

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 105
December 2015

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GLORIES GIVEN TO THE LORD

Key to initials:

THE RIVER OF GOD'S GRACE

"BLIND, LAME, WITHERED"

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GLORIES GIVEN TO THE LORD

John 17: 5, 22-26

PAG When we were together this morning, the brother who gave thanks for the emblems made reference to the Lord speaking to the Father about “the glory which I had along with thee before the world was”, and the fact that the Lord now has other glories besides this glory. There is for example the glory of the Creator in Revelation 4, and the Redeemer in Revelation 5. Our brother referred to the glory of the “firstborn from among the dead” (Col 1: 18), and we know that the Lord is also “firstborn amongst many brethren”, Rom 8: 29: these belong to His exaltation as Man. I wondered therefore if we might enquire together as to glory that the Lord has which is further to what He had before the world was. The glory He refers to in verse 22 is the glory of sonship that He shares with us. But then there is glory which the Father has given Him, which we can behold but do not share. I wonder if we could get help in enquiring as to the Lord’s glory that He has won.

RT Is not the wonder of it that He now has the glory in verse 5 as Man?

PAG Yes. So we often say that He never ceased to be what He was in becoming Man, but having become Man He has added glory, do you think?

RT The glory was impenetrable before, was it not, but now there is something available to us that never was before - shining in a Man - someone we know? Someone who died for us now has this glory.

PAG So it says in Colossians that “in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”, chap 2: 9. The fact that the reference there is to dwelling in Him bodily would suggest what is accessible to us; we can take account of it. Our brother in prayer at the beginning referred to seeing His face; that is by faith and by the Spirit. We are not just seeing something abstract as a range of glories come before us.

MC Glories are given to Him because of His worth. We have the passage in Hebrews which refers to Him being “made some little

inferior to angels”, but it is immediately followed by “crowned him with glory and honour”, chap 2: 7.

PAG Yes. He has been proved to be morally suitable for the glory. Of course He is suitable personally as well, and He is suitable for the official glories that He has. In His person He is greater than any glory that can be conferred on Him. But still, God is justified in a Man who is morally equal to bearing the glory, do you think?

RG We sometimes sing,

For Thou hast brought again to Him
More than by man He lost;
And in the very place of sin
We see his glory most.
(Hymn 431)

Is it not a wonderful triumph of divine power and love, that even in this condition in which we are, we can see His glory? We have seen something of it this morning at the breaking of bread, have we not?

PAG His glory has a transforming power, do you think? “We all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed ...”, 2 Cor 3: 18. What a power there is! This is a glory that has a power all of its own, and it causes us to be changed, and to be brought into conformity to Him. There is a time coming when we will be like Him, 1 John 3: 2. We will have a new body not marked by failure. Paul speaks of our present condition as “our body of humiliation” (Phil 3: 21), but there is to be moral conformity to Him now, do you think?

TM In Luke 2: 9, just after the birth of Jesus, it says, “an angel of the Lord was there by them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them”; it is great material evidence of the glory of the Lord being revealed.

PAG So that would be a glory that shone from heaven, but in that Babe that was born there was capacity to “bear the glory”, Zech 6: 13. Reference is made to “the holy thing also which shall be born”, Luke 1: 35. That is a significant expression. It does not say, ‘the holy child’; it says, “the holy thing”. It suggests that there was

something there that was substantial, and Christ in manhood is substantially able to bear the glory.

RT He says earlier in this chapter, “I have glorified *thee* on the earth”, John 17: 4. Does this enter into what you have in mind?

PAG Yes. Say more for our help.

RT This could not have been in the Old Testament, could it? But there is a door opened in the work that Jesus has done. And God, who was largely unknown before, has been made known and glorified where man had disowned Him. Man had disqualified himself; there is a Man who has glorified God on the earth, and glory is now the answer.

PAG Yes; so there is a voice out of heaven in chapter 12, “I both have glorified and will glorify it again”, relating to the Father’s name, v 28. The Father’s name was glorified in a Man, and it would be glorified again at the cross, but then glorified too in the Lord’s resurrection. He was “raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father”, Rom 6: 4.

RT Heaven is all the more a wonderful place than it was before.

