me a sanctuary”. He is confident that they would do it. How gloriously they did! He counted on them having heard His voice. Are you willing tonight to make Him a sanctuary? The word is addressed to the very youngest. You have a heart and He wants to fill it. The song says,

Room for pleasure, room for business,
But for Christ the Crucified,
Not a place that He can enter,
In the heart for which He died?

That would not be anybody here, I am sure, but as Paul says to the Corinthians, “let *your* heart also expand itself”, 2 Cor 6: 13. That is what the Lord Jesus wants you to do. He does not want to come just as a visitor. The poet says,

Be not to me, my God,
As One who turns aside
To tarry for a night, and trod
His onward path. Abide
With me as light divine,

J N Darby, Spiritual Songs

Are you saying that, 'Abide with me'? Well the Lord is concerned, and I believe He is urgent, to find a dwelling-place, not only as a Visitor, not just when you are at the meetings. 'I want to dwell among them'. “According to all that I shall shew thee, the pattern of the tabernacle ... even so shall ye make it”. It was only a matter of months since they were slaves in Egypt, very young converts, and He is asking them to make Him a sanctuary.

In chapter 19 God says, “Ye have seen what I have done to the Egyptians, and how I have borne you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. And now ...”, vv 4, 5. Look at these two words. That is where we are tonight, dear brethren, “And now ...” He has brought you, wonderful favour, into an area where He is going to make wonderful proposals. He says, 'I have dealt with Egypt to bring you to Myself'. He did not bring you to a church, or bring you to make a resolve that you

would do better tomorrow. He says, "I have ... brought you to myself". Wonderful grace! Glorious Saviour! "And now ...", that is tonight. "And now, if ye will hearken to my voice ...". Maybe there have been other voices because Satan would say, 'Well, you have confessed the Lord Jesus but you do not need to be too devout. You will go to heaven when you die'. That is a common expression in Christendom, but I do not think it is scripture. If God wanted just to forgive your sins and take you to heaven He would have taken you that night, but He did not. He left you here, as we have been saying, for the testimony; to "hearken to my voice indeed and keep my covenant". Normally a convert is taken to the inn, Luke 10: 34. For the man on the Jericho road, He did not just pour in oil and wine, He took him to the inn. He brings you into heaven's society when He forgives you your sins. That is where the man was going to live. If he had just gone back to Jericho, he would have been wounded again. The younger son repents and is made suitable for the house. "And now, if ye will hearken to my voice indeed and keep my covenant", listen to this proposal, "then shall ye be my own possession out of all the peoples - for all the earth is mine". What a Saviour! What a God! That is what He had in mind in forgiving you your sins, not taking you to heaven but to make you a people for a possession, "and ye shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" v 6. Oh what a change from the slaves of Egypt, saying that to them three months on the journey. How often has He appealed to you, my friend? Many a time I am sure, and I have known it and I have seen it in others. You have said, 'Well, that was a good word. I will try and do better', and within a week you were as bad as ever. He says, "I have ... brought you to myself". If you have an impression of Christ as He touches your heart, look to the Holy Spirit of God who alone will give you power, so that you are not drawn back into the bondage of Egypt. That is what God does in bringing you to Himself. He gives you the power of the Holy Spirit within you to overcome the claims of the devil, and the weaknesses of the flesh, that you may be here in the joy of His salvation. Salvation does not just mean that you are saved from your sins but that you are here in a power that is superior to the workings of the flesh and the appeals of the devil and brought into the full joy of life in the house, as "my own possession". Does He not have a claim over you above every other claim? Dear brother, dear sister, we owe it to Him. We are not debtors to live to the flesh, Rom 8: 12. Peter says that the time past is sufficient for all that and now but we have the rest of our time, 1 Peter 4: 2, 3. May these meetings help us, dear brethren, about the rest of the time. , God would like you to speak to Him about the time past. That is Laodicea, "I will come in unto him and sup with him", Rev 3: 20. He is ready to hear

about the problems you have. Then He says, 'You will sup with me, and I will tell you the superiority of the gift of the Spirit, that will give you power to go against the stream, and even the pull of nature', because it has been superseded. "I have ... brought you to myself". Well, that is what He does to these people.

I want to read further on in Exodus in chapter 35 where you see God speaking to them again. "And all the assembly of the children of Israel departed from before Moses. And they came, every one whose heart moved him", v 20, 21. Is that yours today? I trust it is. I have often pondered what God says, "I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals", Jer 2: 2. I see it here in these verses. Let me say this, dear brethren, your young years are most precious to God. You may think, 'I will do it when I am older'. You will not. God values the espousals of youth. He does not say, 'I remember about you'. He says, "I remember for thee". You may fail later on. He says, "I remember for thee". Exercises will come up that may disturb you. God says, 'I remember that person, that young boy, young girl, confessed my name at school, a young person committed himself to me in the fellowship and sought to be faithful, and now some troubles have come into their life ...' He says, "I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth". What an Advocate to have! He is on our side, He knows our best days, and, when we fail, He knows how to bring us back. Dear brethren, these are real things. "I remember for thee". You maybe wonder why some older people are able to quote scriptures better than you. They learned it in their youth. There are things of His patient love and grace that beget confidence in Him and bring stability into your life. "And they came, every one whose heart moved him, and every one whose spirit prompted him". In the verses I am reading here you will find four or five times that the heart is involved and the feet follow. Where your heart is your feet will soon take you whether it is the local meeting or the sports ground, or whatever it may be. And that is what is happening here. It says in verses 21 to 24, "whose heart moved him, and ... whose spirit prompted him; they brought Jehovah's heave-offering for the work of the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the holy garments. And they came, both men and women; every one who was of willing heart brought nose rings, and earrings, and rings, and bracelets, all kinds of utensils of gold: every man that waved a wave-offering of gold to Jehovah. And every man with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and byssus, and goats' hair and rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, brought them. All they that offered a heave-offering of silver and copper brought Jehovah's heave-

offering. And every one with whom was found acacia-wood for all manner of work of the service, brought it". Where did they get it, just three months out of Egypt? God knew that they had it. He does not ask you for what you do not already have. He had already given them it. How did they get it? They got it because they *moved* out of Egypt, "Rise, my soul, thy God directs thee ... Egypt's food no more to eat ... On to Canaan's rest still wending" (hymn 76) - there they were in those three months. What substance they acquired. It came to me in the reading, "that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance", Prov 8: 21. That is where you will get it, by loving Christ, and that is where we may say that they got it. They saw that blood on the lintel, they ate that lamb roast with fire (Ex 12); there they are getting substance that helped them to move, and that is the kind of stimulation we need, dear brethren, something that will put us in *movement*. Do not just say, 'It was a good word', but there needs to be movement, and that is what they are doing here at personal sacrifice with nose rings, earrings, bracelets, everything that would adorn them in Egypt, everything that would adorn the wrong man; they are prepared to cast it all aside for that Lamb once slain. You may say, 'Well, if I do that I will not have much left'. There was that widow that we spoke about yesterday. It says that she cast in "the whole of her living", Mark 12: 44. In a very broken day, God says, "Bring the whole tithe into the treasure-house...and prove me now herewith ... if I open not to you the windows of the heavens, and pour you out a blessing, till there be no place for it", Mal 3: 10. That widow found that. I am sure when she went back to her house that day the table was laid, there was everything she needed, and God, my friend, is no man's debtor. She cast in "the whole of her living". You know, we sang that hymn 272 today, and we sang it very well, and I am tested when I sing it; I trust you are too. It was written many, many years ago:

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Lord of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride...

