

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 32

November 2009

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SAFE AND WELL

Ron D Plant

John 5: 1-9, 15

Mark 5: 24-34

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Luke 15: 27

We have been speaking about very great things, indeed glorious things, together over these days, and, of course, we would always have to confess that we but touch the very fringes of them. That is why I think Paul, writing to the Ephesians, prays in the first of the two prayers in that epistle that “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of him, being enlightened in the eyes of your heart”, Eph 1: 17, 18. There are wonderful things which are available to the believer by the Spirit, the greatness of God’s inheritance in the saints, also touched on there in Ephesians, divine thoughts in their fulness, such that if we could only open our hearts to the fulness of them it would eclipse everything that this world can offer. These are very great things and I trust that there has been some impression left that may have whetted our appetite a little for them.

My impression for this preaching is the wonder that the One who is so great, the One we have spoken of, “by whom also he made the worlds” (Heb 1: 2), who created all things, “the visible and invisible”, and all the things that we read of in Colossians which “have been created by him and for him” (1: 16), our Lord Jesus Christ, is the One who in the glad tidings has a care for you. We know what it is like to sit in the preaching and other meetings and to listen to the truth being spoken and to hear of great divine things, and apparently some of the company enjoying them very much, and yet they seem to pass us by. It is a wonderful thing to know that the One who inhabits the highest glory is the One who would come near to you. He would come really near to you with a desire that you

might not just be an onlooker in the vicinity of divine things, but you might be brought into the fulness of them. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Lord of glory would come near to you tonight in the glad tidings to appeal to your heart.

I read the reference in Luke 15 where the servant goes out to the older son and says, “because he has received him safe and well”. Somebody said to us once that God’s desire for you in the glad tidings is contained in those words, “safe and well”. It is not that you might just be on the periphery of divine things but that you might be ‘safe *and* well’. There are two things there because we know what it is, some of us, to be safe, but not well; we know what it is to know God’s salvation yet not be in the enjoyment of it. We know what it is to know our sins forgiven and to have peace with God in relation to our eternal destiny, but as far as the present time, we may be troubled and unsettled as to many things. I think that expression covers both, “because he has received him safe and well”. The Lord Jesus has a desire for you, as He has a desire for me, and for everyone here, that you might not only be aware of the greatness of divine things, but that you might be a participator in them, and for that you need to be “safe and well”. Do you know what it is to be safe? Are you safe in relation to your eternal welfare and destiny? Are you safe? Young people like to be safe. Parents provide an environment, as far as they are able, which is safe. But as far as our eternal destiny is concerned, these things are beyond the reach of human ability, and when we look for safety as to our eternal welfare we have to do with God, we have to do with our Lord Jesus Christ.

I will tell a little story, which I have told many times. The people of Israel were in Egypt, and Pharaoh was refusing to let God’s people go. God had brought the plagues upon Egypt, and the final plague came upon them where the firstborn in every house in Egypt was to die as Jehovah passed through the land. Now, suppose there were two houses in Egypt at that time, both with Israelite families in them. They had heard the word of God that they were to take of the blood of the lamb that they had kept in the house, and they were to dip a bunch of hyssop into the blood, and put the blood

across the top of the door and down the two door-posts of the entrance of the house. God had said, "I will go through the land of Egypt and smite all the firstborn ... and when I see the blood, I will pass over you", Exod 12: 12, 13. The man of the first house could not see and understand how applying the blood like this could possibly make any difference. He was in terrible fear for his family and anxiety about what would happen, but in obedience to the word, despite his anxieties and concerns about it, he took of the blood and put it on the door-posts and the lintel of his house and shut the door for the night. He spent the whole night in anxiety, awake and waiting for the morning to see what would happen. There was another man in the second house who had full confidence in what was said. If God had said that the blood on the door-posts and the lintel of his house would ensure its safety, he had full confidence that if God said that, that is what would happen. So he took of the blood and put it on the door-posts and the lintel of the house, shut the door, confident in his God and in His word, that what He said He would do. 'Now', the old preacher has asked, 'which was the safer house?'. The answer was that they were both safe, because it is not what I see and understand of the blood of Jesus, it is what God sees, and if I take shelter under the blood of Christ, my eternal destiny, my eternal future is secure through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember that, if you remember nothing else, that when it comes to faith in the blood, it is not what I see in the value of the precious blood of Christ - I could never put the proper value upon it - but it is what God sees. What God sees is that the One who meant everything to Him, the One who fulfilled His will, the Man who was here upon this earth, in obedience to His will, who demonstrated in manhood everything that He had ever looked for in a man, went into death and shed His precious blood that that blood might become the purchase price for the safety of millions. There are countless millions of persons who put their confidence in the fact that what God saw in that blood was great enough to save them forever. These are very precious things. Remember this: both the houses were safe. It is not your feelings or fears, it is what God sees. By faith lay hold of that work of Christ, which you can never appreciate in its fulness;

what God sees in it is great enough to save you. Have you got that? Do you know what it is to put your confidence in God and in the work of Christ in relation to all your sins and your guilt, and all the things that have entered into your life?

The younger ones here will know something like me about the guilt of sin. What a wonderful thing it is when we come to put our trust in relation to all of that in the Saviour's work and in His Person, and in His present position as a risen and glorious Saviour:

My sins - O the bliss of this glorious thought -
My sins - not in part, but the whole -
Were borne on the cross, and are gone evermore.
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

(Hymn 238)

Have you got that? It is a precious thing if you have your faith in the blood of Jesus and in His precious work, and in the fact that He is now a risen, glorious, living Saviour in heaven. "If thou ... shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from among the dead, thou shalt be saved", Rom 10: 9.

That is the first thing I would like to speak of in the glad tidings, that ability to save. Nothing man can give you can save you. Man does his best, but how often in relation to this world things go wrong, things break down, things do not work any more, or do not work as they should: catastrophes and disasters come about. There has never been a catastrophe in relation to the word of God. Everything that He says is sure; that salvation is secure. I can tell you this, beloved young one, that for myself, my faith and trust is in the blood of Jesus, and the work of Jesus and the Person who has risen out of death and lives in heaven, a glorious living Saviour. That is what it is to be saved.

But are you well? As we get older, we learn that we are not always well. We are not always well in our Christian life either, in relation to the Christian pathway, where sometimes the enemy can assail us. Sometimes we know what it is for Satan to come in and trouble us in our thoughts and try to destabilise us. These are very

real things. I wonder how many troubled hearts there are amongst us. It says in scripture, “why are thoughts rising in your hearts?”, Luke 24: 38. The Lord Jesus knows all this and the glad tidings come to us, not only to save us, but to make us well.

