

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 99

June 2015

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THE BROTHER

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I would like to say a word, if I can, as to the matter of the brother. Of course the thought of the brother does not exclude the sisters; we use that term, one of affection and one of relationship, to cover both brothers and sisters. The second Scripture we read refers to the brotherly covenant and that underlies what is on my heart as to this matter of the brother. What a precious matter it is. It is not something to be taken for granted; you may be at work all day and amongst those who may have rejected the Lord Jesus, and it is a wonderful thing when you come to the meeting and you sit down and the saints come in; and there is something that marks them. You see the Lord's people coming in and you can tell that they are people who love the Lord Jesus. How blessed that is. They are people who are different. Well, what a precious, precious matter it is to have an appreciation of one another. We are favoured with brothers and sisters; we are just brethren: that too can be said. We are not claiming anything. Mr Raven makes the remark that every Christian denomination is sectarian, vol 8 p104. I suppose the very thought of a denomination suggests that, and we must not claim to be anything. We do not claim to be 'the Brethren' with a large "B". We are just brethren; brethren of Christ and - let us also be - brethren of one another. How precious that is.

We were reminded recently of the song of the bow. How brotherly David was. Think of him: what an example! He was one who was saturated with the Spirit of Christ.

How are the mighty fallen in the
midst of the battle!

Jonathan is slain upon thy high places.

I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan:
very pleasant wast thou unto me;

Thy love to me was wonderful,
passing women's love.
How are the mighty fallen,
and the instruments of war perished!
2 Sam 1: 25-27.

What a brother David was! He was a king, he a victor; what a valiant man he was - think of the battles of David - but he was a brother.

Paul was an apostle; what a great apostle he was, but he was also a brother. He also had his own song of the bow. In referring to the Jew, he says in Romans 9, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great grief and uninterrupted pain in my heart, for I have wished, I myself, to be a curse from the Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to flesh; who are Israelites; whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the law-giving, and the service, and the promises; whose are the fathers; and of whom, as according to flesh, is the Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever", v 1-5. You might say there is Paul's song of the bow. And what feelings mark him, he says; "I have great grief and uninterrupted pain in my heart." That is the feelings that belong to a brother. It says in Proverbs, "a brother is born for adversity", Prov 17: 17. Born for adversity does not mean that a brother is born to cause trouble - far be the thought - but a brother is a resource when there is trouble. In times of trouble we should be able to turn towards one another as those who are available. Timothy has been described as a brother born for adversity. "The friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." You think of Timothy going to Corinth where they were reigning as kings. You may say, 'Well, Timothy, you are going to be eaten alive'. But Paul sends Timothy.

Where we started to read it says, "A man of many friends will come to ruin". It is interesting that this should have been written so many years before social media and all these things, but it says, "A man of many friends will come to ruin, but there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." That refers, does it not, to the Lord? It refers, as we might say, to divine Persons, especially to the Lord. It is not that we would refer to the Lord as 'our brother', of course.

Nobody would seek to use familiar language when addressing the Lord, but that same Person sticketh closer than a brother. What a Person He is! We sang in our hymn, 160,

To gaze upon Thyself
So faithful known,
Long proved in secret help
With Thee alone.

Think of that, the Lord sticking closer than a brother. And I would just say for the encouragement of the young, that divine Persons desire to be close to us. What a thing that is! We perhaps spend a lot of our lives in exercise to be close to divine Persons because we find our self-will gets in the way, but divine Persons want to be close to us. Divine Persons want *you*, dear young child, dear young brother or sister, to know in your heart what their love for you is. Is that not wonderful? In 1 John it says, "I write to you, little children, because ye have known the Father", chap 2: 13 "Little children" there has reference to growth. It stands in contrast to "young men" and "fathers", but as children, actually as children, I do not think there is anything that the Father would not want you to speak to Him about. Even we as parents, alas, may overlook an opportunity that the children have to speak to us at times, but dear young one, the Father always wants to hear what you have to say. Is that not a wonderful thing? We sometimes sing:

A Holy Father's constant care
Keeps watch, with an unwearying eye,
Hymn 138.

Think of that. The Psalmist says,

I will instruct thee and teach thee
the way in which thou shalt go;
I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee,
Psalms 32: 8.

Well, you cannot be guided by someone's eye if you are far away from them. That means that the Father wants to come right into our lives. We are all children, of course, no matter what age we are. "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of

God", Rom 8: 16. Is there ever going to be a time in our lives when we do not draw upon our heavenly Father? Is there ever a time in your life when you might say simply you do not need the Father? Our Father is the One who knows our needs.

But there is also the Father's hand.

Our times are in Thy hand;
Father, we wish them there;
Hymn 210.

The Father's hand involves His touch. It affects our lives, and the Father can do that too. He acts in love and He acts to bring us closer to Him. The Father is supreme in the economy, but the name "Father" suggests to us all that could be known of God in grace. Is that not wonderful? That is the Father. David says in Psalm 31,

Into thy hand I commit my spirit (v 5)

and later on he says,

My times are in thy hand, (v 15)

What confidence we can have in the Father's hand. What an example we have in the Lord Jesus in the way, we might say reverently, that He trusted in His Father's hand. Think of Matthew 26 when the Lord comes to Gethsemane: "And going forward a little he fell upon his face, praying and saying, My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; but not as *I* will, but as *thou* wilt", v 39. And then later on: "Again going away a second time he prayed saying, My Father, if this cannot pass from me unless I drink it, thy will be done", v 42. The Lord refused to take the cup from the hand of man; He refused to take it from the hand of Satan: but He took it from the hand of the Father. Speaking reverently, He trusted the hand that held the cup. The perfection of His manhood caused Him to say what He did: "Let this cup pass from me". But the perfection, too, of His manhood caused Him to take it from His Father's hand. It says, "but gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously", 1 Pet 2: 23. Perhaps this is a slight digression from the scripture we read but I think it all lies behind what is being conveyed in the scripture in Proverbs, that "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother". That is the Lord Jesus. "Sticketh" shows something of

the commitment, the commitment that divine Persons have made to us. I think the Lord sticking closer than a brother must involve divine sympathy. This is not just, I say carefully, divine remedy. There are certain things the Lord allows to continue in His ways, but then there is His sympathy to be proved.