PAG Yes. I do think that it is important that we see that God has been fully justified in a Man. All the men that went before failed. But God showed that He could have in a Man One who would do His will, and One who would glorify Him on the earth. It might have been one thing to glorify God in heaven, where everything is in order, but it is a greater matter to glorify Him on earth, where sin had come in.

RT Man was cast out of Eden, was he not, but here He speaks of being received in glory?

PAG That is very good. Something of that will be seen millennially too, “And I saw no temple in it; for the Lord God Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb”, Rev. 21: 22. It will be brought out in display then. So the whole universe shall see it, but God saw it when Christ was here.

CS He not only glorified God but He said, “I have completed the work”, v 4. So He is the great Accomplisher, is He not? So there are

glories that are added through what He has accomplished? For example, He now has glory as the Redeemer.

PAG It is important for us to see that there was great cost involved in God being glorified. There was a work that had to be done; there was a work that man after nature could not do: and here was One who came in, and not only did it, but completed it. Many may begin a thing, but there is glory to God in completing it, and it says of the Lord in John 19, "When therefore Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished", v 30. "It is finished"; well, God was glorified. You might say it was a scene of death, a scene of rejection, a scene of humiliation; that is man's view of it, but God's view is what matters.

RG Is it not a remarkable thing that in verses 4 and 5 He says, "I have completed the work which thou gavest me that I should do it; and now glorify *me*, *thou* Father"? One who was co-equal, and is co-equal, with God, and now a Man, is a Man in sonship. There is something very wonderful about that, because "the glory which thou hast given me I have given them" refers to the glory of sonship, as we know. So, while He stands out unique because of the greatness of His Person, the glory of who He is and was and ever shall be, yet we are brought in alongside of Him to share in this glory.

PAG So there are added glories for the Lord, but there are added glories for the Father too. He has what He had not before. He has men in sonship who are like Christ, and God will dwell with men eternally, and it will be with men who are like Christ. God did not have that before, and now He does, and He always will.

JAP So "Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons ... and he made him a vest of many colours", Gen 37: 3. Is that something of "the glory that thou hast given me"?

PAG I was thinking of that; I am glad that you bring it in. That vest was one vest; it was not a selection of different pieces of material that might be brought out for one occasion or another. He always had the whole vest, but at the time of the service of praise there may be certain of the colours come before us in a particularly distinctive way on one occasion, and then different colours on another, do you think?

JAP So we answer to the word as to David, “Arise, anoint him; for this is he”, 1 Sam 16: 12. It is appreciation that is drawn out in the souls of the saints, do you think?

PAG Yes, that is good. So that in the anointing of David by Samuel, God looks on the heart, v 7. He saw what was there morally in David, and he was a youth, “he was ruddy, and besides of a lovely countenance and beautiful appearance”. There had been other sons passed before Samuel, but they would not sit at table until he came, v 11. We cannot proceed in the service of praise until Christ comes in.

RT Are “the Apostle and High Priest of our confession” (Heb 3: 1) two of the glories the Lord Jesus has been given?

PAG Yes, go on.

RT In the mystery of piety, “God has been manifested in flesh ... received up in glory” (1 Tim 3: 16), and that has opened the door, has it not? John 17 has been spoken of as referring to our great High Priest. There is Somebody who maintains things in heaven for us, keeping us there, you may say. We are here in weakness, but He is there for us, is He not?

PAG Yes. So the fact that He has “the priesthood unchangeable” (Heb 7: 24) means that the glory is always maintained at its height. There is no decline in the Person, and there is no decline in the glory do you think?

RT Yes. It is fine to get beyond the breakdown, is it not?

PAG It is. We can go into the holiest at any time. It takes us out of the area of breakdown.

RG I was just thinking of that quotation that you made. He has “neither beginning of days nor end of life”, Heb 7: 3. That was true of Him before time. It is still true of Him as a Man, and that adds to His glory, does it not?

PAG It is “power of indissoluble life”, v 16. It is life that does not ebb and flow, and it cannot change. It is not a question of whether it might change or might not; it is unchangeable. The priesthood is unchangeable; the life is unchangeable; the glory is unchangeable.

We sing hymns, and we greatly value them, but I wonder how much they really mean to us in their familiarity.

Unchanging glory fills the place,
Where Jesus dwells on high,
(Hymn 26).

Well, it does, but is it real to me?