Were the whole realm of nature mine ...

"My richest gain" - that is more than the nose rings and the earrings! Dear brethren, we sing these words. The Lord today is looking for reality, I have been impressed with that in these meetings, and He has provided the wherewithal that it can be possible, without any loss to you, but with everything to gain.

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

Did you sing that today? "Demands my soul, my life, my all!" That was the widow. I am sure she was one of those in the upper room enjoying the blessedness of the house when the Holy Spirit came down and filled the whole house where they were sitting. Well, these are the things that they bring. What I want to say about this is that it is at personal sacrifice, nose rings and earrings; then it speaks about them waving a wave-offering - it was not grudgingly drawn out.

Well, dear brethren, the rest of the time to God's will! It says here, too, they brought "blue, and purple, and scarlet". Oh, see what God will do with it! He will bring it all into His house and clothe it with glory.

It says they brought acacia-wood. That is one of the finest things in the sanctuary, the acacia-wood. You say, 'How can I bring that?' The ark was made of it, and yet here is God asking you to bring something that the ark is made of. You see the acacia-wood in Philippians 2. You say, 'Oh, that is the Lord Jesus'. Let us just look at it for a minute. Paul wrote in Philippians 2 that that mind might be in them, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself, taking a bondman's form", v 5-7. That is the acacia-wood, "a bondman's form". The acacia-wood is what the ark was made of, but it was also what the boards were made of, "let this mind be in you a bondman's form". This whole section of Exodus is illuminated through a bondman saying, "I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go free", Ex 21: 5. Having heard that bondman, God says, 'I will tell you now about my system where I can be among you and in my sanctuary'. It is a very wonderful wood.

We will speak about these boards. In chapter 36 verse 20, "And he made the boards for the tabernacle of acacia-wood, standing up; ten cubits the length of the boards, and one cubit and a half the breadth of one board". He made them standing up. What does that mean? It means you are ready to bear responsibility. You are not there as a spectator in the house of God. The boards were the strength of the sanctuary. They were not bowed down. You see the boards being developed in Romans, "O wretched man that I am!", Rom 7: 24. He is soon standing up, glorying in his Redeemer. At the end of Romans Paul looked at them. and says, "who were in Christ before me", Rom 16: 7. There was a board standing up on two bases of silver. Oh, what a

ground to stand on! There is the power to stand up, not on your work or anything of man, but it says, "And he made the boards for the tabernacle: twenty boards for the south side southward; and he made forty bases of silver under the twenty boards, two bases under one board, for its two tenons, and two bases under another board for its two tenons", Ex 36: 23, 24. They were standing on the ground of redemption. Wonderful ground to stand on!

'On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand'.

That is what the board was standing on. Paul has to remind the brethren of the ground that they stand on, even to the Ephesians. He reminded them, "Ye ... once were afar off", Eph 2: 13. Because of what we are, we very soon get proud. We begin to think that we are a little better than some others. Every board stood on the same two bases, the finished work of Jesus. Oh, what a ground to stand on, every one of them! No one board was more precious than the other. They all cost the same to Christ. Do you see that about your brethren? I want to apply these boards to our local meeting, because that is what they really were. They were not standing there independently. You look in the passages I am reading, and see it was that the tabernacle might become one whole, Ex 26: 6. That is one of the beauties of acacia-wood. It is easy to stand beside the brother next to you because he is of the same material. As I said, they came out of Egypt, that was one thing. They had passed through the Red Sea and they sang a song to their Deliverer. "The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea", Ex 15: 1. You see the boards being fashioned, all ready to be fitted one to another. Further on they are looking for some food, and what did they find? They found the manna, angels' food, Ex 16: 13-36. It is a very interesting thing about that manna. It says that they ate of it "until they came into an inhabited land", v 35. It covered the whole of the wilderness journey. It forms another character of man, that is impressionable. These boards had to stand very close together; their power, their efficiency, depended on that, otherwise the winds of the wilderness, the subtle suggestions of Satan, would very soon get in and spoil the local meeting. Dear brethren, the power of it all stands in the boards standing together, "they were joined". And then in verses 27 and 28, "And at the rear of the tabernacle, westward, he made six boards; and he made two boards for the corners of the tabernacle at the rear". The enemy is ready to sow seed and very quickly he would bring in some suggestions to disturb. God anticipated these difficulties and He is giving the grace that is needed. Dear brethren, let us look for this.

The corners need strengthening with special grace and power, and He has provided it. The boards are prepared to take on the responsibility when exercises arise, as brethren are ready to shoulder it. They do not say, 'Oh well, we will leave that to so-and-so. We will wait and see.' No, it says, "And at the rear of the tabernacle ... he made two boards for the corners ... and they were joined beneath", v 29. They were not just standing next to one another, they were joined beneath. Can you shake a corner like that? It says more than that. It says, "and they were joined beneath, and were coupled together at the top thereof into one ring: thus he did to both of them in both the corners". That is how things will be met, dear brethren, in our local exercises. The corners get strengthened beneath. Not only am I founded in the finished work of Jesus, but then there is a ring at the top; "Firm, immovable, abounding always in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor 15: 58) is said of some saints. There they are fortified against what the enemy may bring in. I think you will find that in the ministry meeting some nights. You get the boards being fortified at the corners. We may not know the dangers but the Lord knows and He is ready to fortify the corners, and will provide what is needed. As I said, these people were ready, were ready to do it. It says that they went away from Moses and they did what was said. Is that how we will go from these meetings? Then in verses 33 and 34 it says, "And he made the middle bar in the midst of the boards reach from one end to the other. And he overlaid the boards with gold". Oh, what infinite detail He has put into things. You know, sometimes things are a bit shaky. At Corinth where a party spirit was coming in Paul is making these boards cleave to their sockets when he says, "For I did not judge it well to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and *him* crucified", 1 Cor 2: 2. He is strengthening the sockets, for that is where the weakness comes in and we begin to get shaky. What was preached to Corinth was the word of the cross, chap 1: 18. That is strengthening these boards in their sockets, removing every other man so that Christ, and Christ alone, may be glorified in the boards standing up in the sockets of silver. There were two sisters at Philippi. They were getting a bit shaky too. Paul says, "If then there be any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love ..." (Phil 2: 1), "I exhort Euodia, and exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord", Phil 4: 2. That is the boards joined together. It was not very much, it was just that these boards became loose. These words would be read in the local meeting, I suppose. Oh what a place it is where divine speaking is heard and where the boards get strengthened, but now there is this one bar running right through. What is that? Paul says again, "using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace",