So we read in Amos, and it says there, in relation to the transgressions of Tyre, "I will not revoke its sentence; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant". It appears to be a very serious thing not to remember the brotherly covenant. If we can use that word, we are given the terms, of the brotherly covenant in 2 Timothy 2, which has also been described as our charter, JT vol 39 p457. It is not a position, because then our state would become unexercised, but it is a path, and it says in verse 22, "But youthful lusts flee, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart". That is the covenant that we have been called to, that we should each in faithfulness flee certain things and then "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart". John also touches upon the terms of the covenant in his second epistle when he says, "The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not I only but also all who have known the truth" (v1), and the footnote says, 'the apostle teaches us here, there can be no truly loving but in the truth'. This is no ordinary love that we have for one another; it is established in Christ. We have ever to remember that the truth is the truth as it is in Jesus. We are not speaking about what is cold and devoid of feelings and affection. It is the truth as it is made known in Jesus. But our links are in Christ and they are in the truth. It has been said that love of the truth is morally greater than loving the brethren, although they go together, but love of the truth comes first in order, JT vol 48 p320. But it is also expected and normal that as we love the truth we love one another. Our love for one another is in the truth. It is brought about because of our affection and devotion to Christ, because we have that one Object, and He alone, you may say, can cause the company to merge. We are now no longer thinking of children: we are really thinking of men. We are thinking of what is mature and responsible, and that responsibility is to keep the

covenant. The covenant is established in 2 Timothy. The covenant is also alluded to in the second epistle of John. Keeping the covenant would involve respect for assembly judgments because we are jealous to preserve the brotherly covenant. Nothing should ever come in to undermine the brotherly covenant. There will be exercises, and there are exercises amongst us which need to be worked out, but as soon as we revert to our own way of thinking, and perhaps churlish actions, we are going against the brotherly covenant and the principles that belong to it and the dignity that belongs to it and what God is jealous about. He says, where we read, "I will not revoke its sentence". What a matter it is to trifle with the brotherly covenant, what has been established in Christ and established in the truth. Matthew 18 provides guidance as to how to proceed in relation to such matters, where a brother has failed to listen and the matter comes before the assembly. The section from verse 15 to verse 20 continues, "Then Peter came to him and said, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? until seven times? Jesus says to him, I say not to thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven", v 21, 22. The Lord in Luke brings in the matter of repentance, Luke 17: 4. Repentance is not just saying you are sorry that you may have caused some grief. Repentance is towards God. It is a moral act, a moral action that takes place in the heart and is towards God. But then as repentance is known there is an obligation laid upon the brother to forgive. Peter says, "seven times"? He probably thought that was quite good. But "Jesus says to him, I say not to thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven". Where there is repentance there is also an abundance of forgiveness and all this is operating to maintain the brotherly covenant.

So we read in Philippians as to Timothy. A brother is there as a resource, as one that we can trust, as one that we can turn to. In Romans, there is the practical working out of what we are speaking of. In Romans 14, Paul says, "So then let us pursue the things which tend to peace, and things whereby one shall build up another. For the sake of meat do not destroy the work of God", v 19, 20. In 1 Corinthians 8: 12, Paul says, "Now, thus sinning against the brethren, and wounding their weak conscience, ye sin against

Christ". Think of that. It is the brother for whom Christ died. He says, "Wherefore if meat be a fall-trap to my brother, I will eat no flesh for ever, that I may not be a fall-trap to my brother", v 13. If anybody could have dictated what was right or what was wrong, it was the apostle Paul. Clearly he writes that we should know that what he says is the Lord's commandment when referring to the principles of the truth which are being attacked; but in referring to how we work out the brotherly link Paul did not just dismiss a weak brother. He says, "I will eat no flesh for ever". There was Paul's committal to maintaining the brotherly covenant.

And so we come to Timothy who was sent to Corinth. It says in 1 Corinthians 4. "For this reason I have sent to you Timotheus, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who shall put you in mind of my ways as they are in Christ, according as I teach everywhere in every assembly", v 17. There is another reference to the covenant; it is one standard; it is consistent. So by sending Timothy, his beloved and faithful child in the Lord, Paul would put them in mind of his ways as they are in Christ, and then it says, "according as I teach everywhere in every assembly". So what a person Timothy was; what a brother he was. It says where we read in Philippians, "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus to you shortly, that I also may be refreshed, knowing how ye get on. For I have no one like-minded who will care with genuine feeling how ye get on". We often think about the genuine feeling part, and that is very wonderful. Timothy would have learned genuine feeling as he saw it in Paul himself, who, when bringing in correction, associates the brother with himself. So in the first epistle to the Corinthians he introduces Sosthenes the brother, v 1. When he writes the second epistle he introduces Timothy, v 1. That is that, alongside the authority of his word, he wanted to also convey the feelings and affection that he had, the love that he had; so the covenant is a brotherly covenant. It involves feelings and affections and love for one another. Paul passed things on to his true child in faith, Timothy. The genuine feelings belong to being brotherly and the like-mindedness is the covenant. It is the brotherly covenant that marks Timothy. We have spoken of how divine Persons desire to be close to us, and we have also thought of the terms of the covenant and how it works out

practically, and the example in Timothy. But if we are going to become a resource, if we are going to become those who quit themselves like men, who maintain the brotherly covenant, there has to be personal exercise. Timothy was not described as caring with genuine feeling simply because he was a nice person. It was much more substantial than that. In the first epistle to Timothy, the word to him was, “give thyself to reading”, chap 4: 13. And that is one of the things that marked him. What an expression that is. It does not just say, ‘Timothy, you should think about reading a little’. It says, “give thyself to reading”. It was a commitment: “give thyself”. It was a sacrifice he was asked to make, a committal to what belongs to divine Persons. Of course, it was not simply that he was going to just regurgitate what he had read; he was reading it with exercise. He was making way for the Spirit. The second epistle begins that way: “For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of wise discretion”, 2 Tim 1: 7. One other feature I would draw attention to, that must have lain behind Timothy being someone like-minded who cared with genuine feeling, is in the second epistle, where Paul says to him, “Think of what I say, for the Lord will give thee understanding in all things”, chap 2: 7. There were two matters, two prime matters, that lay behind Timothy being one who was like-minded and cared with genuine feeling: he had given himself to reading and he had given himself to thinking of what Paul had said: “For the Lord will give thee understanding in all things”.

We could have read - and perhaps should have read - from Philemon. Paul says in relation to Onesimus, “not any longer as a bondman, but above a bondman, a beloved brother”, v 16. Is that not wonderful? To look upon such a one who is described as a bondman. He had gone away and now he is coming back. Perhaps he had known the Lord’s hand coming into the situation. Perhaps he had known the Father’s hand that we have spoken of. And now Paul says of him, “not any longer as a bondman, but above a bondman, a beloved brother”. Think of that. How precious, how valuable: “a beloved brother, specially to me, and how much rather to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord?”, v 16. And later on Paul says to Philemon, “but if he have wronged thee anything or owe anything to

thee, put this to my account. / Paul have written it with mine own hand; / will repay it: that I say not to thee that thou owest even thine own self also to me", v 18-19. Think of the resources that belong to the brother; that was seen in Paul. He says, "if even in abundantly loving you, I should be less loved", 2 Cor 12: 15. What resources mark the brother! There is a brother born for adversity. Think of all that he took on. We have seen it in Mr Darby too, and many others, but what marks a brother born for adversity is that they have resources.