AW This is all connected with the Father loving the Son, is it not? Can you say something to encourage us in that?

PAG Well, it is very important to grasp that what lies behind all this is love, and love in its fullest expression. “The love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them”. God’s motive, I think we can safely say, in securing through Christ men for His presence eternally, was love, and it is His nature. Say something as to your own impression.

AW I just feel that we need to get some impression of this interaction between the Father and the Son. “Thou hast loved me”; that is what we come into. It is the same characteristics that we can enjoy, and that is because we have a link with this One, is it not?

PAG Yes. Christ was loved as Man; and it was love that was known in an atmosphere in which there was nothing to hinder or spoil it. It would relate to what our brother said about taking us beyond the breakdown. This was a love that had never known breakdown.

DM snr Do you think Stephen saw something of this in the Acts 7, when he was being stoned? “He saw the glory of God, and Jesus”, v 55. He saw a Man there in righteousness and holiness – the beauty of the One that he was going to be with, do you think?

PAG Well, it is a thing to take account of. He recognised Him; “he saw the glory of God, and Jesus”. When we see Him we will be like Him, 1 John 3: 2. But will we recognise Him? I think we will; it will not be a stranger that we see: it will be One whom we know. And what will we recognise? Well, we will see His face but we will see His glory too.

DM snr This might be included in John’s contemplation in chapter 1: 14. These chapters that he has written are a contemplation of His

glory.

PAG I think that bears helpfully on what our brother just said. “A glory as of an only-begotten with a father”. If it was written as a natural man might edit a passage, one might ask what is meant by glory as of an only-begotten with a father. There could not be an only-begotten if there was not a father; so why add that? Well, the Spirit adds it because I think it shows that we are being drawn into a sphere of affection: “an only-begotten with a father”.

RG The Lord now knew a relationship as a Man, as a Son before the Father. That is wonderful is it not?

PAG It is good to remind ourselves of these things. There was something taken up that had not been before. “Coming into the world he says ...”; so there was a point in time in which God’s counsels were taken up. And it was new.

RT It has been said, I think rightly, that Christendom largely knows a historical Jesus; but what we are to know is a glorified Jesus. The only Jesus we may know vitally is a glorified One. I think it is important that young people should get the grasp of that, because largely they are taught, if they are taught anything at school, about a historical Jesus. But He is a Man who has been glorified, and that is the only Jesus we have, and we have a link with Him eternally.

PAG Yes. So it is interesting that when you get the expression as to the Supper in 1 Cor. 11 the word in verse 24 is, “This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me.” Now we might think that remembrance involves something in the past; you remember something in the past. But the note is important; it says, “For the calling of me to mind.’ The word translated ‘remembrance’ has an active signification of ‘recalling’, or ‘calling to mind’, as a memorial”. If you go then to Exodus 3 you get the name brought in, “I AM THAT I AM” (v 14), but it says, “Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you. This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations”, v 15. His Name is His memorial. Now that means that we are remembering Someone who is alive, not someone who is dead. And even as to the expression “the God of Abraham, the God

of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” the Lord reminded persons when He was here that God is “not the God of the dead but of the living”, Mark 12: 27. So it is living persons who remember a living Man, not living persons who remember a dead man.

RG Our remembrance is of a Man in the glory. So we call Him to mind as a memorial. It is a wonderful thought that we have Spirit-given power to be able to call Him to mind where He is, do you think?

PAG Would what John says in his first epistle bear on it? “That which we have seen and heard we report to you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is indeed with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ”, chap 1: 3. Now when John wrote that, his fellowship was with Christ in glory. And he says, “And these things write we to you that your joy may be full”, v 4. That has to be present joy in a living Man. There is only so much you can gain from remembering what is past. But to know Christ as He is, is really what will occupy us eternally.

HS The Spirit is very active here, is He not? He is the One who can communicate these things. Would you say a little as to that so that we may understand it better?

PAG Well, the Spirit provides a living link with a living Man so that the Lord says in chapter 16 verse 14, “He” - the Spirit - “shall glorify me”. “He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you”. Everything that is to be known of Christ is already under the Spirit’s hand, but “he shall receive of mine and announce it to you” means that the Spirit brings forward at any time particular glories of Christ that are suited to the moment.

HS My current understanding of this has to be by the Spirit; the Lord Himself says that here.