Eph 4: 3. That is the bar that runs right through. There are the saints, every one with their own distinction, every one in their own glory and beauty, but there is a bar running right through. What binds us together, dear brethren? "If any fellowship of the Spirit", Phil 2: 1. There is no true fellowship of any other kind. Our affinities, dear brethren, have to be in the Spirit. It is not a social circle that we are brought into. Although we enjoy the company of the saints, the bond that holds all firmly together is, "using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace". There is the local company in function. What is it all for? It is all part of "my sanctuary": "And they shall make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them". It says, "And he made the middle bar ... reach from one end to the other. And he overlaid the boards with gold", verse 34. It is the acacia-wood that bears the gold. There is a very fine remark, I cherish it, that morally the bondman of Exodus 21 was the high priest of Exodus 28. There is the acacia-wood with the gold. The man who said, "I love" morally is the same man who bore those garments of glory and beauty when he went into the holy presence of God. The board is standing up and the bar running right through, in the unity of the Spirit, means that that bar was touching every board. Did one of the boards say, 'Oh no, I am not having that' and stand a little bit back? No, that bar was running right through. It was touching every board that was standing up. There is no agreement to differ. That is something that tends to creep in. That is not the unity of the Spirit. These things are not too far away from us, but let us use diligence "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace".

But now there is something else: I want to speak of the curtains. In Exodus 36 verse 10 and 11, "And he coupled five of the curtains one to another, and the other five curtains coupled he one to another. And he made loops of blue on the edge of one curtain at the edge of the coupling; he did likewise in the edge of the outermost curtain in the other coupling", fifty loops of blue. Now what is the curtain? Well, we have spoken of the grace of these boards, but they had to be strong enough to hold the curtains. If there were no curtains, what would it be? It would be an open position, open to all that the devil could bring in. The curtains are divine principles and are borne on the boards. Sometimes we you may try to have the curtains without the boards. You cannot do that, dear brethren. The curtains and the boards are joined together. The boards of acacia-wood have no problem with the principles, because they see that without the curtains it will be an open position. There were fifty clasps or loops in every curtain, hence they were closely bound together making it an almost impregnable position.

There are these people, willing-hearted, "joined in soul" Phil 2: 2. "And they shall make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them". This is the structure, but it is the maintenance of the principles that make it "my sanctuary". He could not come if they were not all together. He could not come if they were not all ready to receive Him. And there are these fifty loops in the curtains and then fifty clasps, verse 13. There was more than one set of curtains, there was blue on the inside, there were rams' skins and then there were badgers' skins. Oh, the beauty was all inside, dear brethren. People may look, and they see the badgers' skins. They see a separate people and they say, 'What a poor people?'. They have never been inside. What you see inside is the curtains of blue. The Galatians were missing the curtains of blue. They were trying to apply the principles, but forgetting the blue. Paul has to tell them, "Jerusalem above ... is our mother", Gal 4: 26. Not those beggarly principles, but, "Jerusalem above ... is our mother". He was bringing them into the enjoyment of sonship. There was no problem with the badgers' skins, "Wherefore come out from the midst of them, and be separated ... and I will be to you for a Father" - that is inside - "and ye shall be to me for sons and daughters", 2 Cor 6: 17, 18.

Well, let us have a look inside for a minute. I want to look at Numbers 7 verse 89, "And when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with Him, then he heard the voice speaking to him from off the mercy-seat which was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubim; and he spoke to Him". There is the inside. Moses went in to speak with Him, and "he heard the voice speaking to him". Have you ever done that? He maybe went in with his problems. I will tell you about a man who did. He was a wonderful singer. During exercises in his history, his tone was not so good as it used to be, he began to look around and he said, 'Lord I am spending a lot of time practising my singing, but I can see persons who do not practise and they seem to get on as well as I do'. He went in to speak to God about it. It will tell you about him in Psalm 73. He says, "my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped ... Until I went into the sanctuaries of God; then understood I their end ... Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden my right hand; Thou wilt guide me by thy counsel, and after the glory, thou wilt receive me", v 2, 17, 23, 24. I would like to have heard him singing the next night he came out! Would it not have been sweeter? That was Asaph. He went into the sanctuary. He was going to tell God about all his problems, and he heard a voice speaking to him, 'Asaph, I know about all that'. Daniel knew that too. He bore many burdens. God put His hand on him one night when he was praying in

his room. I would like to make it as simple and practical as I can. It is a very simple thing to do, to go into your closet with your problems. Daniel, as he was praying, he heard a voice saying, "O Daniel, man greatly beloved", Dan 10: 11. He says, 'I will take care of it. It is more than you can handle. You go your way. You will stand in your lot at the end of the day', Dan 12: 13.

May I just tell you about another man who received a letter saying he was going to be killed? What was he going to do with that? He went into his closet, and he took the letter and spread it before God and said, 'Lord, look at this'. His name was Hezekiah, 2 Kings 19: 14. These are practical things, dear brethren, practical things where we learn, and thus acquire substance in the knowledge of God.

Well, here Moses went in, and he heard a voice speaking to him. It says, "then he heard the voice speaking to him from off the mercy-seat which was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubim; and he spoke to Him". God spoke first. He spoke from the most advantageous position. That is what is inside. "And there will I meet with thee, and will speak with thee from above the mercy-seat", Ex 25: 22. God is looking on you, but He is not looking for anything from you. He is supplying everything in Christ. He is speaking from off the mercy-seat. Oh, you wonder how long Moses spent there. He spent his life there, my friend. He says, "Lord, *thou* hast been our dwelling-place in all generations", Psalm 90: 1. I often think of him, with far bigger problems than anybody here will ever have. He says, "Lord, *thou* hast been our dwelling-place in all generations".

Well, dear brethren, the inside is beautiful. Is it not worth while putting up those badgers' skins when you have to go out into the world? The circumstances may be testing. But you will never do that unless you have known those curtains of blue and God speaking from off the mercy-seat. 'Oh', you may say, 'this is all in the Old Testament'. No, my friends! I only quote from Matthew 18, "For where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them", v 20. "Where two or three are gathered together", that is the boards of the tabernacle; "unto my name" is the boards with the curtains on them. "Unto my name" - we are not to be gathering on any other ground. It comes even closer, "If any one love me, he will keep my word ... and we will come to him and make our abode with him", John 14: 23. Oh how precious these things are! It comes down to the broken day that we are in, "If any one love me". I do not say this in any way disparagingly, dear brethren, but it is true. You often hear people say how much they love

the Lord. I do not think you need to tell Him too much: He knows. When people say, 'Lord, we tell thee how much we love thee', do not be surprised if one day He says to you, "He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me", John 14: 21. There is the proof of it. You have the boards with the badgers' skins, but you are enjoying the blue, the heavenly colour inside. Oh, my friend, what a place to be! That is in the New Testament. In broken days, difficult exercises to be resolved, they are resolved by the boards of acacia-wood and the curtains being held closer together. The principles are not to be divorced from a priestly state. They lose their power if they are. The principles are held in the Spirit of Christ.