I have read these other scriptures because they speak of those who have been made well. John is the last gospel written, written in days when things were breaking down publicly. John does not write directly about the assembly, he does not write about any organised structure, he does not speak about disciples in that way. He has one thing only before him: he speaks about Christ. He presents the Lord Jesus Christ; he loves to speak of Jesus. John is not a historical gospel; he does not write it as a history like the others. He writes with a purpose. He says at the end, “Many other signs therefore also Jesus did before his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life in his name”, John 20: 30, 31. He speaks about a Man. We have been speaking of the glory of that Man, and John loves to speak of Him, and he writes as a lover of Christ. He speaks about the Lord Jesus Christ all the way through his gospel, and you find things in it that you do not find in the other gospels; and always he speaks about the Man, the Man that was here. I have read of one of those occasions. John the baptist says, “A man comes after me who takes a place before me, because he *was* before me”, John 1: 30. John, the writer, as an admirer of Christ, uses every opportunity that he can use to magnify Jesus. I would like to do that. In this scripture that we have read, the man by the pool at Bethesda says, “Sir, I have not a man”. The woman in chapter 4 says, “Come, see a man who told me all thing I had ever done” (John 4: 29), and in John 9 the blind man who was healed says, “A man called Jesus made mud and anointed mine eyes” (v 11), and right at the end, as Pilate brings out the Lord Jesus Christ to die, even he, hardened, hard-bitten Roman governor, is moved to say, “Behold the man!”, John 19: 5. That is John’s gospel which in summary, you could say, is about the Man.

The gospel is about a Man, not about a creed. It is not about a book of laws; it is about the Lord Jesus Christ Himself personally, God's Man. I want you to imagine this pool at Bethesda, which apparently had healing powers as an angel appeared at certain seasons and troubled the waters. I cannot say much about it; that is what the scripture says - any one who went into the water first was healed. You can imagine that man had made something of this place as a place of healing and Bethesda had these five porches. Entrances had been built into the place, as men would do with such places. It is a bit like the gates of Christendom, all the different entrances that men's minds have conceived, Methodism, Catholicism, and all kinds of 'isms' in Christendom that purport to show the way to salvation. Maybe these are like the porches of Bethesda. But, there is no 'ism', no position, that can bring you salvation in relation to your never-dying soul. The only One who can do that is the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ personally. That was the position here and all these persons were lying there waiting for the water to move, waiting for the angel to come, waiting for something to happen. One of these was this man "who had been suffering under his infirmity thirty and eight years". That is a long time. He was lying there waiting. Presumably he was crippled and could not reach the water, and the Lord Jesus comes alongside him and says, "Wouldest thou become well?". How long have you been around the Christian company? How long have you known what it is to be in a condition of things where you are not really able to fully participate in the whole thing? The Lord Jesus would say to you today, "Wouldest thou become well?"; do you want to not only be saved, but do you want to feel well? Do you want to come into the full joy of Christian life? Do you want to know what it is not only to have salvation as some distant thing, or something that is on paper, but do you want to know the blessings as an inward truth by the Holy Spirit? The man says, "Sir, I have not a man" - beloved, the gospel would present the Man for you. The Lord Jesus says to him, "Arise, take up thy couch and walk. And immediately the man became well, and took up his couch and walked: and on that day was Sabbath". The man "went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had

made him well". No position in Christendom, no ecclesiastical position however distinguished, no building, no church can ever bring you into soul salvation and wellness; the only One who can make you well is Jesus. That is the truth. I am not saying that we do not have a responsibility as to our walk down here because we do, but the first thing in becoming well is by contact with Christ.

Someone said to us once, 'You do not find the Lord Jesus through a company, you find the company through the Lord Jesus Christ'. You become a person who has had to do with Him, and the man said it was Jesus who had made him well. How many persons in this room could say that - 'It is Jesus who made me well'?

I read of the woman in Mark who had a flux of blood twelve years, a state of things which was draining her life away. If this condition had gone on she would have died, and for a long time she had suffered from it, and suffered much under many physicians, and had spent everything that she had. She had found no advantage from it, and then it says, "but had rather got worse". Even the best that man could offer had been of no advantage. If we turn this into a spiritual context, there is nothing that man can do, despite his best efforts, and despite everything that money could buy, that could bring peace to a troubled soul. There is nothing of that kind that you could spend your money on and your time on that will make your soul well. You may feel that you could try becoming a better person, and that if you committed yourself in a different way or to a different company, it would bring you joy, peace and satisfaction. Beloved, you could spend it all to no avail. The only thing that will bring you these things is if you have to do with Christ. She says, "If I shall touch but his clothes I shall be healed". What a wonderful thing that is. Does that appeal to any one here who feels their life is draining away, and spiritual life, spiritual energy, and enjoyment is still missing, and that spiritually you are not well? Beloved, today, if you will have to do with Christ alone, you can be restored, not only for safety, but to wellness. I commend that to you. It was Jesus who made her well. The only One who can make you well is Christ. You say, 'I have a problem, I have difficulties in my life'. Others concerned

for you might try and help you, thank God for that, but the only One who can make a difference in relation to your soul is Christ. The only way that I can find peace and fulfilment and joy is through the Lord Jesus Christ personally.

I read the last scripture in Revelation - it does not involve a person, it involves a place, one of the assemblies that the Lord Jesus addresses Himself to in Revelation, the last one, the one that marks the last days of the church's history here, Laodicea, lukewarm, full of pride and arrogance and all the things that tends to mark religious presumption everywhere. It is a company and sometimes we have situations and difficulties that come up in the Christian company. Some may say that what such and such a place needs is this or that, and what they need to resolve matters is this or that, or they need to follow this advice or that advice, and all these things. Beloved, as it is with the persons, so it is with an assembly, the only way that it will become well is to make way for Christ. I say that very simply because we may try many remedies for all these things, but only Jesus can make you well. In divine things, whether it is a person, whether it is a situation, whether it is a company, whatever it is, it is only as we make way for Christ that it can be remedied.

I commend this to you. We have spoken about the One who fills the highest glory, but He has a desire, that One who fills eternity has a desire, that you might not only know what it is to be safe in your Christian life by faith in the work and Person of our Lord Jesus, but that you might be in the fulness and enjoyment of it. You will only get that by having to do with Himself. The Lord of glory would have to do with me, would have to do with you. Make Him your Friend. The hymn writer says:

Jesus! Our Saviour, Shepherd, Friend,
Thou Prophet, Priest, and King,
Our Lord, our Life, our Way, our End,
Accept the praise we bring.
(Hymn 54)

These are very real things; make it real to you. It was John Newton who wrote that hymn, one with a long history away from God, who knew what degradation was in his early life until God touched his heart through the Lord Jesus Christ, and he became devoted to Him for the rest of his life. May such be the message and the song of each one, for His Name's sake.

Walton on the Naze

28th September 2008

THREE QUESTIONS

Alan A Croot

Genesis 3: 9

Matthew 8: 27

Acts 16: 30

We have read three extremely important questions. I would like to speak a little about who asks the questions, about why the question is asked, and what the answer is to each.

We will begin in Genesis. I have not read the scripture that surrounds these verses. I do not wish to take them out of context at all, but, even the youngest will know and understand the setting in which these questions are raised. The first one: Man, Adam and Eve, in the garden of Eden, having sinned, having eaten of the tree that God said Man was not to have eaten of. Man is there in the garden, that garden of Eden, planted with the very best that God could provide for His creature and, having set Man there in the midst of it, God comes to speak with Man and He asks him a question. God Himself asks this question. Now I believe God would still ask this question and He would ask it of every one of us and He is asking it now, "Where art thou?"