PAG Yes, it must be. Well, you could read the whole of the Bible without the Spirit and it would just be a history book. The Spirit would show us that “the glory which thou hast given me I have given them” is the glory we have in sonship. It is something we have been taught, but we have been taught by the Spirit to enquire in the

temple what these things mean. If it was not for the Spirit we would have no access to glory. We need to have that clear in our minds.

MC It is a living experience, is it not, and by the Spirit we get fresh impressions? These can accumulate in our hearts and produce more by way of depth, do you think?

PAG I am struck by how often we will hear a scripture read and someone will say, 'It never quite struck me before'. Now you might have heard it or read it many times, but the Spirit brings out something distinctive on that day, some fresh feature. The active, living power of the Spirit gives us a fresh impression. And sometimes He will bring to our minds an impression that we have had before and it takes on a new significance. So that is all to do with the present service of the Spirit, I believe.

RG Is that not borne out by where you read at the end of the chapter. "I have made known to them thy name, and will make it known". You were asking just now how we know that "the glory which thou hast given me I have given them" relates to the glory of sonship?". "I have made known to them thy name", that is the Father's Name and that brings in the glory of sonship. "And will make it known": is something that is being unveiled for us that the Lord delights to open up to us in relation to the Father. And that then gives the Lord added glory, does it not?

PAG It is as well for us, do you think, to understand that the glories added in the souls of the saints in this dispensation are cumulative? It is not that each generation gets an impression, and then that passes away, and another generation gets another impression and it passes away. As to nature that is so, but as to glory it is not. The glory that the disciples appreciated, and those appreciated by everyone that forms part of the assembly, will form part of the assembly eternally. There is the glory of all these centuries of time that perhaps we do not know very much about. Bernard of Clairvaux wrote in the eleventh or twelfth century,

Jesus! the very thought of Thee
(Hymn 279).

That is all added. The man who wrote it has been gone nearly a thousand years, but the glory remains and it will come out in display.

RT Christ has entered “into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us”, Heb 9: 24. What a touch of His love there is in that. We may limit His love to the cross. He died for us, that is true, but this gives a sense of more being added to that, and it is eternal?

PAG I have been thinking about that a little. The love remains; the Lord’s service - the washing of water by the word (Eph 5: 26) - is His present love. That is not a historical love. “Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it” (v 25); there is a work already done. But then the present service of the washing of water by the word involves, I think, conformity to the glory.

RT That is here in the verse, “I sanctify myself for them”, John 17: 18. It has often been said that the assembly is His occupation in the time of His absence, is it not? The world goes on; it does not interfere exactly: *His* occupation is the assembly.

PAG Yes, and to think that One so great would sanctify Himself for us, set Himself apart in that sense, that we might be brought in to the fulness of the things that God has prepared for those that love Him.

RT The whole world will bow before Him; praise the Lamb! But here is something that is present and to be enjoyed.

PAG Yes. So we have the earnest by the Spirit, but we should not forget that divine Persons have now a foretaste of what They will have eternally. That is in a sense a greater thing. We could narrow it down to what we appreciate and enjoy, but think of what the Lord is receiving and the Father is receiving.

DTP I was thinking of John in the Revelation; he distinctly got a touch as to the Lord’s glory. He had never seen it that way before, and we should get touches of that too, because it leads onto the Lord’s opening up the revelation as to the churches and what is going through.

PAG That is good. So John begins with his present enjoyment of the love: “To him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father”

(Rev. 1: 5,6), but then he gets a view of the glory. And it is so different from the glory He had previously seen. He says, "I fell at his feet as dead", v17. But then the Lord lays His right hand upon John and says, "Fear not". We may have to take account of the Lord's judicial glory, and it is real and it is necessary, but in giving us that view He says to those whom He loves, "Fear not".

JT "The glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one" really brings out freshness, and sonship brings out the place that we have in divine affections: the Father's affections and the Son's affections.

PAG That is helpful. So these ones who were given, He did not have them before but now He does. And I think an added glory here is "that they may be one as we are one". We know that God is One. But now He is producing a company that is one; there is testimony in that. There is testimony in the fact that God has at the present time on earth what is marked by oneness. Again, that is apart from the breakdown. But He did not have that before.