Well, another verse I would call attention to is Hebrews 10, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness for entering into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus, the new and living way which he has dedicated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh, and having a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart", v 19-22. Your name is on the breast of that great Priest. Did you know that? If you are inside, that is what you will see. You will see the Man, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the great Priest, your name on His breast, and there He is standing, waiting to receive you and embrace you as He goes in. Beautiful touch! "A great priest over the house of God" - is your name on His breast? - ready to impart to you the joy of the house. You may have some doubts, "sprinkled as to our hearts from a wicked conscience, and washed as to our body with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of the hope unwavering, (for he is faithful who has promised;) and let us consider one another for provoking to love and good works" - there are the boards in function - "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom is with some; but encouraging one another, and by so much the more as ye see the day drawing near", "so much the more", Heb 10: 22-25.

I want to close with a reference to David, which largely led me to these scriptures. David spoke of what he had prepared in his affliction (1 Chron 22: 14), for the house of his God and in his affection, 1 Chron 29: 3. That is what the Lord is looking for there, "make me a sanctuary". At the close of that he says, "And who is willing to offer to Jehovah this day?", 1 Chron 29: 5. May we say, my friend, every one of us, 'I am!' For Christ's Name's sake.

20th October 2007

Kirkcaldy

THE DAY OF GRACE

John Speirs

Joshua 10: 12-14 (to “man”)

Luke 23: 33, 34, 44-46

John 17: 24

Acts 26: 11-18

The period of time that we are in, dear friend, is like no other period of time that there ever has been, or ever shall be. I am not speaking literally of today, the 19th of August 2007, but a day as in a period of many years. This day that we are in is a period which began when the Lord Jesus had ascended into heaven and the Holy Spirit came here, and which will end when Jesus comes again for those who love Him. This period of time is a day like no other day. It is sometimes referred to as a day of grace. It is different in its character to other periods of time, or dispensations, in which God has operated. It is different from the period of time before the incoming of Jesus, when God was then known only in a limited way and only by a few persons. God did not then offer full and free forgiveness to all men. One particular feature of the present time that I would like to occupy you with, dear friend, is that today there is a Man living in heaven, in glory, a Man who has actually been here on earth. He is a real man, but He is a Man who is now in glory. I think that is a feature of this dispensation that marks it out as different from any before. That living Man is available to all men as a Saviour in glory tonight, dear friend; therefore how favoured we are to live in this period of time.

I often think what it might have been like to live in a previous dispensation. Think of Adam in the garden, what wonder it would have been to see everything set up there in perfection! Think of Abraham and of the blessing that he came into, what it would have been like living in that time! Think of Moses, of God coming down and speaking with him, face to face! Think of God dwelling in the midst of the children of Israel! Think of king Solomon in his glory! What it would have been to be one of his servants, one of his men! These were all wonderful times, but they do not really compare to the present time because now you have an opportunity to know for yourself in a personal way the glorious Saviour, the Lord Jesus. We thank God that we have these persons all recorded for us in scripture because God teaches us about Christ through them. Mr F E Raven said that three prominent thoughts in the Old Testament are blessing, dwelling and ruling, vol 5: p29. Blessing is

typified in Abraham (Gen 12: 2,3) - all our blessings are in Christ, "every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ", Eph 1: 3. Then dwelling, God dwelling there amongst the children of Israel (Exod 29: 45) - now Christ can dwell through faith in the hearts of believers, Eph 3: 17. And then think of rule, the glorious rule of king David, and Solomon too after him - now you can have Christ as your Lord and King. So Christ in this present day far supersedes everything and everyone that has gone before.

Then, there is a time coming after this dispensation, a period of a thousand years, the period of the millennium, and there will be blessing for men there too, but it will be earthly blessing. Tonight there is an opportunity for you to come to know a heavenly Man, to know heavenly blessings, and to know that your destiny will be heavenly with Him. Those persons who will be on the earth in the millennium will know blessings; but there is something special tonight. "There was no day like that before it or after it".

How has this day come about? How is it a day in which God can preach forgiveness? How can that be? I would like to use this reference in the Old Testament about a man called Joshua. He did many wonderful things for God and His people and it is worth reading about because, like so many things in the Old Testament, it is there to help us learn and understand more about Jesus. It says, "And the sun stood still, and the moon remained where it was", and then further down it says, "And the sun remained standing in the midst of heaven". I think that is like Christ glorified. The Lord Jesus has been on this earth; He was a lowly and perfect Man; He perfectly fulfilled God's will; but He is a glorious Man tonight. We were reminded in the reading of the Scriptures today that the glad tidings are not just to give you relief. They are to attract you and attach you to a Man who is living in glory, a Man who is in heaven. Accepting the glad tidings will save you from judgment. We rejoice that we can know the One in our Lord Jesus who is "our deliverer from the coming wrath" (1 Thess. 1: 10), but that is not the end in the glad tidings. We might say carefully, the glad tidings are not an emergency exit. They are not preached only that you may escape the judgment you rightly deserve because of your sins and your sinful state. If you remain in that state away from God, you will go into eternal judgment. But the glad tidings are that the judgment has been poured out on Another - we will read about that - but they are really like a door into something, a door into a wonderful area of heavenly

blessings, and it is available to you tonight.

There is no other day like this either before it or after it. I cannot tell you how long this day is going to last for. It says here, "And the sun remained standing in the midst of heaven," - Christ is there; He is the centre of everything that God is doing; He is the centre of God's interests - "and hasted not to go down". I am using this reference to a day in which an enemy was overthrown. There is a touch of grace here for God's people. God is making the day of salvation as long as possible so that as many persons as possible can come to know Jesus as their Saviour. I do not know how much longer it will be before the sun may go down, that is, until the opportunity to know Jesus as your Saviour is lost. I do not want to frighten anyone but there is a time coming when, typically speaking, the sun will go down. There is a time coming when persons will no longer be able to avail themselves of the Lord Jesus. What terror there will be in the hearts of men who perhaps had come under the sound of a preaching like this! I think something will dawn on them; think of the horror of their souls when they realise that they had missed an opportunity and there was no way of regaining it. Dear friend, there is no need for you to be like that. There is no need for you to end up in a situation like that. Simply accept the Saviour that God is presenting to you tonight! You cannot buy what He will give you. Simply repent before God and accept the Saviour that He has provided! I was just affected by that, "there was no day like that". There is no day like the present day. There is a common saying, 'There is no time like the present', and how true that is in terms of laying hold of Jesus as your Saviour. There is no time like the present. There may not be any more time. There is nothing you can do about the past. Do not worry about that, but know that you can have all the sins you have committed in the past cleared completely before God by putting your trust in Jesus.

Well, I read in Luke because here we have the voice of a Man, God hearkening to the voice of a Man. The Lord Jesus says here, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"; they were about to put Him to death, they had nailed Him to a cross, dear friend, and still He said, "Father, forgive them". I think God hearkened to the voice of a Man there. I think from that point forward the whole period of time that followed was going to be marked by forgiveness, grace, and mercy. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". It says, "they crucified him". Well, that had to be. God could not forgive you otherwise. God could not just forgive you and pretend that what you

have done in your sins has not happened and overlook it. God does not sweep anything under the carpet. Everything that God does is righteous and just. God is a holy God. It is good to remind ourselves of who it is we have to do with in the glad tidings, God, the One that is “from eternity and to eternity” (Ps 106: 48), the One that dwells “in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen, nor is able to see”, 1 Tim. 6: 16. Yet, He is a God who has come out, a God who has come out in love. Do not overly concern yourself with the person next to you. Be concerned with your own self, your salvation. It is you that God is speaking to tonight. But Jesus had to die. There had to be a sacrifice. For God to be able to offer forgiveness, there had to be a sacrifice and, we might say carefully, no ordinary sacrifice. Anyone who had even a trace of sin upon them coming under the judgment of God would have been completely consumed but Christ was absolutely sinless and He bore the judgement.