May we be encouraged in this matter of maintaining the brotherly covenant for His Name's sake.

Brechin

13th September 2014

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

Terry W Lock

Hebrews 10: 5-9 (to “will”)

Psalms 69: 4, 7-9, 11-12, 20-21

Luke 9: 22

Mark 14: 53-65

John 19: 28-35

I feel very measured in what I feel the Lord has given me by the Spirit to speak of today because it involves the sufferings of Christ, sufferings that human minds cannot fathom; but God is good enough to give us an opportunity to look at them, to be affected by the depth of the love of God that He would go to such an extent to save people like me and you for His own sake, not just for our sake.

It says here in Hebrews 10, “Wherefore coming into the world he says, Sacrifice and offering thou wilt not; but thou hast prepared me a body”. What a thing that was! There had never been a Man like this before. Adam was made of the dust of the earth, Eve was built from the rib of Adam, but in the Lord's case it was a unique body, prepared by God; “the holy thing also which shall be born shall be called Son of God”, Luke 1: 35. That vessel was of God, a body prepared to be taken up to live and die for God's will. What a thing to think of the Lord's willingness: “Thou tookest no pleasure in burnt-offering and sacrifices for sin. Then I said, Lo, I come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do, O God, thy will”, the roll of the book having to do with what was there in the counsels of God. Every matter in the counsels of God, in what He was going to work out in time in relation to His own inheritance, in securing the hearts and souls of men for Himself, was found in “Lo, I come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do, O God, thy will”.

What did that involve, dear hearer? What did it involve for Christ to do that, “to do, O God, thy will”? There was a Man who had set Himself in a scene that was contrary to God. For God's sake, He set Himself there; then He moved as “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa 53: 3); He moved through this scene that

was so contrary to all His holy nature; and He moved for God's sake to secure persons like me and like you, to secure a race of men for God.

God puts enough value on securing all He had in mind that He would give His Son, He would prepare Him a body that could suffer, that would suffer to secure this race, a race including persons like me and like you. I cannot comprehend love like this, love as great as this that would go to such an extent to secure its end. We had a touch of that in Philippians 2 last week and it carried through in our reading today, “who ... did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself”, humbled Himself to take up this body that was prepared in relation to the suffering that He was going to know, “becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross”, v 6-8. That was Christ in the body that was prepared for Him, in the scene that was contrary to Him and contrary to God, and He did it for me and for you to secure us for God's sake. Does it affect you that God loves you so much, that God would put that claim upon you? It says in the Psalms, “For the redemption of their soul is costly, and must be given up for ever”, Psalm 49: 8. Before ever Adam was created, God had measured that cost and what it would be to secure the heart of Adam. It is not that Adam did not belong to God; indeed he did. God had creatorial rights over Adam, but God wanted affectionate rights over the whole race. And how did He secure them? By sending Christ to die. So it says here, “Above, saying Sacrifices and offerings and burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou willedst not, neither tookest pleasure in (which are offered according to the law)”. Why does He say that? It was not as if the law was wrong. God gave the law. Indeed it says in the Old Testament that the law is the inheritance of the children of Israel, Deut 33: 4. So the law is not wrong, but it was impossible to fulfil by persons like you and like me; when He says subsequently that the offerings that are according to the law are not pleasurable it is because they can never take away sins, Heb 10: 4, 11. It says even in relation to the burnt-offering that you get in Leviticus 1 that the person who offered was to put his hand upon the offering, “and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him”, Lev 1: 4. Atonement is only needed when there is something that is contrary

to God. Then it says, "Lo, I come to do thy will", and the roll of the book is not mentioned. Now this is not only according to the purposes (as seen in the roll of the book) of God, and, or according to the counsels of God, but this is also according to the heart of Christ. He takes this matter up because of His love for God and what was precious to Him, what He would achieve by suffering in such a manner for God's sake. You cannot compass that; you can only accept it for what it is.

That is why I read in Psalm 69; now this is a psalm of David but there are things that are prophetic of what the Lord felt while He was here in the body that was prepared for Him in the scene that was contrary to Him.

They that hate me without a cause are more
than the hairs of my head;
they that would destroy me,
being mine enemies wrongfully,
are mighty: then I restored
that which I took not away.

Who took it away? You say the devil took it away. But men in their lawlessness took it away, "then I restored that which I took not away". How did He do that? By being perfect for His God. What God found in Christ, what He saw here, was a Man that walked absolutely in accord with what God is Himself. What was He doing? He was restoring that which He took not away. He was giving to God in a Man what was absolutely in accord with what God was Himself and what God had ever intended to see in a Man. All that He had ever hoped to have He had in Jesus. What a thing it was for God to see Him here. You can understand the heavens being opened, you can understand the outpouring of the praises of God upon the head of that Man. You can understand the Spirit descending and abiding upon Him. You can understand that because of who was there and what was there, the moral perfection that was in Jesus when He was here when He walked upon the earth, suffering in a scene for God's sake, having in mind to secure persons like me and you for God's sake. What a thing that is. So He could say, "I restored that which I took not away", and He felt those

sufferings connected with the restoration. What a thing it was for Him to come. It says in John's gospel, "He came to his own, and his own received him not", John 1: 11. What suffering that was for the Lord, the One who wanted nothing more than to express His affections to men, to express the affections of God for men; instead they rejected Him; instead, at every turn all they had for Him were words of scorn: even His own disciples did not understand the extent to which He would have to go. It says in John 4, when they came upon the Lord when He was sitting at the well speaking to that Samaritan woman, and "they wondered that he spoke with a woman". v27. They had no understanding of the feelings of the heart of God that were being expressed by Christ when He was there. What suffering that was for the Lord that even those that went with Him day by day for the whole of His pathway could not understand the feelings that were there, and instead they would say, 'Why is He doing this?' and 'Why is He doing that?', 'Why is He speaking with this person?' and 'Why is He speaking with that person?'. Those persons that travelled with the Lord did not understand the feelings of God expressed in the heart of that blessed Man in relation to the whole race of men. That was all part of His sufferings.

So then it says here,

Because for thy sake I have borne reproach;
confusion hath covered my face.
I am become a stranger unto my brethren,
and an alien unto my mother's sons;
For the zeal of thy house hath devoured me,
and the reproaches of them
that reproach thee have fallen upon me.