Why does God ask? It is not that God did not know where Adam was. We know that God knows where you are, where I am. There is nothing hidden from God. God asks this question, and He would ask it of you and me tonight, for each one of us to contemplate; where do we stand before God? God says, "Where art thou?" Adam does not explain where he was hiding; that was not the point. God is asking this question to establish where you are in your relationship with Him. How do you feel as God asks you the question? Consider it. There are two people alive in the world, only two, and God, the Creator of them, asks the question. There are not many places you can hide.

It is not like sitting in a class of thirty children and the physics teacher says, 'Who can tell me the law of ...?' You can often duck the

question then, can you not? But it is not like that. You cannot avoid this question. You may say, sitting in your chair, 'I do not have to answer it'. My friend, you have got to answer this question. One day you will have to answer it, and I suggest you pay attention to it today. It is very important. This is the first question asked of Man after sin had come into this world, and sin is still here and sin will stay here until the Lord Jesus comes to claim His own and until eventually this world is rolled up and done away with. "Where art thou?" God asks this question that man's conscience should be exercised and He would ask it tonight. You may be able to tell me, 'I am sheltering under the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is my Saviour'. What a wonderful position to be in! That is an answer which God loves to hear. He would like all men to be able to answer this question in that way. I wonder whether you can. What would you answer to this question? Adam does not answer it directly, does he? But what he goes on to say, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I feared, because I am naked; and I hid myself", is an answer. Do you feel like that? Where are you in your soul? Where are you in your relationship with your Creator, the One who could say, "And God created Man in his image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them", Gen 1: 27. Who more important than God could ask you a personal question today? Think about it. What answer can you give to God?

Now we will just touch on Matthew's gospel. In Matthew we have very different circumstances. You may like to consider for a moment the four thousand years that have intervened between these two questions and what had happened. Each of us is very privileged to know something of what has happened in between. There may be those in this room who could recount all the Books, for instance, that come between Genesis and Matthew, and maybe some that could tell you much of the history from memory that goes through each. Everybody here could tell me, 'Well there was Abraham', and it says of Abraham that he walked before God. And there was David, a man who fought battles for God in a wonderful way. There was Jonah. He tried to get away from God when God asked him to

do something, but God had His own way with him. We could all say something, under God's grace, that He has given us to teach us from the things that have intervened. Now we have the disciples accompanying the Lord Jesus here in this very world in which we are. They had been with Him for some time at this point and they are with Him, as you know, in a boat on the sea in Galilee. They had seen very wonderful things which the Lord Jesus had done in His power which no other man had ever been able to do before or since. These men had been wonderfully impressed by the influence and power of the Lord Jesus Christ. They knew it. They accompanied the Lord Jesus because they had learned to love Him. They accompanied Him because He had called them out of what they were doing to go with Him and they had gone. Can you imagine One's call so powerful that you leave behind what you are doing? Some of the men were fishermen, and they just left behind their nets, their boats, their parents and they went and they followed the Lord Jesus Christ. Think of the power of the call of the Lord Jesus. He still calls today and He is calling you and me.

But let us come to our question. These men are there in the midst of a storm in the sea in a tiny boat and they think they are going to die, and they call upon the Lord Jesus in their need. It says that He awoke and He says to them, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then, having arisen, he rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm". How wonderful, but what does this rouse in these people's hearts? What does it do? The question comes, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" These men had seen lepers cleansed - an incurable disease healed, you may say, in a moment. They had seen blind people given sight, they had seen demons cast out, they had seen water turned into wine. These men know of the power of the Lord Jesus already; so this question is asked by people who knew Him well, who have been with Him, but still they ask it. It is wonderful to contemplate and I would encourage you to think about all three of these questions for as long as you can remember them. "What sort

of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" He is a Man like no other man. What does the hymn-writer say?

The mighty God, a Man become!
(Hymn 34)

This was none other than God here in a little boat on the sea of Galilee in the country of Israel; there was a Man asleep in a boat. How close God has come to you and me! How could He have come closer than to come as a Man, a perfect, holy Man? These men knew He was different. They had learnt that in the Lord Jesus there was something they had never seen before. Have you seen it? Have you been brought to marvel and ask a question like this, "What sort of man is this?" Think about it, contemplate it. It is worth contemplation till the day you die and you will never regret minutes, hours, days, maybe years spent in contemplation of the answer to this question, "What sort of man is this?" Why did they ask the question? They ask out of sheer wonder! They have come to know something of Jesus. You may say they thought they knew Him, and then they find that the very universe is obedient to His word. What about you, dear friend? What about me? He could address the clouds, He could address the sea and in a moment there was calm.

We read at the beginning, we just referred to the scripture, of God creating us in His image. How much rather, do you think, we should be obedient to the Lord Jesus? What does He desire us to do? He desires us to come to know Him, to contemplate Him, to put our trust in Him. These men put their trust in Him. Would you not put your trust in a Man like this? Is He not attractive to you, One who has so much in His grasp, so much in His hand, and He wants to give you the very best of what He has got? He wants to share it with you. He wants you to enjoy it as well. You can be a co-heir along with the Lord Jesus. How wonderful is that! What more could God do for the an that is created in His image than to give him to share in what the Lord Jesus enjoys in sonship before Him?

The answer to the question, "What sort of man is this?" is that it is God Himself who was there, but it is not an answer which, in a

sense, finished there. That is absolute fact, but you could go on thinking many, many things that are answers to this question. Here is a Man who is holy, untouched by sin, untouched by the ravages of this world, here in flesh and blood conditions, but not a sinner. Here is a Man of whom it says that no guile was found in His mouth, 1 Pet 2: 22. Here is a Man who in every step and moment of His life fulfilled God's will in perfection, a wonderful, holy Man.

Let us move on to the scripture in Acts. Here we have very different circumstances. Again we know the scripture. We have two men, who both love the Lord Jesus. We see them taken, beaten, their backs are bleeding from stripes which had been inflicted upon them, they are cast into a jail in very horrible circumstances, and their feet chained to the stocks. What was the result? There were two men singing praise to God. I do not know whether that prison had ever heard anything like that before, whether those walls had ever taken account of anything like that before. I suggest probably not. Here were men, men who had committed themselves to the Lord Jesus, men who could give you an answer far better than I could as to "What sort of man is this?". They knew very well what sort of Man the Lord Jesus was. Their faith and trust was in Him, and we know that as they were there undaunted by all that man had tried to inflict upon them it did not manage to stop their enjoyment of the Lord Jesus and His love, of speaking of Him and of His greatness, of their trust in Him.