RT Unity at this level is something to be coveted at the present time. Can you say something about that?

PAG I do think it is most important because we can see that one of the things that the enemy is set against is unity. He will bring in division and distraction, and he will bring in difficulties in the spirits of the saints that cause them to diverge from one another. Divine glory properly appreciated always has a unifying effect; I think I can say that from Scripture. If a problem comes in, the answer is a view of the glory of Christ. Certain issues may arise, but the answer is going to be some view of the glory of Christ, and it will have a unifying effect.

RT That is right, and much needed because we try to get unity at a lower level and it will never work. So it says here, "sanctify them by the truth", v 17. This level of things is going to hold us together in an unbreakable bond, is it not?

PAG Well, that is another matter to think of. Paul says in Ephesians 4, "as the truth is in Jesus", v 21. So there is the Person, and there is the standard. If the truth is to be available to us, we see it

objectively in Christ, and it is formed in us subjectively by the Spirit. The truth is our bond, and that is what holds us together. Now you might say, 'Is love our bond?'. Well, love is the bond of perfectness. That is to say that if we do not hold the truth in love then we will not hold it in a complete way, but the truth is our bond. It is essential that we grasp that, because it means that we are operating in relation to the divine standard set out in a Man. And again, God did not have that before. If you look at the old dispensation there was the law, but there was no one who exemplified it; but Christ fulfilled the law. He magnified the law and made it honourable.

RT Unless we enjoy our privilege we will never fulfil our responsibility. Is that right?

PAG Well, that is another important matter. There is an address by Mr F E Raven, on 'Fellowship, Privilege and Testimony' (vol 1 p58), and that is the order. You cannot go out in testimony without the enjoyment of privilege, because then, what are you testifying to? And what are you seeking to bring people into? You want to bring persons into the privilege that we enjoy. Why? Because it is for the glory of God.

RT They took knowledge of the apostles because they had been with Jesus, Acts 4: 13.

PAG Yes. Really the testimony of the word of God which we preach has to be the testimony of Jesus. We can only bear testimony effectively to someone we have been with. It is spoken of in Isaiah 53 and also in Romans 10 as a report. How would you bring back a report of something you had not seen?

RG "How shall they preach unless they have been sent" (Romans 10: 15), and you are not sent by a communication through the air. You are sent by a personal transaction and experience of His presence, and that is how you give something that He has given you, do you think?

PAG Well, that is as it should be. There are younger brothers here who might be asked to preach. All I would say is this: you only need one impression of Christ because He is so great. The Spirit is God,

and infinite in power, and, if we have an impression, the Spirit can help us to fill it out. It does not depend on me.

RG The Spirit can tell you whether it is a right impression or not. How important the Spirit is. If we all have the Spirit, and there is only one Spirit, He would not be saying one thing to you and another thing to me. The truth is under His hand, and it comes to us all from the Spirit.

PAG Well, Paul says to the Ephesians saints, "There is one body and one Spirit one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all ...", Eph 4: 4-6 This thought of oneness pervades the divine system. It was typified in the tabernacle system, where everything was anointed with oil. The tabernacle was one whole. That was a physical manifestation of it, "figures of the true" (Heb 9: 24), but now we are in the true. And the true is marked by oneness.

MC God has revealed Himself in Father, Son and Spirit, and we have come to understand what that means, and the love that exists between divine Persons themselves. It is a very wonderful privilege that we have any insight into that, but it has been made very manifest, has it not? I was thinking of what it says here about oneness, and the standard being the same oneness that marks divine Persons themselves which is a very wonderful thing that we should be able to touch it at all, do you think? But we have been given that glory. That is a marvellous privilege, do you think?

PAG I do. It certainly has helped me to think of it in this way, that what the Lord unites to Himself is one. It is not just individuals -, "he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit", (1 Cor 6: 17); there is also one body in Christ. So that what is united to the Lord is one. And I have a part in that; but He then leads His own into the presence of the Father where we are associated with Him in sonship. It is the same persons, but viewed from a different standpoint. But we really come from the enjoyment of oneness into the presence of the Father where we see that divine Persons are one. But we touch it in spirit as united to Christ.

RG Divine Persons are one; I like that: you could never think about the Lord taking disparity into heaven. Where there is oneness, there has always been oneness and always will be oneness.