What a thing! "For **consider well**", Hebrews says, "him who endured so great contradiction from sinners against himself", chap 12: 3. He suffered "so great contradiction from sinners against himself" for God's sake. One coming into the world, "who came out from God and was going to God", as it says in John's gospel (chap 13: 3), coming out from God freighted with all the feelings of God in relation to a race that was lost. It speaks of those persons who "did

not think good to have God in their knowledge" (Rom 1: 28); that is no different from you and me. We are exactly the same. Naturally it is the thing that is furthest from our minds to choose God, but thank God that He has worked in His own mind and in His own power that we should even have an inclination to feel after God. So as the gospel goes out today He is feeling after you. Are you feeling after God? He has expressed Himself in such a manner and in such a Man to draw your heart to Himself. Men are God's inheritance and God is man's inheritance, and the proof of it will be seen in eternity in the liberality and the freedom of the attachment of affection that there will be between God and men. This is the God that is seeking after you, this is the God who says, "My son, give me thy heart", Prov 23: 26. This is all God's doing. What a thing it is!

So then in Luke's gospel we see Him as the Son of man, and that is a title distinctive to Christ. What came into expression in the Son of man is what God is in relation to men and the securing of men. What an expression of affection there is! What fulness of feeling there is in the title of "Son of man"! What dignity and glory! It is not a Man according to men. It is a Man according to God expressing God to men. That is all in this title, the Son of man, and think too of the feelings that are expressed by that title. What does He say to His own? What does He say here? We did not read it but He asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am? But they answering said, John the baptist; but others, Elias; and others, that one of the old prophets has risen again. And he said to them, and ye, who do ye say that I am?", v 18-20. The persons that He was speaking to knew that He was of God but they did not recognise who was there. The Son of man was there. The prophets could not speak like He could speak. Elias could not speak like He could speak. It says a little earlier in Luke's gospel that they wondered at the words of grace coming out of His mouth, chap 4: 22. They had never heard words like that before. The prophets could not speak words like that. There were never words of grace like came out of the mouth of Jesus. It was impossible for it to be so because there was nobody who could express the grace of God in a man like Christ could. Yet Peter had said, "The Christ of God"; and "earnestly charging them, he enjoined them to say this to no man, saying, the

Son of man **must** suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up". You see the word "must" there; it was not just that it would proceed that way but it *must* proceed that way. In order for God to move in relation to you and me, in order for God to secure His own inheritance, Christ *had* to die, God *had* to give Him up in death: it *had* to be so. God could create the whole universe by a word; but sin is not removed by a word. It took the death of His Son. It took the blood of Christ. And God measured that: "For the redemption of their soul is costly, and must be given up for ever". God measured the cost of the soul, and He gave it up. Does that affect you, that God would put that value on your soul, that God would move this way? Does that affect you? It affects me. But think of the Lord saying to His own that He must be rejected, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised". He still had testimony to go on with. There was still a period of time when He had to work things out here in the testimony for God's sake, but He went, in His entire pathway here, knowing He was going to die, knowing that it was only by dying that He would be able to secure for God what was precious to God, and that was in persons like me and you.

Do you belong to Him? This is the point of the glad tidings; God has maintained this day of grace so that you not only just get relief from your sins, which is wonderful - *and it is wonderful* - but more than that: eternity will not just be filled with persons who have their sins forgiven and that is all, but it will be filled by persons who love God and whom God loves. Are you one of them? How well do you know God? How well do you know the love of God? I am not asking you if you know *of* God. There are hundreds of thousands of people out in the world that know of God. The devil knows of God; so do his angels. Do you know God? You may say, 'Well, I know God because I come to the meeting, and I read the Scriptures and I lead a good life, and I do all those things so, yes, I know God'. If that is as far as you go, you do not; pardon my saying so, and being so blunt. If you read the beginning of Job, you see that he had brought up his household in relation to what was right before God, and it

was. On the outside it was right before God, and he prayed for them that they would not step outside the rights of God, he did all those things; and to look at Job and his household outwardly, and the way things were governed there, you would say, 'That is a man of God'. But God knew Job. So what happened? The devil came along and spoke to God in relation to Job and what was there, and God did things both to prove Job's faithfulness and to give Job a true knowledge of God. He says to Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job ...?", chap 1: 8. You say, 'Well, why did God allow that to happen?'. Because God was going to work out things in Job in suffering so that Job would understand what God was to Job, and what Job was to God. And there was great affliction. He lost everything. He lost his business, he lost his children, he lost his relations with everybody that respected him, and he lost his health. After losing all those things Job began to contend for himself, and sometimes we tend to do that. We stand up for our own rights and we say. 'I am as good as the crowd'. No, it does not matter how good you are as a natural man; Christ still had to die for you. For God's sake Christ had to die for you to bring you to God. He suffered "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God", 1 Pet 3: 18. So Job had to learn that. He had known of God but he said at the end of his days,

I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear,
but now mine eye seeth thee:
Wherefore I abhor myself,
and repent in dust and ashes.
chap 42: 5, 6.

He had heard of all that had gone on before; he had heard all the things the others had said before, and he had given up his entire life in relation to it, and yet he had not known God truly. Now I am going to ask you the question again, do you really know God? Can you go into the presence of God, you, as you are, and are you at liberty to be there, and do you know you are at liberty to be there? Do you know what it is to go into the presence of God and enjoy yourself? Do you know what it is to go into the presence of God and feel safe there? Do you know what it is to go into the presence of God and

feel you are with your best Friend, and I mean that in a literal sense, that you are with your best Friend who cares for you like none other? That is knowing God. There are times when everything is very deep and dark, where everything seems to be against you, feeling to you as it was against Christ when He was here upon the earth. Where did Christ go? He went into the presence of God. He went to the Mount of Olives. He went to the place where He was with His Father and He lived in His relationship with His Father while He was in this scene of contrariety. That is what was in expression in Christ when He was here. He gathered nothing out of this scene. Everything for Him was because of the love that existed between the Father and the Son, and He has in mind that you know that and that you enjoy that too. He says here in Luke, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up". What a thing, is it not? "And the third day be raised up". Why is that a necessity? Because the man that sinned has no place before God. Peter, writing to believers, says, "who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Pet 2: 24), so then that body had to be put into the grave. What a remarkable statement that is! Has He borne your sins? Are you conscious of that? That is what underlies the conscious knowledge of your relationship with God, that you understand that Christ bore your sins in His own body on the tree. Remarkable to think that He would do that for you. He did it to save you for God's sake.