The earthquake comes and it says the doors were opened and the foundations of the prison shook, and it was open for all of them to go out. The jailor comes, the jailor who had been charged with the responsibility of keeping of these men safely, and it says, "And having asked for lights, he rushed in, and, trembling, fell down before Paul and Silas. And leading them out said, Sirs, what must I do that I may be saved?" This is asked by a sinner. It is asked by a man who becomes conscious of his own state of soul. It is as if God asked him, "Where art thou?" Ah, we do not know how God had spoken to him. He must have thought to himself, 'These prisoners are very different to every other prisoner I have ever had'. He must

have been thinking about that. We do not know how God had spoken to him, how He had prepared him for this, but this question is asked by a man who is a sinner, and I would urge you, dear friend, to think about this question too because each one of us in our natural state and away from God are sinners. This is a question which is very, very pertinent to every one of us, “what must I do that I may be saved?” Why did this man ask? Because he recognised his need; he could see it. He wanted a share, something of the joy and life that he saw in Paul and Silas. There was something there in these men which he had never seen before, something that he wanted a part of. As you see someone who has their faith and trust in Jesus, what do you see? You see somebody who has peace, somebody who has joy. Maybe you know what it is like to have it in your own heart. I wonder what others see when they see you. Do they see something like this jailor saw in Paul and Silas? If you were unjustly treated and taken and put alongside other men and locked up, would they see in you something that was seen in these men, Paul and Silas? Would it be such that others in that prison would say to you, “what must I do that I may be saved?” What a testimony there is here to the Lord Jesus and to His work in these two men! He asks because he too wants to share what it is like to be a forgiven sinner. I trust, dear friend, that you would like also to know what it is to be a forgiven sinner. I hope every one of us would have been able to give the answer, from experience, “Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house”.

Now we know that that does not mean that just because the jailor believed all his house would be saved, but it is for the jailor to believe and all his house to believe individually and then they would all be saved. That applies today. It is not sufficient just that mother and father believe. You need to believe yourself. Now, you may say, it is not that I do not believe. This is worth again a lot of contemplation, what is meant by “believe on the Lord Jesus”? There is more to this, dear friend, than simply saying, ‘Yes, I believe that Jesus was here and He suffered for me’. There is again the rest of your life’s contemplation worth thinking about believing, believing

on. It is just not 'Believe', it is "Believe on". I think we need to take on the gospel, take it on. One has said that we need to search it out, and these things are worth searching about, search into the glad tidings, search into the Lord Jesus, "What sort of man is this?" Think about Him, search after salvation and see how much there is in "believe on the Lord Jesus". Make it your own and nurture it, and you will find as you believe on the Lord Jesus that everything He has done becomes important to you, and every aspect of it is vital to your salvation because this is the Man who has given His life for you, taken up that perfect, holy life, laid it down upon the cross when He was made sin for you and for me, the Just for the unjust. It has only happened once. It only needed to happen once. Scripture says, "even as by one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death ... so also by the obedience of the one the many will be constituted righteous", Rom 5: 12,19. The Lord Jesus having taken your case and my case upon Himself, having been made sin for you and for me, has borne God's judgment - God's wrath upon all that we have done - that you and I should go free. Well may we ask the question: "What sort of man is this?" 'The mighty God, a Man become' to take up your case and mine in love that you and I should go free.

Think of those women who came to the tomb in which the Lord Jesus was laid. What did they find? They found the stone was rolled away. They found the tomb empty. You may ask the question again, "What sort of man is this?"; One of whom it says in the Old Testament that God would not "allow thy Holy One to see corruption", Ps 16: 10. He would not allow the Lord Jesus to remain there in that grave. The hymn-writer says:

Up from the grave He arose.

He has risen out of that grave never to go that way again, taken up from this world, taken up to be crowned at God's right hand with glory and honour, a place that no other man could take, no other man could access, but the Lord Jesus is there at God's right hand for you and me. He would like you to have a portion with Him in that place of glory and you share in it, something of the greatness of the place that He has as God's beloved Son as we enter into the

privilege of sonship, having put out faith and trust in Him, having been taken up by Him like we were this morning, taken in the enjoyment of sonship into God's own presence. What a wonderful Man He is! 'Believe on Him' is a very deep thing, it is a detailed thing in one way. In another way it is very simple and links very much with what we sang in our hymn,

Simply trust Him, that is all.

(Hymn 439)

Well, I have not more to say, but I would trust that we will remember these three questions, that we will think about them, we will think about who asked them. We maybe put ourselves in some of those questions, we will think about why they were asked and think about the answer. "Where art thou?" Let us never forget that this is a question God asks of each one of us. And then the men that accompanied the Lord Jesus; "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" Then a man whose need becomes so apparent to him that he simply says, "Sirs, what must I do that I may be saved?" May we all be able to answer these questions! May we take them to ourselves and may we think about them, and may we each be found as those that have put our faith and trust in this wonderful Man, One who has shed His precious blood to save us, the One who is now seated at God's right hand. May it be so, for His Name's sake.

Sunbury

23rd November 2008

THE LORD JESUS AS A BUILDER

John Wright

Matthew 14: 23-33, 16: 13-8

1 Peter 2: 1-10

I would like to speak of the Lord Jesus as a Builder, and of the structure He is building, and the material He has for building. In Matthew 16 He speaks of "my assembly". This is not the assembly from the point of view of what it is in heavenly relationships with Him, but it is what He is building here. It will soon be transported to heaven but at the moment what the Lord is building is here. It came into evidence at Pentecost and the Lord has been building and adding to it ever since. Is each one of us exercised to have part in that building? If it is His building, He will select the most suited material for it. He is not selecting any kind of material. Peter is an example of the kind of person He is building into His assembly. He was the leading apostle but he is also an example of the kind of material. The Lord is not building something that is attached to this world's system, whether it be religious or political, because He is rejected here. Men are building up a system, and they considered Christ when He was here as they said, 'He is not suitable for our building. He is worthless'. That is what they said; they cast Him away as worthless. So the Lord Jesus is not building up anything in connection with this world's system because He has no part in it.

The Lord Jesus also considered what was here in the world and He could not build that into what He was going to build. He could not build the Roman Empire into it, and He could not build the Jewish system into it, and He could not build the heathen darkness that enveloped the gentiles into it. So He began a completely new structure. The Lord Jesus felt it that He was rejected here; He did not find a home in the world; He could not because it was all so foreign to Him. Indeed it grieved Him in His heart to see what was transpiring in the world. He found comfort in His disciples and in that

company of disciples there was the nucleus of what He was going to build.

In this section of scripture, the Lord is facing His rejection. The beginning of the chapter brings out that John the baptist was slain, that he was killed, and the Lord knew what was ahead for Himself, that he should be crucified and slain, but the Lord goes on with His service. He feeds the poor of the flock, and He puts His disciples through a testing experience. This was all preparation for part in the structure that He was going to build and Peter brings out the kind of material for that building. You might say, 'Well, Peter failed', but he showed that he was in advance of the others when he walked on the water to go to Jesus.