It says further down, “And it was about the sixth hour, and there came darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour”. Before that the Lord Jesus had said, “Father, forgive them”. Communion with His Father is expressed. It says elsewhere, “Father ... I knew that thou always hearest me”, John 11: 41,42. We read in another gospel that, at the end of these three hours, He cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”, Matt. 27: 46. The Lord Jesus knew that His Father always heard Him. But for a period of three hours, we would say reverently, God did not hear Him. God left Him alone whom He loved the most. He forsook Him. Why did He have to be left alone while the full wrath of God was poured out upon His perfect, sinless head? Not for anything that He had done - far be the thought! It was because of what I have done in my sins and what I am in my sinful condition that the Lord Jesus had to endure those three hours of unimaginable suffering. There is nothing in those hours that we can look into. There was darkness. No-one could even begin to comprehend what went on in those three hours, but you can have some appreciation of it by accepting that He went that way for you. I can say, 'He went that way for me'. If you say, 'Jesus died for me', He “bore our sins in his body on the tree” (1 Pet 2: 24), God will offer you complete and immediate forgiveness of your sins. You will have nothing to fear, but, more than that, you will have a right to lay claim to the One who is in glory. You will have a right to claim Him as your Lord and your Saviour and you will have a right to be with Him for ever in glory.

“And it was about the sixth hour, and there came darkness over

the whole land until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened," - think of that! - "and the veil of the temple rent in the midst". The whole new dispensation was being opened up. That veil had been a barrier, and limited access to God. God had come out in a limited way through that system because of what man was. But now, in Christ, God can come out in a full way, and we can go in in a full way. You do not have to hesitate. We can go before God with boldness, not because of anything we are but because of what Christ has done and what He is.

"Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit". This is proof, if it were needed, that the communion that could not be enjoyed during the three hours of darkness was reinstated. He addresses His Father again, the work having been finished for God. What a work it is! Have you ever thought about the magnitude of what Christ has done? Have you ever thought about the millions and millions of souls that have been secured for eternity for God's praise and pleasure and glory? You can be amongst them tonight. There is no day like this, this period of time when you can lay hold of Jesus as your Saviour.

"And having said this, he expired". We must be clear that the Lord Jesus did actually die, a real Man who came into this scene. There was no room for Him in this world from the very beginning, laid in Bethlehem's manger, no room in the inn, Luke 2: 7. The world still has no room for Him. Can you see anywhere in the world where Christ is made much of? There is that which holds His name, but how sorrowful it is to see what goes on, what attaches to His name! There is no room in this world for Him. Is there room in your heart for Him tonight? Just accept that you are a sinner, repent before God and accept, and put your faith in, the fact that the Lord Jesus died, that He died for you and that His blood was shed. John's gospel tells us that once He had expired, once the Lord Jesus had died, a soldier came along and "pierced his side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water", chap. 19: 34. The immediate answer in love, even in the presence of man's utmost wickedness and cruelty there, what grace! God can then say typically, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exod. 12: 13), but more than that, there was the blood that was sprinkled before the mercy-seat. There is a way in. Christ has made it possible for us to go right into the presence of God because of what He has done. That is where He wants you to be. He does not just want you to escape from the coming wrath; He does not just want you to be delivered and then go on with all the poor, paltry things of the world. He

wants you to be saved, yes, certainly, but then He wants you to be attached to Christ where He is in glory. That is wonderful, dear friend. I would that I knew more about it.

So then in John 17 here is another example of the voice of a man. We can be sure that the Father hearkened to this as well. "Father, as to those whom thou hast given me, I desire that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory". Think of that! That is what the Lord Jesus desires for you, not only that you should be saved from the coming wrath, but that you should be with Him where He is to behold His glory. That is the full end in the glad tidings, not that I should simply say in a selfish way, 'I am saved and now I can do whatever I want'. You can be occupied with Someone else other than yourself, Someone that is worth being occupied with. There is nothing and no-one else of this world that is worth being occupied with. There is nothing in myself naturally or after the flesh that is worth being occupied with, but Christ is well worth being occupied with, "that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory". Well, what a glorious One He is! It is worth spending any time that you have, any time that you make, to contemplate Christ in His glory. Get down on your knees in a private way, no-one else needs to know anything about it, in a secret way, and just contemplate Christ in His glory. He will give you satisfaction in your soul that nothing else can. I know a little of it but not enough. I would that I knew more of it! I would that you would know something of it too, dear friend.

Well, I read in Acts because here in Saul is an example of one who saw something of the glory of the Lord. Sometimes we think, 'I am such a poor and helpless sinner that God may not listen to me', but God was listening. We quite often say in the glad tidings that God is speaking to us and that is true, but I think God is listening in the glad tidings too. God is listening for you to come in repentance to Him. God is listening so that He is ready to hear you when you come to confess your sins and accept Christ as your Saviour. If something is said, no matter how weak, how feeble, how quiet, if something sincere is said in true repentance and acceptance of the Lord Jesus, there is no way that God will miss it. There is no way that God will not hear it. Do not think that you are too far gone. Do not think that anything you have done is too bad and that God will not be able to listen to you. God in that way will hearken to your voice. He will hearken to the voice of men who cry to Him. Think of the man in the gospel who said, "O God, have

compassion on me, the sinner“, Luke 18: 13. That is all you have to do. There is no other claim you can make on your own behalf. Just simply accept that you are a sinner, and that Christ has died for you and saved you from your sins.

Well, Saul here was meting out terrible punishment on those who were believers, causing them to blaspheme. He was furious. It says elsewhere that he was “breathing out threatenings and slaughter“ (Acts 9: 1), but such a one as this came to say, “I saw, O king, a light above the brightness of the sun, shining from heaven round about me and those who were journeying with me. And, when we were all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” You know, there is proof if it were needed, recorded in the Scripture, of the fact that Christ was glorified. He died and He shed His blood and He went into the grave. He was there for three days and three nights, a full period. The fallen order of man that had offended God was completely put out of sight in the grave. And what followed was Christ raised, and not only raised, but then ascended, glorified, at God's right hand. Think of God's delight in Him! Think of Him being able to look on in anticipation and see that because of what Christ had done there was a basis for persons to come freely to God, persons that He could offer forgiveness to. Think of God's delight in Christ! Is your delight in Him? I speak to us all. Do you actually delight in Christ? Think of one who could say, “For for me to live is Christ”, Phil. 1: 21. Is that you, is that me? That is very testing. Are we happy just to be saved from our sins and know that nothing can change that? That is wonderful to know, but do not stop there, dear friend! Be attracted, then be attached to Christ where He is in glory! He is a glorious Saviour.