PAG What you say is borne out by what Paul says in 1 Thess 4, “the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living who remain, shall be caught up **together**” with them in the clouds”, v 16, 17. The whole church will go up together. And whatever distance or fracture there may have been, it is all removed then.

DM jnr It speaks of the Lord’s body of glory. It says that our bodies will be brought “into conformity to his body of glory”, Phil 3: 21. So the thought of oneness is there, but the body of glory that the Lord has now is something that He did not have in eternity past. Can you help us with that?

PAG Well, I think it goes back to what our brother said at the beginning; it involves His manhood. So that is a position He did not have, but then it says in John’s first epistle, “Beloved, now are we children of God” (chap 3: 2); that is what we are at the present time. “And what we shall be has not yet been manifested; we know that if it is manifested we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is”. So what He is in His present condition is going to be manifested, but when we see Him we will be like Him. That must be related to His manhood, because we cannot see what is impenetrable in relation to deity. Do you not think that will be a wonderful thing? We will see the Lord in actuality in glory as He is, and there will be nothing about you or me to hinder the enjoyment of what we see.

DM jnr The hymn puts it,

Sin-soiled feet have never trod;
(Hymn 206).

So we are morally suited to the glory of God there.

PAG I think that. We are so used to conditions that are mixed. Even in times of highest privilege we can sometimes find ourselves distracted. It might even be something legitimate comes into our mind, but we need the Spirit’s help to concentrate. But then all these things will be gone; all the distractions will have been removed. We shall know even as we have been known, 1 Cor 13: 12.

MC We will have the capacity to take it all in. What a wonderful thing to have a body of glory like his own body of glory! I was thinking of the way that we will be sustained.

PAG We will be sustained eternally. We will still be in a mediatorial system, of course. The Spirit will be there, in power. We will remain creatures eternally. If you look at the variety of creation, all that we can see, the detail, what we know about the structure of the material world, even down to the level of atoms and smaller particles than that; all that is really the handiwork of God. Now the new creation will be more wonderful than that. I cannot say what it will be, but it will be more wonderful than that. There will be variety; there will be life: it will be inexhaustible. And we will be sustained in power forever. That is what God has in mind for us. Christ will be at the centre of it, and everything will be conformed to Him.

RT The new creation's stainless joy
Shines through the present gloom;
That world of bliss without alloy,
The saints' eternal home"
(Hymn 81)

PAG Yes, we touch something of it; we do. I was thinking this morning at the service of God of Mr J N Darby's hymn:

Like Jesus! Grace supreme!
Like Him before Thy face;
Like Him, to know that glory beam
Unhindered, face to face!
(Hymn 72)

There is no better thought for us.

RT All that we are given is not for information; it is for formation.

PAG Exactly. I remember you said a good few years ago in an address, as to being transformed according to the same image, it is a permanent change: something added every day for the glory of God eternally.

RT It makes the present time very important. There is something to be formed now. We are not going to grow in eternity, but there is

something being formed now that will be at home in eternity.

PAG Yes, so we should desire to be formed in greater capacity now to take it in. It is not that we will see nothing new in eternity - it is a new creation. But our capacity, our measure, that is what is formed in time.

Kirkcaldy, 31st May 2015

Key to initials:
(local unless otherwise stated)

T D Beveridge; A Buchan; M Cowan; R Gardiner; P A Gray
(Grangemouth);

T Mather; D Matthews jnr; D Matthews snr; D T Pye; J A Pye; C
Seeley (Glasgow);

H Smith; R Taylor; J Thompson; A Wilson

THE RIVER OF GOD'S GRACE

David A Brown

Luke 4: 16-22; 27-30

Acts 16: 23-34

Ezekiel 47: 1-7

I would like to speak tonight as to the river of God's grace. We sang hymn 13 after our Thursday night reading in Linlithgow; the latter half of verse 3 says,

The river of His grace,
Through righteousness supplied,
Is flowing o'er the barren place
Where Jesus died.

There *is* a river of divine grace, and it is flowing in this room, and it has its source in God Himself. I can assure you tonight that the river of God's grace has not dried up. It is flowing today in all its greatness, liberality and power! I trust tonight that there might be a heart here which would be opened to receive the fulness of God's grace because it has its source in God Himself. He is the God of grace; the source is pure, and the river is flowing.