It was a comfort that the Lord was on high. He was on the mountain praying and it is a comfort to us that the Lord takes account of us where we are and He is interceding for us. But these disciples were in a testing position; they were in this boat which was tossed by the waves, and the wind was contrary. It is not going to be easy if you are going to have part in what the Lord is doing. If you want an easy time here, you will not have part in this system. "But in the fourth watch of the night he went off to them, walking on the sea." He waited until then, the fourth watch of the night. He could have come in the first watch of the night; He waited until the fourth watch of the night. That was deliberate on the Lord's part. The Lord allows things to go on to test us. "And the disciples, seeing him walking on the sea, were troubled, saying, it is an apparition." He was going off to them but they did not recognise Him, and it is an exercise; do we recognise the movements of the Lord Jesus? His movements at the present time are not in relation to the world. He is going to take up His rights and take up the affairs of this world, but His movements at the present time are in relation to His own who are here and this scripture brings out His supremacy. He was walking on the waters, however rough they were. Is not the Lord Jesus supreme? Is He not above everything here? We often get troubled, we must admit, but they did not recognise Him; "they cried out through fear. But Jesus immediately spoke to them, saying, Take

courage; it is *I*; be not afraid. And Peter answering him said, Lord, if it be *thou* command me to come to thee upon the waters". I have known this, beloved brethren, in critical times in the testimony (and we are in critical days now), the Lord saying "it is *I*: be not afraid". And Peter says, "Lord, if it be *thou*, command me to come to thee". To whom can we go? In John's gospel, Peter says to the Lord Jesus, "To whom shall we go?", chap 6: 68. Not '*Where* will we go?': '*To whom* will we go?' Peter says in his epistle, "To whom coming, a living stone". In that epistle he is drawing on his own experience to help the saints, but have we come to Him, beloved brethren? "Go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach", Heb 13: 13. Peter left the boat and walked on the waters to go to Jesus. You might say, 'Oh well, he began to sink', but first of all he walked on the waters to go to Jesus. No one else in the boat did that, perhaps they would rather stay in what they thought was the safety of the boat. The one thing about Peter, despite his failings, was that he had affection for the Lord and he would say, 'Lord, if that be thou, if that is where Thou art, I must reach Thee where Thou art. I would rather be with Thee than in the boat'.

And then he looked at the waves and he began to sink. He saw the trouble and he was afraid. I have often said to the Lord, 'Lord save me'. What was the answer? Jesus immediately stretched out His hand and saved him. Would Peter ever forget that experience? Would Peter forget it in all the troubles that faced him in the testimonial setting later? We need, beloved brethren, help in how to overcome. To be honest, I often feel very weak but He is strong. Sometimes the children sing -

I am weak but He is strong

- how true that is. His arm is there to stretch out and save us. The Lord had to rebuke them for their lack of faith and in His love He will rebuke us. He says in Revelation, "*I* rebuke and discipline as many as I love", chap 3: 19. They came to the realisation of who the Lord Jesus was through this experience.

In Matthew 16 we come to another experience of Peter's; this was a spiritual experience. Have you had a spiritual experience with the Lord Jesus? The structure that the Lord is building is a spiritual structure, it is a spiritual house. The assembly is a spiritual entity; it cannot be taken account of by sight. Persons have buildings and say, 'This is the house of God', but the structure that the Lord is building is a spiritual one and it requires spiritual persons. So the Lord raises the question here: "Who do men say that I ... am?" So, beloved brethren, what can we say about the Lord Jesus? What can we say as to who He is? 'Well', you say, 'the scripture says this about Him or that about Him', and that would be true, but what have you come to yourself?. You might say, 'Well this was a special revelation to Peter', and it *was* a special revelation to Peter, but that does not mean that we cannot arrive at something ourselves as to who the Lord is. We have meetings, there is ministry proceeding, and spiritual ministry would bring before us something of Christ, something for us to lay hold of for ourselves. Have I gained anything today as to the greatness of Christ for myself? We have an advantage over Peter. He had this revelation from the Father but as having the Holy Spirit we have the power to obtain things. Mr Raven helped us to see that we get things by the Spirit. We do not exactly get things from the Scriptures; we get things by the Spirit. Then we can go to the Scriptures to get the words to express what we have got. It is possible to get the words without the substance of it. Peter made his confession, "Thou art the Christ the son of the living God". How delightful that was to the Lord Jesus to hear that, and He says, "flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee but my Father who is in the heavens". Then He says, "I say unto thee that *thou* art Peter". It is not exactly who Peter was, it was what he was. He was a stone for the building and he was a living stone. Then the Lord Jesus says, "and on this rock I will build my assembly". The rock is not Peter (as some people say); the rock is the revelation that Peter had as to the Son of God. Peter was not the rock, he was a stone for the building, and the Lord says, "and on this rock I will build my assembly". The Lord is building His assembly and He is looking for material for it, and He says, "and hades' gates shall no prevail

against it". You might say, 'Well, why has all the ruin come into the church?' Satan has set up an imitation; the real structure is here and it is impregnable, it is Christ's building. Am I built into it? I need the Spirit if I am going to be built into it. Whilst every believer belongs to the assembly, I do not think that you could say that every believer is built into it; it needs the sealing of the Holy Spirit. I just raise this, beloved brethren, that we might be exercised about it, that we all might find a vital part in it.

In 1 Peter 2 he is helping the saints into the truth and he is drawing upon the experience he had. There are certain things that we have to lay aside; malice and guile, etc. But then there are things that we are to desire: "the pure mental milk of the word that by it ye might grow up to salvation". What does it mean "to grow up to salvation"? This cannot be eternal salvation. My own impression of this is that by 'growing up to salvation' you grow more after the stature of Christ. If Christ was rejected and cast away here, I shall be as well, and that will be salvation for me. But then there is not only salvation in what we are saved from but there is salvation in what we are saved to or for. We are saved to have part in this structure which takes character from Christ. He says, "if indeed ye have tasted that the Lord is good". Have we all tasted that? How good the Lord is! So we want to keep coming to Him, do we not? "To whom coming" it is not 'have come' but "To whom coming, a living stone, cast away indeed as worthless by men, but with God chosen". He is the Man of God's choice. It was not an arbitrary choice. God has made known the choice of His Man, this Man, because of the moral worth and beauty in Him. And then he says, "Yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ". And then he goes on to speak of this stone as being the cornerstone, it gives character and strength to the building and it is, "elect, precious: and he that believes on him shall not be put to shame". Later on he speaks of this stone, "which the builders cast away as worthless, this is become the head of the corner". It is the Head of the corner, beloved brethren.

Well, I do not think that I should say any more. Do you want to be part of this building? Are you prepared to come under the Lord's hand and be educated for it? Are you attracted to Him, attached to the Lord Jesus, that you keep coming to Him and take character from Him? Well, may the Lord help us in it. Amen.

Anand, India

12th December 2008

THE BEARER OF OUR SINS

Richard M Brown

1 Peter 2: 24

I draw the words of this verse to your attention because I believe each one of them is full of holy meaning. You will notice the first ones speak of “who himself”, which as we know is a reference to our Lord Jesus. And, friends and brethren, there are times when I can scarcely believe that the Lord Jesus actually bore my sins. I say that simply because by God’s grace I do believe it. But it is not easy to take in, first of all, that there should be a man who has actually felt the burden and the pain of the things that I have done and, secondly, that *that Man* should be our Lord Jesus Christ. It was “himself”, you see, who “bore our sins in his body on the tree”.

I should like you to ponder that for a moment because I would say that, generally, we are far too light about our sins. Part of the reason for that is that we are living in a society which has departed from God. It is a society which laughs at sin. These things can affect our minds; they can influence the way we think, even subconsciously. But that is only part of the problem, because there is in all our hearts that which will seek to excuse ourselves. If we stop to think about our sins at all the tendency often is to compare ourselves with others, to seek to persuade ourselves that what we have done is not as bad as it appears, and so on.