But then you come to John 19. It says there in verse 30 (and prophetically in the Psalm we read of it), "When therefore Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished; and having bowed his head, he delivered up his spirit". That had never been done before. You have no right, nor do you have the power, to deliver up your spirit. The Lord did. He consciously went into death. It was not that it was put upon Him. I remember somebody saying once, 'But men crucified Christ'. Yes, they did, but they did not take His life, a most important point. At no point in time was the Lord's life ever in the hands of men, or in their control. He had power over His life and He delivered it up. He committed His spirit to the Father; He did it. Men did not take it away from Him. He had authority to lay it down and he

had authority to take it again. Men did not have that authority. So then it goes on here, "he said, It is finished". The Jews were still carrying on with their observances. They had missed the whole thing. How many times have you sat under the gospel and missed the whole thing? How many times have you heard this message, and how many times has it not had effect? Do not leave this room today without it having effect. This is the Man who has died so that it would have effect upon you. So it goes on here and it says that "one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water". It is what cleanses you and me before God for God's sake so that He can lay claim to you for ever, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son. What a cost! What a cost to God! Nobody else could pay this. Nobody else had the right, only Christ, and He exercised that right and paid the price. He has done that.

There is another thing that Christ has done: it says here in relation to His own in John's gospel, that He would ask the Father for another Comforter, "that he may be with you for ever", John 14: 16. That is another thing done by divine Persons for their inheritance. God desires not just to have you saved: He desires a relationship; He desires the love of your heart. How will He get that? It is one thing to be saved, which is wonderful! To be saved is the beginning of everything. It is not the end of everything; it is the beginning of everything. As a brother said to me last week, in one sense the Bible does not give you anything; it just tells you everything that is yours. I thought that was most remarkable. The Bible is an expression of everything that God has in mind for you, and how He has gone about getting it. Dear friend, God has expended Himself, and I am saying that very carefully and very reverently, God has expended Himself more than any mortal man ever could to secure you for Himself; He loves you as much as that. He would give up Christ; He would give you His Spirit. He would be found here in figure as a Man, in Christ, humbling Himself, taking a bondman's form. He would do all these things to win you. Does that affect your heart? Do you know God like this? And do you love Him? You know, the proof that you love God is not seen in what you say. The proof that you love God is seen in what you do. That is a very testing thing. We may know the terms of what it is to be a Christian,

we may know all those things, but the reality of your relationship with God is seen in what you do. Do you love God? Do you love what He loves? Do you spend time learning of God? Do you spend time developing your relationship? Time is the one thing that all men have a measure of, and it is all limited. Time is limited. Indeed, the whole dispensation, the whole scene of time, will cease. When God has done with it, it will cease. God is working in time, in a measured system, in the lives of men which are measured as well, what is for Himself. Are you developing the relationship that God had in mind in giving up Christ to secure you? You should be because you do not know how long you have. There is "A time to be born, and a time to die", Eccl 3: 2. Those are the two things in your life that you have absolutely no control of, none. You have been born. When will you die? And when you die, what will the relationship with your God be at that point in time? It is what it is. If it is there in small measure, it will always be in small measure; if it is not there, it never will be, and if it is there in large measure, thank God for it. Live in it now and live in it then.

Well, may it be so for His Name's sake.

Loanhead

11th January 2015

JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME

David J Hutson

Hebrews 13: 8

This scripture has been much on my mind and heart today, and the hymn our beloved brother has given out (Hymn 29) seemed to confirm bringing it forward at this time. What a comfort it is to know this glorious Man, Jesus Christ! This verse is not so much the assertion of who He is in His Person, the One “who is over all, God blessed for ever” (Rom 9: 5), the One of whom it could be said as to His Person, “he who is, and who was, and who is to come” (Rev 1: 8); but refers rather to His Manhood.

The order here is, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and to the ages to come”. “Yesterday” refers to a period of time; what a time it was, the “yesterday” of Jesus! We can take account of that precious life here and all that was seen there, all that He was in the revelation of God, all that He was in the display of the grace and love of God to man; and how that “yesterday” came to an end. Who can say as to what that was, the closing up of that life? It is not as our lives are closed through the frailty and weakness of the condition in which we are, but He laid down His life in order that He might take it again, John 10: 17. But what that involved for Him, that death! As one could say, ‘For Him, death was death. Man’s utter weakness, Satan’s extreme power ...’, JND CW vol 7 p169. What can we say as to the close of that “yesterday”? Where would we be apart from the close of that “yesterday”?

But oh the wonder of it, that was not the end! His “yesterday” was not the end: “yesterday, and to-day”. How wonderful, beloved, that we can have a living link with this glorious Man “to-day”! What an extended period that has been, the “to-day”! How soon it will end we do not know. We might say it could be today, but what a period it is now when the Holy Spirit has come and the assembly is here, and Christ is to be known as in relation to His body “today”: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and to the ages to come”. All that love, all those feelings that were expressed in His “yesterday” are

expressed today. What a comfort that is to us in our weaknesses. As it says also in this epistle, He is able “to sympathise with our infirmities”, chap 4: 15. What a comfort is this glorious “to-day” in its application to us, when we think of the feelings that were expressed in His “yesterday”.

But He is still “the same”, “the same yesterday, and to-day, and to the ages to come”. How wonderful that time will be when “we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is”, 1 John 3: 2! We shall no longer need Him as Saviour as we do now. As another has said, the last act of salvation is when He comes to change “our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory”, Phil 3: 21. We shall be saved even out of the mortal condition to be with Him for ever; as it says, “to the ages to come”.

I say no more, beloved, but it was just as pondering this for some time today, and our brother’s hymn so related to it that I felt I should bring it forward that we might all have some impression of the glory of this blessed One, some impression of what He is to us. I know not the pressures and the troubles that are upon each one who is here. May it be a comfort to you, dear brother and sister: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day”; and, as we have this appreciation of Him, may it stimulate us in relation to our present answer to Him! Surely we would be stimulated in that blessed desire of His to remember Him in the time of His absence in view of the time when He will be manifest in glory, and we shall be with Him “to the ages to come”.

May the Lord bless the word!

Edinburgh

11th November 2014

CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Alistair M Brown

1 Peter 2: 1-3

Colossians 1: 9-11

Ephesians 4: 13-16

The scriptures I have read all speak about Christians growing. In the first scripture the apostle Peter speaks about desiring “earnestly the pure mental milk of the word, that by it ye may grow up to salvation”. I would like to speak briefly about the importance of learning God's word in the Scriptures. In Colossians the apostle Paul speaks about “growing by the true knowledge of God”. In the third scripture we get the object of our growth - “the full-grown man”, in character the Lord Jesus Christ. The scripture speaks about growing up to Him in all things. The present time when we are here as believers on the earth is a growing time. A time is soon coming when we will not be on the earth anymore; we will be taken to be with the Lord Jesus in heaven, but the present time is a time of growing in God's things. God delights in growth because it is a sign of life, and God likes to see life that is according to Him.