So further down it says, “I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light” - such a one who was going about persecuting Christians became one of the greatest preachers - “and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive remission of sins”. Is that all? No, as we were reminded already today, “remission of sins and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me”. Think of the inheritance that is available to you, something for you to enjoy, something that will not end in time. A woman last week won an enormous sum of money, £35 million, I think it was. I trust that she is a believer in the Lord Jesus because nothing to do with our status, or what we have here, or what we own can secure our eternal salvation, only the fact that you are a believer in the Lord Jesus. When you die,

you take nothing from this world with you. The things that we see with our eyes will all be left behind, but if you have a link with Jesus in your heart through faith, that will never be left behind. That link will remain until you are actually with Him in glory for eternity - no need for faith then! Well, He is coming again and if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus He will take you to be with Himself. I can say that with certainty. The scriptures state it: "we shall be always with the Lord", 1 Thess. 4: 17. It says that quite clearly. Simply believe it in faith, dear friend.

And then "from the power of Satan to God". There is a power in the world, the power of Satan. Satan is real, and he has many different ways and means to distract you and take away the joy of your salvation. I was reminded recently of ministry we had some time ago where the brother said how the devil would suppress, depress and oppress. He may come in in a direct way and try to cause you to fear, or bring in something that would cause you to turn away from God. Or perhaps, although you know the Lord as your Saviour, he would try to suppress any joy that you might have, so that God might be robbed. God loves to have the company of those who love Him, and the devil would love to suppress that. Then the devil would depress, he would have you look into yourself and think that circumstances are hopeless. Think of the woman who was bent double and all she could see were her own circumstances, Luke 12: 11-16. Dear friend, in the Holy Spirit there is a greater power than the power of Satan, and He is able to liberate you from all of these things, He is able to help you resist the oppression: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you", Jas. 4: 7. He is able to lift you out of depression. He is able to give you liberty and joy. He is a wonderful Person to know. He is a glorious divine Person.

That is another unique feature, I think it is right to say, of this period of time in which we are, this dispensation: it is the Spirit's dispensation. He is here. He is not here in the way that the Lord Jesus was here; we cannot see Him, but He is dwelling in believers. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus, what a wonderful thing it is to have the Holy Spirit too, a divine Person dwelling within you. Well, He is able to help you overcome the difficulties of this world. I feel ashamed how often that is all I rely on the Spirit for, because His service is a glorious service attracting you to Christ where He is in glory. Let us rely more on the Holy Spirit! And let us know this One, the One who is in the midst of heaven, remaining standing, hastening not to go down. Perhaps that day, that full day - what a full dispensation it has been! - is about to end very quickly. Make sure you have a link with the One who is standing in

the midst of heaven, the glorious risen Saviour! Christ is my Saviour; make sure He is your Saviour! And not only that, may you have the Holy Spirit so that you can be living here in liberty and joy and can give something to God! What He has given for you! Do you not feel that perhaps you should give something back to Him? There are those who love to remember the Lord Jesus, those who week by week reverse the world's judgment. There are so many persons who say, 'I want nothing to do with Christ', but there are some who give Him a place in their hearts and desire to remember Him. That is available to you too, dear friend.

Well, I feel how feebly these words have been spoken, but let us be attracted to Christ where He is in glory! May it be so for His Name's sake!

Grangemouth

19 August 2007

RESTORATION AND RENEWAL

Ben Eastwood

2 Corinthians 4: 13-18

Isaiah 58: 8-12

I have been thinking a little since one of our local readings last week as to David in 2 Samuel, his grievous failings and what we speak of as the Psalm of contrition, Psalm 51. David speaks to the Lord of need in himself for restoration and renewal. I was thinking on those lines as to the need for renewal, which in God's goodness we experience in our own souls. The apostle who is writing here is quoting one of the Psalms, "I have believed, therefore have I spoken", Ps 116: 10. He spoke of what he believed in, what he had experienced and what he had laid hold of through faith. He spoke of those things, spoke of what he knew; and his authority was in being fully persuaded as having a knowledge of the things which he presented. He was an elect vessel, and he said, "we also believe, therefore also we speak; knowing" - how positive a statement it is, how positive is the word "knowing" "that he who has raised the Lord Jesus shall raise us also with Jesus, and shall present us with you". Then he goes on that, "the grace abounding through the many may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God. Wherefore we faint not". He was conscious of the outward man as we are, increasingly so as we get older. If we are left here some of us in our younger years will go the same way, but we are conscious of these things, the frailty and limitation of our earthly tabernacle. But he says, "yet the inward is renewed day by day". That is a wonderful thing. How great it is to have some sense of that in our soul. David fell so grievously that you might be surprised when you read that chapter in Samuel. We ought not to be since we are not made of anything different to David. He says, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and let a willing spirit sustain me", Ps 51: 12. Those were genuine words of David's. It was not David repeating some mantra, it was right from the very soul of David that he could say that. The enemy would have come at him and said, 'you will never recover from that David, you will never be able to stand upright again, you will never be able to show your face; you will never be the same the man as you were before'; and I suppose in a way he was not. In God's wonderful ways David had learned something about himself which in God's sovereign way advanced His own work within the man's soul. It is God's prerogative to do that. It is not, as we often stress, that we would put

any premium on sinning, but God in His wonderful ways can bring us to that; God can strengthen us in relation to the very things that we fail at. We often quote Peter where he preaches so powerfully: he says, “ye denied the holy and righteous one”, Acts 3: 14. What had Peter done? But there was no stain left on his soul as to that. Think of the Lord Jesus appearing first to Peter and that private interview which He had with him, and everything being settled, Luke 24: 34. I think it is a wonderful thing that we can experience this in our own souls; it is renewal. We have in Isaiah, “He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed”, Isa 50: 4. I think we can be so thankful for the fresh mornings that we have, a new start to the week that we have on the Lord's day, and then every morning there is an opportunity afforded us for renewal.

Speaking practically you might see a brother or sister you have not seen for some time. It may be five or six years since you last saw them and your first impression is that they are failing, they are becoming older, and then they speak about the Lord's things and you realise that there is something there that is not failing; something there that is substantial in the soul, which not only is not failing, but is advancing, and growing, and it is better than ever. A relation of mine was suffering from Alzheimer's disease. His mind was almost gone, and yet at the Supper everything cleared and his part was fresher than I had ever known it before. That is a remarkable thing to lay hold of and to witness, the sovereign work of God in a soul that is going on.