Then there is Satan. The enemy of our souls is very active. He may not prevent you coming to the gospel preaching if you must, but he does not like to see a person who is under exercise about his sins. If there should be any stirrings of conscience with you he is quick to draw near with soothing words to lull you back to sleep again. How ready we have been to give heed to his blandishments.

So the effect of all this is that we are very light about our sins. Even as to the matter of repentance, one has proved that it is quite possible to turn in repentance to God simply because we know it is

something that we ought to do without there being with us any real sorrow for sin.

What is the answer to this problem? How are we to be brought to see ourselves, and be brought to see our sins as God sees them? I submit that the only place where we can grasp the enormity of what we have done, the gravity of being a guilty sinner, is at the cross of Jesus: to see Him there with *my* sins upon Him; and to understand that it is because of what I have done that Jesus suffered as He did. It was *my* sins that put Him there. What a point that is to come to.

One of the most poignant verses in the Old Testament is in the prophet Zechariah where, in speaking of His earthly people, Jehovah says, "They shall look on me whom they have pierced", Zech 12: 10. Think of Jehovah saying that. How could such a state of affairs ever have come about, that the Man who as to His Person is God should be found nailed to a cross? What a sight, a cross of shame, and One hanging upon it who had come down out of heaven. Who can take it in? A cross would not have been an uncommon sight in the ancient world. But here was a blessed Man hanging upon it who as to His Person is Jehovah. How terrible! How, I ask, could such a thing ever have come about? Then further, that it was *they* who had pierced Him. Think of what that terrible moment of realisation will be for that beloved earthly people, when it dawns upon their souls that Jesus was their Messiah and that is what they did to Him - Him who had come in grace to save them.

Now I believe each of us needs to come to it that it was we who put Jesus there. It is most solemn to see that it was on account of what you and I have done that Jesus suffered as He did. Those Jews in a future day will say, 'What have we done!', as the realisation dawns upon their soul of their terrible deed. But as I look at my blessed Saviour, I say, 'What have I done to cause Him such terrible suffering?'. I see Him there in the garden of Gethsemane, I see His sweat becoming as great drops of blood falling down upon the ground, and I say, 'What have I done?'. I see Him lifted up on the cross, I see the darkness, and I hear the cry of a Man forsaken of

God, and I say, 'What have I done to our precious Saviour?'. It is only as I see the spotless Lamb of God with my sins upon Him, only then do I begin to understand something of the enormity of my guilt in the sight of God.

Sins which were committed so carelessly, sins that had never troubled my conscience hitherto, how terrible do those sins look now when I see the Saviour suffering in my place. As the realisation dawns on the soul I say, 'Away with the excuses, away with the self-justification, away with Satan's blandishments!'. Let me take this in. Let me understand my guilt in the sight of God. Sins which were committed without any thought for God; how awful do they appear when I see what Jesus suffered as having taken my place. You see, it was really Him. Peter was writing to Jewish believers who were familiar with the system of animal sacrifices under the law. They would remember how the guilty Israelite had to bring a goat, and how in placing his hand on the head of the goat and confessing his sins, so his sins were transferred to the goat; and that innocent creature then stood in the place of the sinner before God, to receive from God all that the sinner deserved. But we are not speaking of goats tonight, for no animal sacrifice would meet the case. It was nothing less than the sacrifice and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. I trust it may work its way into our souls that it was truly "himself". It is a very solemn consideration, for it is when we see what Jesus suffered that we have to confess how guilty we are. If our sins were so great, if the effect of our crimes was to cause Jesus to suffer like that, how guilty we are!

Now there is another very sweet and blessed side to this, "who himself". I want to show you that Jesus came willingly to take your place. Oh that God would give me the strength to tell you something of the love of Jesus! If we are light about our sins, He understood what our sins were in a way that you and I never could because as to His Person He is God. More than that, He knew what the consequences were for us of being guilty sinners. He knew the consequence of our sins was eternal ruin. Let us be clear that as guilty sinners we deserve the eternal judgment of God. Then He

knew too what would be required by God if our sins were to be taken away. He could see that you and I have nothing that we could offer to God to satisfy Him in respect of even one of our sins; we have nothing to offer a God who is perfectly holy and perfectly righteous. Jesus saw all that, and the wonder of His love is that He came Himself. You say, 'Could He not have sent an angel?'. Angels are great beings. There is no one who serves God more efficiently than they do. It has been said that if God called on an angel to sweep the road he would do it. But no angel could meet the case. The guilt of ruined man had to be met in man. *Jesus came Himself.*

Think of Him becoming a man, and leaving His wonderful home above of love and glory. Think of Him coming into this dark sad world, a wicked world where everyone else in it was a sinner. Think of Him coming all that way that He might suffer for your sins. All through His precious life here on earth Jesus had before Him that He was on His way to meet God in the place of guilty sinners like you and me. And, solemn as it is to consider it, there at the cross God met Him. Jesus, having charged Himself with our sins, went forth to meet God. And (one trembles to speak of it) there was no mercy for Jesus when God met Him with His righteous, unmitigated, judgment of sin; and there in those terrible three hours of darkness the great question of our sins and our eternal salvation was worked out between God and Christ.

None of us asked Him to come. None of us asked Him to be our Saviour, yet still He came. He came unasked for. He came unloved. He was a rejected Man even while here among men, and yet, blessed be His precious Name, He went on steadily to the cross to suffer what you and I could never measure, in order that our sins might be removed from before the eye of a holy God.

Then it says that He “bore our sins”. That is the next thing. I would like to pause for a moment to consider these important words. I would draw your attention to this: *Jesus did not bear everyone's sins*. The Scripture says that “he died for all”, 2 Cor 5: 14. That means His precious work is available for all, it is for the benefit, or in favour, of all. But when it comes to the bearing of sins, this verse

says that He 'bore **our** sins'. I would like you to understand that. I say again, Jesus did not bear everyone's sins: He "bore our sins". Whose are those? That is the sins of those whose trust in Him. Now, friend, let me ask, did He bear yours? I would like you to face the question. I would like you to answer it honestly. I put it to you that there is no question more important that you will ever be called on to face. I can say through grace that He bore my sins, but did He bear yours? Did He?

Let me speak, first of all, to any persons in this room who may be careless or indifferent about their souls. Let me give you a solemn warning. Listen carefully. Pardon me if I speak plainly to you. Understand that I do so out of concern for your precious immortal soul. Let me tell you that never again will Jesus die for guilty sinners. Never again will Jesus bear anyone's sins. If Jesus has not borne your sins, they never ever will be borne. If Jesus has not carried your sins out from under the eye of a holy God they remain upon you, and in due course you will be called upon to answer to God for them, and that can only mean one thing, that is, solemn judgment. Oh, if there is any sleepy soul in this room today I trust that God will wake you up. I urge you to wake up to the solemnity of the present moment.