In particular, He loves to see people growing up to the Lord Jesus Christ. God loves us to grow in the knowledge and understanding of His thoughts. He has come out towards us all in the Person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and every one of us who believes in Him is the object of His grace and goodness, and is brought into faith and repentance. That is a blessed matter because it means that we are saved; our eternal salvation is secure in Christ. If we have come to the Lord Jesus as Saviour, then we have the characteristic that is spoken of in this first scripture as “newborn babes”. There is life according to God, very attractive life, and God wants that life to grow and take form and substance, because He wants believers who have believed in Christ to become like that One. Peter brings before us that it is very important to desire earnestly “the pure mental milk of the word”, which is the communication of God's thoughts to us in His word. What we find about God's word, is that it appeals to His work in us. God's word

does not appeal to the flesh in us, but it appeals to His work in us. God Himself wants us to read His word and understand it, to desire earnestly that pure mental milk of the word, because in the Scriptures, in God's word, we find what is needed to grow up to salvation. Of course our salvation is secure in believing in Jesus: we do not grow up to our eternal salvation, we have salvation in Christ; so the apostle must be speaking about something slightly different when he speaks in this scripture of growing up to salvation. I suggest that he is speaking about the growing up of the believer's mind, so that we are able to understand the truth of God, to discern between what is right and what is not right, and to choose what is right according to God's mind as taught in the Scriptures. This is the kind of growing up that relates to teaching, to spiritual formation, and to understanding in the believer. The result would be that our pathways here are according to God's way, the way in which God would direct us.

In reading the Scriptures, we should do so with the help of the Holy Spirit. It says that "Every scripture is divinely inspired, and profitable for teaching", 2 Tim 3: 16. We would accept as believers in Christ that every scripture is divinely inspired - that the Scriptures were indited by the Holy Spirit; and we need the help of the Holy Spirit to understand what God is saying to us in the Scriptures. In Acts 8, a man on his way back to Ethiopia was reading the Scriptures; he was reading the prophet Isaiah. Philip said to him, 'Do you know what you are reading about?'. The man said, "How should I ... unless someone guide me?". We too need guidance to understand what is in the Scriptures. How do we get the Spirit's help in this great matter? The first thing is the desire, as accepting the divine inspiration of the Scriptures and that they are God's word, to have the help of the Holy Spirit so that we will grow by the word and will understand more and more what God is saying. This has been said before, but if God takes the trouble to write down His thoughts in the Scriptures, we should take the trouble to read them. In every scripture we should look for how it speaks of the Lord Jesus. We will find the Holy Spirit helping us to find Christ in the Scriptures. Then we will taste that the Lord is good, and we will want to read more and understand more. So the Christian reads the Scriptures with

understanding by the Spirit, with light and hope in his or her heart, looking for how the Scriptures speak of the Saviour, of Christ.

Further as to the help of the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 2 would help, where it says, “not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, communicating spiritual things by spiritual means”, v 13. At the end of verse 16 we have, “For who has known the mind of the Lord, who shall instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ”. It is a wonderful thing to see that the Holy Spirit puts us in contact, in communication, with the mind of Christ. How different His mind is to what our minds are naturally. We get that lovely reference in Philippians 2: “For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”, v 5. I would encourage myself and all of us to apply ourselves to reading and understanding the Scriptures with the help of the Holy Spirit, that we may grow up to salvation, absorbing an understanding of God's mind for us, and then being regulated by that mind and by these thoughts of God Himself.

In Colossians where we read, it speaks about “growing by the true knowledge of God”. Reading and understanding the Holy Scriptures by the Spirit helps us, but I think “the true knowledge of God” is a further thought. In verse 9 it speaks about the apostle's prayer that the brethren in Colosse would be filled with the full knowledge of God's will. The footnote there connects to Ephesians 1: 17. In that verse you get the apostle Paul praying that the believers in Ephesus would be given “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of him”, that is, the knowledge of “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ”, and this is taking us to a wonderful heritage, a wonderful place. Not only does the apostle desire that the Christians in Colosse might have an understanding of God's will, but that they might be “filled with the full knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding”. I do not think his prayer was restricted to the believers in Colosse; he had all in mind. I would therefore encourage myself and all of us here to put ourselves in this scripture. Do we have a desire to be filled with the full knowledge of God's will? Do we have that desire for ourselves? It is good to. It is also a blessed thing to have that desire for one another. In chapter 4 of Colossians, there is a reference to a brother who came from there,

Epaphras, who was always praying that the brethren in Colosse “may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God”, v 12. Epaphras wanted the brethren where he came from to grow “by the true knowledge of God”. This matter of being filled with the full knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding would lead to the formation of features of the Lord Jesus in us as believers in Him. God works inside first, and then what He has worked inside comes out into expression, and the result is “to walk worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing”. There is a testimony borne, and then we are to bear fruit in every good work, and we grow by the true knowledge of God, and we become strong in the faith, “strengthened with all power”. The believer of whom those things can be said is becoming more and more like Christ.

This is not for a few; it is for all believers. We must have faith, and we must have the Holy Spirit, and we must have the desire to read and understand God's word. These are fundamental. Then we also must have the desire for the blessed things spoken about in this scripture, and as we do there will be growth with us, growing by the true knowledge of God. What a blessed matter! It is also a fine basis for a link between believers. If you are growing by the true knowledge of God, and I am also, what a basis we have for a link together! We are speaking here about spiritual things, and as it says in Ephesians, “the spirit of wisdom and revelation” is needed, chap 1: 17. The things we can enjoy are far superior to and more real than the things of this world, because they are eternal. “The things that are seen are for a time, but those that are not seen eternal”, 2 Cor 4: 18.

I wish to speak briefly from the scripture in Ephesians 4. The apostle Paul wrote “to the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus who are at Ephesus”, Eph 1: 1. What dignity is found in believers in a place! Then he exhorts them: at the beginning of chapter 4 he is exhorting them; the passage is very much worth reading in full. The apostle speaks about the Lord having ascended up on high, and He cares for the saints from His position of glory, by placing certain gifts among the believers so that they might be built up and edified. He also refers to believers in verse 12 as “the body of Christ”. This is

about believers together, not so much individual now, and one thing in view in all of this working together is that together we might develop in the knowledge of the Son of God. That is the same word that we read in Colossians, 'full knowledge', and it is with a view to the saints arriving at "the full-grown man". The writer adds these fine, beautiful words, "at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ". That is what was in the apostle's mind, and because it is recorded in the Scriptures, it is in God's mind. In verse 15 it says, "but holding the truth in love, we may grow up to him in all things, who is the head, the Christ". What is in God's mind is that we should all grow up to Jesus. He is the One from whom every direction and impulse comes, and this is something that we experience together. Every real believer, who has the Spirit, is part of Christ's body, and the truth of that needs to be worked out in the present time. The truth of Christ's body underlies the assembly, which the scripture speaks of as the counterpart of Christ. The assembly consists of every true believer that ever there was, every believer that has the Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ is soon going to gather together all of His own, and then all this time of growing will be completed, and all the knowledge of the word of God, and all the true knowledge of God Himself, will be gathered together and will be seen substantially in one blessed vessel which will be the true and full counterpart to Christ. The light and the joy of that should affect us now. We have the privilege and opportunity to work out the truth of what we read about in Ephesians now. This is a blessed growing time and we should not waste it. We should be exercised to grow up to Him. We will grow by reading the word and understanding it by the Spirit; we will grow by the true knowledge of God; and as holding the truth in love with others, we will know what it is to and grow up to Him in all things.