Paul speaks here as to “the inward is renewed day by day”. What a wonderful thing. We experience that in a practical way, the support and the power of the Holy Spirit joining His help to our weakness. Then he goes on and says, “our momentary and light affliction” - it is an amazing thing that he could say that, Paul the apostle. Think of how he suffered! He enumerates his sufferings to the Corinthians, 2 Cor 11: 23-28. It seems on the face of it a remarkable thing that he could speak of it as a “momentary and light affliction”. That is because he had another world in mind, as he goes on to say, “works for us in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory”. He has a spiritual view of a heavenly realm of things so that things down here are very temporary and they assume their correct proportion in his souls. I think it is good for us to ask God to give us another perspective on things, on practical situations in our day to day living or in our localities, in our households, to experience something of the renewal by the Spirit

so that we would be able to look at things from a fresh perspective. I often think of that scripture, "Come, look from the top of Amanah", Song of Songs 4: 8. Look at the things from the heights, so that they are operating in our souls in the power of the Spirit, so that we might increasingly have God's perspective on things. He says, "while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are for a time", they are temporary, they are passing. It is a passing scene but what he has in mind are those things that are not seen that are eternal. The things that are not seen had become more real in the apostle's heart and soul than that which surrounded him, so that he was not detained by things down here. It is not that he ceased to care for them, the practical needs of the saints, but held it all lightly. He travelled lightly with the world to come in mind. He was one of the 'Strangers below and citizens above', that the hymn refers to, Hymn 284.

The section in Isaiah is a scripture that I find very attractive. I think there is a word for encouragement here, something for each of us to be going in for. The writer is speaking about the possibility that "the glory of Jehovah shall be thy rearguard", and Jehovah hearing the cry of His own. He "will guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought". There can be no doubt in anyone in whom God has begun a work that we are in a scene where there is a drought. Scripture speaks of "a famine in the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Jehovah, Amos 8: 11. It is not, thank God, that the word of God is not still readily available in this country, that is part of His grace, but we can go through this scene in the power of the Spirit and not be marked by the scene around us. That is set before as a possibility. We are told often that we get like the company we keep, and that age has its effect on us. I do not think these things are inevitable, we have the Spirit and He goes on. This is the portion I so enjoy, "And they that come of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations that have remained from generation to generation", that which was always there. We speak often of the recovery and maintenance of the truth: the truth stands. Paul said, "We can do nothing against the truth" (2 Cor 13: 8), but it is a question of where we are in relation to the truth, the truth as it is contained in Christ. It is a question of what my value is of the wonderful wealth and the inheritance which is ours, which we have come into. "Others have laboured, and ye have entered into their labours", John 4: 38. We do not want to be just second and third generation Christians, the *vitality* is

to remain with us. That is normal Christianity, the vitality of what we have been bought into should remain with us and should be seen in each generation following, that we possess for ourselves those things that have existed from generation to generation. It would be a wonderful thing to be called a repairer or restorer. It is something I covet, something I cannot say I possess. There is always the glory of self to be judged, (few of our motives are entirely without heaven), but I would love to be called, a “Repairer of the breaches, restorer of frequented paths”.

Edinburgh

13th October 2007

PRAYER

Robert Trotter

Matthew 6: 5-6

1 Chronicles 4: 9-10

Daniel 9: 3-4, 20-23

It will be readily noticeable that these scriptures refer to the matter of prayer. I would love to be a greater exponent of it. What I have read relates mainly to individual prayer. I suppose as we usually say, and it is right to say, that the Lord would be our Model in these things. It says of Him, "having been baptised and praying", Luke 3: 21. That is Luke's account that the Lord Jesus, "having been baptised and praying", bringing out a line of dependence, dependence upon God.

I read these few verses in Matthew. They give us some direction as to prayer. It says, "And when thou prayest". It is something that we can enter into any time, I suppose, but Matthew gives us certain directions. He tells us first of all what we have not to do in our prayers. We have guidance here. It is mainly secret. Others may not be aware of it, because each one of us is forming part of that great vessel, the assembly, that we have been singing of, and is to have our own individual links, mainly in prayer, with divine Persons. So we have not to pray as the hypocrites do, and it tells us their mode of praying, that "they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets so that they should appear to men". I think it would indicate that prayer is to be secret and to God. Of course there is public prayer in which others are onlookers, we might say, and sympathetic with those who are praying, but in verse 6 it says, "But *thou*, when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father". The whole thought of this, I feel, is what is our own, what would attach to each individual. It says, "enter into thy chamber", that would be a place that is available for this kind of prayer, and then it says, "having shut thy door, pray to thy Father". How wonderful that is, a heavenly Father, One who cares for us. Sometimes, indeed often, we sing that hymn, "A holy Father's constant care" (hymn 138), and His care *is* constant. "Pray to thy Father who is in secret". I would just like to encourage the saints on this line that this is a secret matter. It is to be entered into, and not only entered into but I believe continued in, because other scriptures speak of persevering in prayer, persevering, Col 4: 2. How easily, I would have to say, I give up, but I read recently, and I have to be careful what I quote, but I read recently as to one who said that he could

see the answer to his prayers of forty years, J. Taylor vol 50, p: 114. God, our Father, is an Answerer of prayer: "Pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who sees in secret will render it to thee". How fine that is, not only that the Father is "thy Father"; it is a wonderful matter to pray to the Father; but then it goes on, "and thy Father who sees in secret will render it to thee". I cannot say much as to these things, but I would just like to encourage each one. When we are younger, how we need to cultivate these things, how we need to make it something that we enter into.

I read in relation to Jabez because his prayer is very interesting. It says that "Jabez was more honoured", or 'more honourable' (footnote), "than his brethren; and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bore him with pain". Then it goes on to say, "And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, Oh that thou wouldest richly bless me". How God delights to bless, and here is one who is asking to be blessed. "And Jabez called on the God of Israel": what can He not do, beloved hearers, the God of Israel? And it says, "Oh that thou wouldest richly bless me, and enlarge my border". He had expansive thoughts in his mind, not natural thoughts for what was his own, but it says "that thy hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil". The Lord's prayer in John 17 - what a prayer it is! These things enter into it. He did not pray that we would be taken out of the world but preserved from the evil in it. I suppose Jabez's prayer is on these lines. How we need to pray! There is a whole line of things which opens up in the matter of prayer. There are our individual prayers, our own matters which sometimes we are a bit selfish as to, but then how much there is to pray for. We have all our local brethren to pray for. I would remind the brethren again - I think I have said it before - as to one who said of an old sister that, during the night, she covered the whole world in her prayers. What scope there is for this kind of prayer! "That thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me!", and it says, "And God brought about what he had requested". Oh, think of that! "God brought about what he had had requested". Have you ever made a request like this? Beloved hearers, make a request like this because God will answer it.

Well, I read in relation to Daniel because we know that Daniel was marked by habitual prayer. It says earlier "his windows being open ...towards Jerusalem, he kneeled on his knees three times a day, and prayed", chap 6: 10.. That was the outlook he had in his prayers, and it

is the kind of outlook I would suggest we should have. This great vessel that is being formed, what a thing it is to pray for! But it says here in chapter 9: 3, "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes". You see, there is more than just prayer, not that I want to enter into that, but prayer here was the first thing anyway, "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications". I often quote where it says, "Be careful about nothing; but in everything", - everything - "with prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God", Phil 4: 6. I feel how far short I come in these things, but I would just desire to encourage one another. It is a thing we have recourse to, the matter of prayer. Then later on in verse 20 he says, "And whilst I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before Jehovah my God for the holy mountain of my God". What thoughts he had in his mind! What a prayer this is! He was "confessing my sin and the sin of my people". Well, there may be room for that and I think there is, but he goes on to say, "and presenting my supplication before Jehovah my God for the holy mountain of my God". We often speak of whole thoughts. I think Daniel represents that, one who prayed in relation to these whole thoughts, "the holy mountain of my God; whilst I was yet speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, flying swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation". Oh, how fine that is! There was something going up to God, and I believe there is that in prayer that it is going up to God. I think his prayer here had the character of the oblation. Oh, how suitable, shall we say reverently, that was to the nostrils of God. And it goes on to say, "And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, Daniel, I am now come forth to make thee skilful of understanding", and I just want to finish, "for thou art one greatly beloved".