Now maybe there is someone else in this room who is troubled about his sins. Perhaps there is somebody here who is labouring under the burden of a guilty conscience. I can tell you feelingly that we know what that is. There is no companion like a guilty conscience. You say, 'Oh, how I would love to know definitely in my own soul that when Jesus died it was for me. How I long to be sure that my sins were among those that He suffered for when He died there upon the tree'. You can know it by coming to Him. The important thing in the glad tidings is to have to do with Him. You must have a personal transaction with the Saviour and discover, as you come to Him in repentance, as you come confessing your sins, that He is a loving Saviour who is ready to meet you in grace. Why? Because He suffered for you. You say, 'But you do not know my guilty past. You do not know the things that I have done, you do not

know what crimson stains lie upon my conscience. I can understand that He might show mercy to others, but I cannot see how He can show mercy to me. I have neglected Him. I have sinned against His love. I have sinned against the light. How can He show mercy to me?' What were those words we sang in our hymn:

If it's the hopeless case Thou lov'st to meet,
If it's a sinner Thou dost run to greet.

(Hymn 423)

That is what the hymn writer had come to for himself, you see, that he was a hopeless case, and he found that this blessed Saviour loves to receive hopeless cases. We can give you His own words to prove it. The Lord Jesus said, "him that comes to me I will not at all cast out", John 6: 37. Precious words! Here is a mighty promise. We would urge you to see if the Saviour is as good as His word. Thousands and thousands of precious souls have discovered that He is. We would urge you to put Him to the test. He will receive you if you come to Him through repentance and faith. He will receive you tonight so that you might know, in the faith of your own soul, that when Jesus suffered for sins upon the cross He bore yours, and that He has carried them forever out from under the eye of a holy God. Glorious Saviour! If only I could speak to you of His love that you might be persuaded to put your trust in Christ tonight.

So it says that He bore our sins "in his body". Let us pause there. What can we say about Him having borne our sins in His body? How easily we sin. How careless we have been. How quickly it happens. Yet it was suffering for Jesus. Does it not break your heart to think of it? He felt all in His body. It was placed upon Him as a great and mighty burden. The prophet says, "Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6), and how He suffered! Who is sufficient for these things? It is enough to make one weep to think how easily we sin, when it meant such terrible suffering for our beloved Saviour.

Then it says that He bore our sins "on the tree". We should understand that "the tree" is a reference to His cross. There was

one place, and one place only, where Jesus bore our sins and that was on the cross. He was not suffering for our sins during His life here on earth. He was not suffering for our sins while He lay in the grave. The one place where Jesus suffered for our sins was in those three tremendous hours of darkness when He was alone with God. The glory of His holy Person is that having thus suffered He could say, "It is finished", John 19: 30. What does that mean? It means that as far as the work of judgment-bearing is concerned, Jesus not only bore the judgment of God, but He exhausted it, even while He was alive on the cross. Oh glorious Saviour! How great He is! The unmitigated wrath of God was poured out on His holy head; yet Jesus was great enough not only to bear, but to exhaust that judgment, to God's satisfaction. For this reason He was able to say, "It is finished". Precious words to those who love Him! We know that in order that His work should be made good to you and me, in order that we might come into the benefit of it, Jesus had to die, He had to shed His precious blood, He had to go into the grave, and He had to rise from it triumphant. But how glorious to remember that all the judgment that our sins deserved was borne, borne in its entirety, by Jesus while alive "on the tree".

Now, Jesus is not on the tree any more. He is not in the grave. Jesus triumphant is now exalted by the right hand of God. You say, 'Where are my sins then?'. Gone forever! How blessed! I speak now to those in this room who are trusting in the Saviour, to those who are sheltering under His precious blood. Jesus is not bearing sins any more. He has done that once and forever for His own. His ascension on high is the divine testimony to the fact that, as far as God is concerned, our sins are gone forever. How perfect is the work that Jesus has done. How complete. My friend, if you only knew the peace and the relief and the joy and the rest of trusting the blessed Saviour, who is now seated at the right hand of God. You see, we look up and see there a holy God, a God who, because He is perfectly righteous, hates – *hates*, I say - the things that we have done. But there at His right hand is the very Man who bore our sins in His body on the tree. Think of the wonder of this,

that there is a Man in heaven tonight who was once wounded for our transgressions. And all the favour of God is towards us as it rests upon Him. Oh the glory of it, that there should be a Man in heaven tonight, not any man, but the very same Man who was once bruised for our iniquities. It is not a different Jesus. Peter says, '**This Jesus** has God raised up', Acts 2: 32. It is the very same Jesus who once walked upon the earth. It is the very same Jesus who hung there upon the cross. It is the same Jesus who answered to God for the eternal salvation of our souls. That is the Jesus who is now exalted by the right hand of God, never to suffer for sins again. He is exalted there because He so satisfies God, that God would not have Him anywhere else. He could not be seated at the right hand of God with our sins upon Him. The fact that He is there is the clearest testimony that you will ever get that His work is complete. He is seated in glory tonight, Jesus triumphant, having borne all which was laid upon Him.

Having said that He “bore our sins in his body on the tree”, the writer then adds, “in order that, being dead to sins, we may live to righteousness”. I draw attention to these words “in order that”. I believe they are suggesting that this is the reason why it is that Jesus suffered as He did. What we have in this verse is an example (of which we have others in Scripture) of one thing done with another thing in mind. What was the purpose of all this suffering on the part of Jesus? What was in mind in this mighty sacrifice of His? Well, you say, 'It was that I might never come under God's judgment'. That is true. It is so that I might have a place with Christ above. That also is blessedly true. But according to this verse the reason why He suffered was in order that even now you and I might be dead to sins and that we might live to righteousness. I wonder if you have thought about that. Often in the gospel we hear it emphasised that 'There is nothing we need to do'. That is true, of course, as far as the work of salvation is concerned. There was nothing we could do to affect our own salvation. But this verse indicates that there is much for us to do, for the precious sacrifice of Jesus had in mind that there should be complete change on our part. “Dead to sins” simply

means that you are finished with one course of things. You are not going to continue as you did before. You are not going to carry on with those sins that caused Jesus such terrible suffering. It is a clean break with the past. Living “to righteousness” is a new principle to govern your life from now onwards. Instead of living to yourself, instead of pursuing your own wilful course, you become exercised about the will of God.

What is righteousness? One of the useful things that has been said about it is that it means doing what is right in every divinely appointed relationship: in the family, at work, at school, you do what is right, you do the thing that is pleasing to God. What the gospel has in mind is to take persons like you and me, who were guilty sinners, persons who were away from God, who have rebelled against God through our sins, and to bring about in our souls a fundamental change. So that not only are we finished with one course of things, but henceforth we are living for the pleasure of God.

The point is that it is brought in here as what was in mind when Jesus suffered. I address myself to those who are trusting in the Saviour. I trust that you might hear the Saviour’s tender appeal as it comes to you through the gospel today. He would raise the question with you, I think, as to whether you are going to carry on living the way you have, whether a sight of His precious sufferings, whether a view of His cross, has produced any desire in your heart to give up your sinful ways. Have His sufferings taught you to hate your sins as He does? Can you continue with those things that have caused Him such sorrow? Can you carry on like that when He has shown you such love in coming all the way down from heaven to suffer and die for you? Does that not produce some desire in your heart to be pleasing to Him? He loved you before there was any movement in your heart towards Him. If He had waited for some response from us we would have been without a spark of hope. But He did it all Himself. He was ready to take your place, He was ready to bear your sins, every one of them, as if they were His own. He received from God what you and I as guilty sinners deserved. Does that not

stimulate some desire in your heart now that you might answer to His love? Would you not review your course, and ask yourself whether it is one that is pleasing to Him, whether it is one that is honouring the Saviour who has suffered so much for you?