May we be encouraged for His Name's sake.

Halia, Telangana

30th December 2014

TIME

Jim Pye

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-2 (“to die”)

2 Timothy 1: 12 (“for I know whom I have believed”)

These are the only scriptures I want to read tonight, and I would like to be simple, but I desire that the word might be powerful; it is God's word as we have said in the prayer. A story came to me that I heard a long time ago about an old worthy that went about preaching in the fishing villages up north; he was very well known, and as he was walking down the street the man on the other side of the street asked, 'What is the time?'. In these days a lot of people did not have wrist watches as we do now; so the worthy took out his pocket watch, thought it over and said, 'It is time you knew the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour'. Now, dear friends, I would like to cry that out to each one here: it is time you knew the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour! Maybe you have been putting it off, maybe you have enjoyed the preachings over the past year, or two or three years, and you are happy amongst the brethren, but you have not put your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, tonight God is saying that it is time you did it; do not put it off. Procrastination - putting off - is the thief of time. Satan would love you to put it off another day. 'There will be another preaching next week', he would tell you. Well, the preacher would say differently: there might not be a preaching next week. So God is saying that now is the time to know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour. Scripture says, "now is the well accepted time; behold, now the day of salvation", 2 Cor 6: 2. So it is not putting it off; the scripture is very clear, very sharp and to the point; it is *now*.

It is very easy to put it off. You may say, 'Well, I will consider it; it is very good; very interesting what is being said, I enjoyed that tonight'. That was like king Agrippa; he might have said, 'I like what you are saying Paul; it is all very convincing, but I will think about it; I am nearly persuaded to be a Christian, and I will think about it', Acts 26: 28. I am sure he is one of the millions that have been in a state of indecision, persons that are putting off, indecisive. How sad it is!

It is Satan's way of putting off your eternal salvation. It is very subtle. One day the Lord will come and there will be many that are still thinking about their salvation, it will be too late! So now is the time to know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour.

Now I read this first passage because it speaks about time; "A time to be born, and a time to die". And we are looking forward to a new young one in Leven in a short while, if the Lord will. You could go to the scientists of the land and say you would like to know when this little baby will be born, the day and the time; they cannot tell you that. They can fly persons to the moon, they can give you open heart surgery, but they cannot tell you that. You may say you would like them to tell you when you are going to die; they cannot tell you that either. But God could; God knows these things. God knew when you would be born, the exact time and the exact date, before the doctors knew it, and God knows when you will die. But you might not die, because scripture says "we, the living who remain, shall be caught up together"; it says "the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living", 1 Thess 4: 16-17. So this is a company of living people, living souls; how fine that is, living spiritually, not living to yourselves. As we came here, there were people out enjoying sitting in the pubs and having a pleasurable day. It is a nice day, a good day; and that scripture came to me "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God", 2 Tim 3: 4. They were showing no interest in their soul salvation, but just having a good time. That is a bit like the younger son: he wanted to have a good time, Luke 15. But persons like that are morally dead. They are living, they are living naturally, but in the sight of God they are morally dead, and I trust there is no one here in this room that is living but is morally dead before God. What does that mean, dear young one? It means that you do not know the Lord Jesus as your Saviour and you are still in your sins. And do you think that such are going to go to heaven? You sometimes hear that; people say, 'Oh, there is another angel in heaven'. Well, if that person was not a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ he is certainly not in heaven. And if you are not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ you are dead towards to God; you are dead in your sins, an awful situation to be in. That younger son was dead. The father says, "But it was right to make merry and rejoice, because

this thy brother was dead and has come to life again", Luke 15: 32. God is looking for life. We have seen it springing up naturally, we have had a bitter winter, and now we are seeing life springing up, and God is looking for life to spring up in this meeting. Maybe you have become a bit dead in relation to the things of Christ; God is looking for new life, new buds, new shoots; He is looking for a return from His word going out.

So here it says there is, "A time to be born". What a time it was when Christ was born; what a birth that was! Was there pomp or ceremony? Sadly no: He was laid in a manger, a trough which the cattle would eat their food from. That is where the King of kings and Lord of lords was laid, my Saviour, Saviour of the world, God manifest in flesh, 1 Tim 3: 16. That is where He was found; what a birth, rejected by the world around. But it was a unique birth. There was a star too; the Lord's birth was not just a normal birth. There was not a star when I was born; but it says the magi said, "we have seen his star", Matt 2: 2. There is something unusual happening, perhaps they had heard of it from their fathers and their forefathers, and now it is happening, the time is here, the Messiah has come. How did these men know? I do not know, but there must have been talk, and the scripture tells us right from the very beginning that there would be One born who would bruise the serpent's heel, Gen 3: 15. So this must have been talked about for generations: 'One day there will be a star and the Messiah will come'. Think of these magi looking up, and they would exclaim, 'It is in our generation, it is happening now!' And they went to see the King of kings and Lord of lords, God manifest in flesh! How wonderful for them, what a thing it must have been, a thrill to their hearts! Here was God Himself coming in in the form of a babe.

The Lord grew up in holy perfection. He grew up as a young boy, as a teenager, as a young man, He was found here holy, perfect to God. It says, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners", Heb 7: 26. Even in death He was separated from sinners. He was separated from sinners in one sense because of who He was, but even in death He was separated from sinners. The Lord had to die. He knew it; we do not know how long our lives may be here, but the

Lord knew the time He was to die. He said of Himself, "But first he must suffer many things" before coming in glory, Luke 17: 24, 25. He told that to the disciples, it did not seem to impress them, they did not seem to understand it, but I think it was before the Lord much in His service that He was to die; He came here to die. Why? He came here to die because of you and because of me, because of my sins and because of your sins. One man saw Him and he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world", John 1: 29. One hymn writer says -