Well, I feel the necessity for these things. As younger ones, we need to cultivate this line of things, make it habitual. There are good habits. We take on the bad habits so quickly, but I would just like to finish with what it says of Daniel that he was a man "greatly beloved". Well, may we be encouraged, for His Name's sake.

Edinburgh

18 December 2007

THE EFFECT OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST

Jim T Brown (Grangemouth)

Matthew 11: 28-30

Colossians 2: 20, 21

Colossians 3: 1-4

1 Thessalonians 4: 18

In reading these scriptures, I was thinking of the impact that Christ is intended to have on us. I feel challenged, beloved, as to what impact Christ has had on me and on my life. Where we read in chapter 11 of Matthew, a very well known chapter, very well known verses, is often used in the gospel preaching - I have often used it myself. And it is often used in occasions like these because the Lord Jesus in this section is not exactly speaking to sinners; He is speaking to saints. He is speaking to believers, persons who believe on Him, persons who have a relationship with Him, and He says, "Come to me". This is Christ in His life on earth. Now, we cannot come to a Christ who is on earth. We know but little of how He was here in His life on earth, but I believe we have been given enough to realise the character of Man who was here, a Man who was unique, a Man who was beyond compare. There was never anyone like Him. And He says in His life here, "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest". Is that not a wonderful invitation, beloved? And, you know, that can have its application to us every day of our lives. We can come to Jesus. We can know the blessed reality of what it is to come to a Man who is tender-hearted, a Man who expresses all that God is, and does so in love. He expresses the love of God. It has been found in expression in a blessed and glorious Man, and that Man would say, day by day, to each one of us, "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest". His desire, beloved, in the tenderness of His heart is that we should come into rest. The prophet Isaiah says, "This is the rest: cause the weary to rest", chap 28: 12. We find it in Christ. We find it in that one blessed and glorious Man who was so unique, so different from every other man, and He would say to us, "Come to me".

Then He says, "I am meek and lowly in heart". Who knew meekness the way Jesus knew meekness? Meekness is related to affliction. Who knew affliction the way Jesus knew affliction? "In all their affliction he was afflicted", Is 63: 9. He endured it, beloved. He "endured so great contradiction from sinners against himself", Heb 12: 3. How wonderful was the pathway of Jesus! He says, "for I am meek

and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light". He has a yoke, beloved, and the Lord Jesus in His ways with us would put a yoke upon us. He would put responsibility upon us. He would put His yoke upon us, but He says, "my yoke is easy, and my burden is light". He would never put upon us anything which we could not bear. He gives us the grace, He gives us the power to go through anything which He Himself would lay upon us. Well, this is the life of Christ.

In Colossians we have the death of Christ and the impact that it is intended to have upon us. It says, "If ye have died with Christ from the elements of the world, why as if alive in the world do ye subject yourselves to ordinances?" It seems as though, in spite of the fact that these Colossian saints had come under the sway of the death of Christ, they were allowing other things to divert them. They were allowing things like philosophy and vain deceit to allure them out of the way of subjection to Christ, v 8. So he says, why do you do it? And we may well ask ourselves the question: why do we allow other things to come in to divert us from the blessed Lord Jesus Christ? We have to reject certain things. There are things which are out of keeping with the Christian faith. There are certain things which are out of keeping with the Christian life, and I believe it is incumbent upon each one of us to reject these things, to be firm in our rejection of them. He is very strong in his language here, but it involves that we have died with Christ. If we have died with Christ these things which may appeal to us naturally lose their appeal for us. That is a very testing thing to say because these things do still appeal to each one of us, I am sure. They certainly appeal to me, but I believe the divine intention is that we should appreciate that we have died with Christ.

But then he says, "If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ". We *have* been "raised with the Christ", certain things, certain features, certain characteristics have been left in the grave. As we come to a judgment of these things, beloved, we leave them in the grave. We identify ourselves with the death of Christ. Now I just wonder often what impact the death of Jesus has had on me. What impact has the death of Jesus had on you, beloved brother and sister? I often think of these words in Deuteronomy where Moses says, "Jehovah was angry with me on your account", Deut 1: 37. As we think of Moses as a type of Christ, we realise that He has borne the wrath and judgment of a holy God in order that we may be set free, in order that we

may come into liberty. It says, "if therefore ye have been raised with the Christ", we have left these things in the grave and we have been raised with Christ.

So Paul says, "seek the things which are above, where the Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God". If the life of Christ here has its impact on us, and if the death of Christ has its impact on us, the current life of Christ where He is in glory is intended to have a tremendous impact upon our lives: "seek the things which are above, where the Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God". That is the area from which the blessed Holy Spirit has come in order that our hearts might be free as related to that blessed Man where He is in glory. "Have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth". So not only do we seek the things that are above but we have our minds on the things that are above. I believe that if Christ has His full impact upon us, we will indeed have our minds on heavenly things. This would be the main bent of our lives, not the puny things of this world, not these weak and feeble things that clearly had diverted these Colossian saints, but things related to a blessed Man where He is in glory. "Have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth; for ye have died, and your life is hid with the Christ in God". Then he says, "When the Christ is manifested who is our life". Oh, is Christ our life, beloved brethren? That is a great challenge to the heart of each one of us, but the divine intention is that Christ should practically be our life. Paul could say in Philippians, "For for me to live is Christ", chap 1: 21. I believe, beloved, that is normal Christianity: "For for me to live is Christ". "When the Christ is manifested who is our life, then shall ye also be manifested with him in glory". These references we have had this evening to the coming of the Lord Jesus are intended to give us a thrill in our hearts. Very soon He is coming, beloved, as our brother said at the preaching we had on Lord's Day. The rapture is ahead but also the public appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a wonderful time that will be! It is intended, I believe, to have its present impact upon us. Very soon He is coming. As another has said, 'He is on His way'. Very soon He will be here to take us to be with Himself. Let us be constantly on the lookout! Let us be as the prudent virgins who have oil in their vessels for the light so that the light is shining for Christ, Matt 25: 8, 9.

Beloved, let the life of Christ have its full impact upon us! Let His life as it was here, let His death, let His life where He is now in glory each have its full impact upon us so that we are ready for that great and

glorious day when He Himself will come. Indeed we can hasten that day. When it takes place is in the Father's hand, as we know. Even the Son knows not the hour (Mark 13: 32), but, oh beloved, let us hasten that day by being ready, ready for that great and glorious meeting in the air, wonderfully encouraging words, as we read in Thessalonians: "encourage one another with these words". May we just be occupied with Christ more and more, beloved, for His Name's sake!

Grangemouth

2 August 2007