I need to make it plain that you will never answer to this challenge without the help of the Holy Spirit. I trust that each of us here will understand that. I would like to awaken interest and exercise with you as to the Holy Spirit, the wonderful gift that God is free to give in the glad tidings to those whose sins have been forgiven. I tell you plainly that you will not get far without the Holy Spirit.

But the point I especially want to emphasise is the Saviour's appeal. I would put it to you like this: the extent to which we appreciate what the Saviour has done for us will be measured by the extent to which we are dead to sins and living to righteousness. I say that to my own condemnation. The extent to which our eyes have been opened to see what He has suffered for us will be measured by the extent to which we are resolved to be dead to sins and live to righteousness. It is what He had in mind for you. You look back to the cross, you see Him lifted up in your place, you see your sins upon Him, and you say, 'What did He have before Him?'. It was to bring about a complete change in our hearts so that we should be here for the will of God.

So it says finally, "by whose stripes ye have been healed" – a most affecting reference, alluding back (as the footnote shows) to Isaiah 53: 5. Our healing was not through some mighty act of power, but it was by the very stripes of Jesus. This indicates that our Lord's precious sufferings were not for our sins (those of believers) regarded as a mass, but for each one. All our sins came under consideration in detail there. Jesus took each one upon Himself, and the rod of God's judgment fell on our beloved Saviour instead of reaching us. The wonder is that Jesus received that judgment in full, and it is through His stripes we are healed. You say, 'I can hardly believe that I should be made perfectly whole'. But here it is in the word of God, "ye have been healed". I sound those words out for

those of us who, though very weak and failing, have in simple faith reached out to the Saviour, "ye have been healed". We are healed by the very sufferings of Jesus Himself.

May the contemplation of it make us walk softly. Let us never forget that it was by His stripes that we are healed. Oh may we tread carefully. May our consciences be kept tender. As we leave this place may we remember that one blessed Man has suffered for every single sin that you and I have done. May it keep our affections alive, may it keep us sensitive to the Saviour's loving heart. May we never forget His mighty sacrifice. May we never forget His dying love.

West Norwood

21st June 2009

“TO HIM WHO LOVES US”

Horst Pfeiffer

Revelation 1: 5 (from “...to him who loves”)

Our brother has spoken about mercy; Mr Coates said, “the love of God has revealed a fairer and brighter scene than Eden; a more glorious paradise than that of man's innocence has been opened up by the death of Jesus”, vol 21 p18. It is a remarkable thing. Think about what it cost God that the Lord Jesus had to die, and had to give up His life which was so precious to God, suggested in the coats of skin (Gen 3: 21); that has been the basis to save a lost world from the situation in which it is. He is able to save you and me from our sins. The basis has led to eternity, and may everyone be in the enjoyment and in the gain of wearing this coat of skin. May you have your own valuation of the preciousness of the death of the Lord Jesus, and take Him for your own.

I read these verses because I was impressed as our brother spoke of the glory of the Person and what comes to us here. John was on the island of Patmos, and Mr Lyon said, 'If you would like to know the address of John it would be just, John on Patmos!' It is as if he was the only one there. He may have lived in a cave, and he was later on in the tribulation, but he lived in the love of Jesus. I wonder whether I could just impress every soul here to take time every day. If you know your sins are forgiven, and you are in the assurance of that fact that your sins are forgiven, it must mean that you have the Spirit. There is some possibility for you then to enjoy the love of Jesus, a glorified Man in heaven who is the object and the goal for the heart of every believer. But, the great point is, may we open our hearts, and have a little time to sit restfully and enjoy His love. That is the power for our way upward. Mr Darby says:

That way is upward still,
Where life and glory are.
(Hymn 12)

I wondered whether this verse could be connected with Hebrews 10 where the writer speaks of the way into the holiest. The Scriptures can be a bit difficult for our minds to understand, but this is not very different from sitting restfully and thinking about the preciousness of the Person of the Lord Jesus.

It is interesting that in Hebrews 9 it speaks of “a golden censer” – “but after the second veil a tabernacle which is called Holy of holies, having a golden censer, and the ark of the covenant”, v 3, 4. In that verse it is the “golden censer”, which is said to be in the same place as the ark. Usually in the Holy of holies it is just the ark in all its glory. Here it seems that there is the “golden censer”. That means that if we are in that place which is called the Holy of holies, where we see the ark, where we enjoy the love of Jesus, there is an answer to the Lord; that is the golden censer. I do not think we can really make a separation between it and the ark, the preciousness of the ark and seeing the ark. There must be an answer to God. It brings out how in life there is something secured in vessels of mercy in relation to the glory of the Person of the Lord Jesus.

I would encourage all of us, older ones, and younger ones, that if you want to have a satisfied heart, you cannot have it without knowing this precious Saviour. Therefore, sit a little and think about His Person. Think of His pathway of devotion, think of His pathway of suffering, and think about the place where He is in glory. What a precious thing that is in relation to all our exercises which we have to go through, our responsibilities, in the ways of God’s sovereignty. This enters into all our lives and the enjoyment may only be very short, but get the real sense of the love of Jesus in your heart. That will help us in going through our pathway down here. It helps us to look ahead to the next gathering of the saints to get another fresh impression, but in between you get something; it is something that to me is very precious to think about. Remember that the Spirit is here and there is a direct link from heaven into your heart and my heart, because there is something substantially worked in our hearts. May the Lord use the possibility of thinking a little about it and giving time to think about the Lord’s love.

John says here, "To him who loves us" - there is no question about that at all - "and has washed us from our sins in his blood". That is related to every Christian; there is no one excluded, every one who is washed from their sins and who has the Spirit can be in the gain of this. Then he goes on to speak in more detail, "and made us a kingdom". I think it is interesting that every true believer knows something of the kingdom, knows something of what grace and truth is; so he is able to enjoy something of the rights and mercy of the kingdom of God to work out things in his life in detail as to what is pleasing to God. It says in Timothy, "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace", 2 Tim 2: 22. That is the way that things are worked out for the true believer, the one who knows that his sins are forgiven and who knows the precious Saviour on high. Then it says, "priests to his God and Father: to him be the glory and the might to the ages of ages. Amen" – see how God has secured something. Think of John by himself. Think of eternal life; it has often been said that John being by himself had this treasure in his heart and that he fulfilled the enjoyment of it. He was in the full gain of eternal life. In loving the Lord you cannot say 'My way is by myself'; it is the way with the brethren in your heart, and the exercises of your brethren in your heart. You carry these things with you. In one sense you cannot forget them. In Corinthians (2 Cor 11: 28), Paul spoke about his concern for all the assemblies, besides all the exercises he went through,.

May these things be more enjoyed by us and more valued and appreciated.

Edinburgh

18th August 2009

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