Guilty, vile and helpless we,
Spotless Lamb of God was He!
Hymn 426

Well, dear friends, that was Christ, the Lord Jesus, this Man who was born to die, born to be offered up as the sacrifice that would glorify God in relation to sin. So that is what He did. We were speaking in the reading as to His laying down His life and He could say in John, "On this account the Father loves me", chap 10: 17. He was aware of that, that the Father loved Him because, as He could say, "I lay down my life". What strength that must have been in His pathway here. Others did not know it, others did not love Him for it yet, but He says, "On this account the Father loves me ... I have received this commandment of my Father", v 18. The Lord went to the cross. There He was crucified by man, and He has become the propitiation for our sins, and indeed for the whole world. What a time that was! What a dark day when the Lord was crucified. One said that the Man that died on the cross was God, FER vol 15 p182. These things are worth thinking about; it was a miracle that He should die, that the Lord of glory should die, should lay down His life for His sheep, for His flock. He did it, He took men's sins as His own; have you ever considered that? Before the eye of God that spotless Lamb of God took on guilt for us; God made Him to be sin for us. It was the very thing that He abhorred most. He did that to be available as a Saviour for you and for me. So we can speak carefully in relation to the Lord Jesus of "a time to die". It says He "cried with a loud voice", (Matt 27: 50); what a time! The whole creation had been waiting for that time, God had been waiting for

that time, because then God was able to come out fully. At that time when that blessed life was laid down, judgment borne, the sin question finished, the Lord cried out, "It is finished", John 19: 30. Wonderful words, "It is finished". The whole question of sin dealt with before a holy, sin-hating God, and removed; but I have often thought that for all that, for God to be satisfied, it needed the blood to be shed. His was a perfect life, a perfect sacrifice, but it says, "without blood-shedding there is no remission", Heb 9: 22. So God was waiting for that time. Man pierced the Lord's side and forthwith there came blood and water. Dear friends, that blood can cleanse you from every sin, 1 John 1: 7. Not just the worst ones: it can cleanse you from every sin, and now you can have your place before a holy, sin-hating God. How wonderful! When you are saved you are taken up; you are not condemned now. How terrible it must be to be on the condemned row, condemned to death. They do not know the time, it has not been fixed yet, but they are waiting there in line to die; they are condemned men. You are no longer condemned; you are justified in Christ and you can take your place before God. Could you ever think that you could be before God in your sins? It is a moral impossibility! God will never and could never surround Himself with uncleansed sinners. You must be justified, and this is the time: now is the time to be saved. I do not know what is on offer next week; I do not know what is on offer tomorrow; I do not know what is on offer tonight! Other people are looking for signs; there are things that have been happening in America, and foolish people say, 'You know the Lord is coming this year, He is definitely coming'. O yes, He is coming, but the day of the Lord comes as a thief, 2 Pet 3: 10! He will not have external signs so that you might think it is all right to delay. He will come when you least expect it! So do not waste time, accept Him as your Saviour tonight.

I read in this other passage about those who have accepted Him as their Saviour. As that old worthy said, it is time you knew the Lord Jesus as your Saviour. Now all or many in this room know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour! It is a wonderful thing! But we can become a bit dull, a bit jaded, corners have got rubbed, we are not as sharp as we used to be, but Paul says, "I know whom I have

believed”, I know Him! Do you really know Him? Do you know Him as your Friend. One song writer could say,

And He walks with me
And He talks with me,

That is knowing Him. Paul knew Him. There are a lot of children here, and some are hoping to go to universities. We can be thankful for education in one sense. There are persons who have no education, who are illiterate; they cannot go to school because they have to provide for their families. These things we may take for granted, that we have a good education in this land; we are thankful for it, it is a blessing from God. Paul was an educated man, I think he would be a university man, he was a very clever and astute man, he was taught in the best schools or universities of that time, I suppose, but one day he sat down and he counted all these things over; he counted it loss and he speaks rather about the power of Christ's resurrection. Now Paul came to know about that like no one else, because he was on that road to Damascus to slay the brethren and imprison them and a voice spoke out of heaven - Christ in the glory; Paul knew that. Do you know Him as a living, raised and glorified Man? I once went to a convent to fix a clock, and there were crucifixes everywhere, some of them as tall as me; it became a bit oppressive. I do not know if the nuns really knew Him and the power of His resurrection. To go over Christ's sufferings is very important in your life, but, dear friend, you have got to know Him where He is. He is not on the cross now; the Father has glorified Him. Paul writes about “the might of his strength, in which he wrought in the Christ in raising him from among the dead”, Eph 1: 20. Christ has been glorified, He is in heaven, so do you know Him there? That is my test. Do I know Him there? He is living to intercede for me day by day; He is there for me. So we can say He is a Counsellor and Guide, He is a Defender. Paul knew Him as a Defender: he says, “all deserted me ... But the Lord stood with me”, 2 Tim 4: 16. How wonderful to know Him as a Defender, One who is going to stand up for you, defend you, maybe in school, maybe in the workplace, maybe in the street. He will defend you; He will stand

by you. Others may flee from you, but this blessed Man will never flee from you. Get to know Him.

Paul might have sat down and listed the things that had been important to him naturally: education, jobs he had had, and so on, and he would have had to score through everyone until he came to the end of the page. And he eventually said, "I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord", Phil 3: 8. So a university degree may get you a job, but the knowledge of Christ is far exceedingly above any of these things. Get to know Him! Now is the time to do it. This is the growing time, we are often told. We may not even have two or three weeks left! So get to know Christ where He is tonight, on your knees. He wants you to have a relationship with Him. He does not just want you to know Him as your Saviour and leave it at that. He wants to interact personally with you. He wants to have a relationship day by day; so that one day, you will hear that voice, that assembling shout, and "we the living ... shall be caught up", 1 Thess 4: 17. "We the living", that is us now; we might not see death. How wonderful that is, what a prospect that is; do you ever think about it that you might not see death. The man in the street might not have that view; he might think he will live and die and that is it. But the believer has a different outlook, "we the living who remain", that is those that are trusting and have their faith in Christ and have their object heavenly; a heavenly destiny, how wonderful that is. How fine to have your residence as heaven. Where do you stay? Heaven - that is where I live. It is not wherever you stay in Dundee; can you say, 'That is my residence'. Dear friends, that is where a believer belongs; their name is written there. Is it written there? Are you sure it is? Make sure it is tonight because, "now is the well-accepted time; behold, now the day of salvation", 2 Cor 6: 2.

What I would say too is that the blessed Spirit will help you to get to know Jesus better. I would say that with all simplicity; that is maybe half the reason I do not know Jesus better, because I have not trusted in the Spirit and relied on Him more to bring out His glories, to bring out His beauties. One could say, "he is altogether lovely", Song of Songs 5: 16. That is a person who has spent a lot of

time with her beloved. "He is altogether lovely"! You will find no flaw in Him and the more you look at Him the more you will love Him.

These are simple words, but profound, and now is the time to take them up. God would say that, 'Do not put it off'. How sad if you went into an eternity saying, 'I wish I had not put it off; I wish I had accepted what the preacher had said; I wish I had accepted God at His word that day, but in my foolishness I put it off'. Friend, that will never be the case with anyone in this room, if each one will accept Christ as their Saviour tonight. And then we have each to get to know Him, "For I know whom I have believed".

Well may it be so for each one of us, for His Name's sake.

Dundee

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