In Luke 4 we see the river of God's grace originating in this blessed Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. In His wisdom towards these persons, the Lord Jesus spoke, as an anointed Man, of what He was going to do: "to preach glad tidings to the poor ... to captives deliverance, and to the blind sight, to send forth the crushed delivered". These literal infirmities (poor, imprisoned, blind, crushed) also speak of moral conditions and the effect of Satan's work has been to bring them to bear upon the human race: but the effect of grace is to lift persons out of such sinful conditions! If you feel that you are in any of these moral conditions that are suggested in chapter 4 of Luke, then the Lord Jesus in His grace is able to save you from them. Grace has travelled all the way from its blessed outpouring at Calvary right through the centuries until the present day. I can think of nothing more wonderful than telling you about the river of God's grace. As it flows, it is gathering persons in, and I trust

that you will be one of those brought in tonight through its sovereign operation. The Lord Jesus preached here to persons in need. He is the *only* One who could say in verse 21, "To-day this scripture is fulfilled in your ears", for the scripture spoke of Himself. What does it say? "And all bore witness to him, and wondered at the words of grace which were coming out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this the son of Joseph?" I trust that you will hear the word tonight, *be affected by it*, repent of your sins, have faith in Christ, and know the power and blessedness of the forgiveness of sins in your own soul. I read later on in this section because it speaks of divine grace operating in the soul of Naaman, who was told to plunge in the Jordan seven times, 2 Kings 5: 10. Grace goes to great lengths to secure just one soul. This is spoken about in Luke 15, the lengths to which divine grace will go in order to save one soul, and perhaps tonight divine grace is looking for you. God will go after you until He finds you. It does not say in Luke that He gave up; it says, "until he find it" (v 4), and I often give thanks for that: "until he find it". It is love in operation and that is grace!

God's desire is that He might save you, and that is why I read in Acts 16. The river of God's grace continued until it reached Philippi. It went all the way from Nazareth, where the Lord was brought up, until it reached Philippi. Philippi was not in Asia but in Europe. So how great is God's grace that moved in order to save Gentile souls, and how it has flowed in order that persons like you and me might be saved. So it did not only flow into the city of Philippi, but into a jail: Paul and Silas were imprisoned there because of their faithfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ. Never has a jailor had prisoners like this before, because these men became a temple for the service of God through the operations of divine grace. A physical earthquake took place in this jail, and sometimes we need a moral earthquake in our lives to change us from our wilful pathway. The gospel does indeed change persons, and it certainly changed this jailor in Philippi for good. "The jailor being awakened out of his sleep, and seeing the doors of the prison opened, having drawn a sword was going to kill himself, thinking the prisoners had fled." What does Paul say? "Do thyself no harm, for we are **all** here": none had left. I appeal to all, especially the young, "Do thyself

no harm". Prevent moral harm by asking this question, the most important question anyone could ask, "what must I do that I may be saved?" The answer? "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house", the most important answer anyone could receive. There are two references to "thou" (or in modern English, 'you'). The first reference is individual: so, have you the faith or have you asked God to give you the faith to believe? There was something with the jailor that caused him to say this, "Sirs, what must I do that I may be saved?". Whether he heard these prisoners singing, or listened to the testimony of other prisoners, there was just something that caused him to ask that question. That something is called the work of God; it is sovereign, and I trust that in every soul in this room the sovereign work of God is proceeding so that you might be affected by *God's* word. There is nothing I can do to affect the souls of persons in this room; only God can do it. He did it with this jailor, and if He can do it with this jailor, He can do it with any one of us. "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house". Notice, "thou and thy house". Households are very important, and God has households in mind for blessing. All of us who are heads of households have a responsibility to bring in the word of God, and through prayer and faith facilitate salvation in our houses. The scripture then says, "And they spoke to him the word of the Lord, with all that were in his house". I would suggest that they spoke to him about the death of the Lord Jesus Christ and what it meant: the death of the Saviour, the One who gave His life for each of us, the One who went to Calvary, the One who met the whole sin question and resolved it completely and eternally. Paul and Silas would speak to him about baptism and teach him the truth of baptism: that is why, "he took them the same hour of the night and washed them from their stripes; and was baptised, he and all his straightway". How wonderful it is when persons are brought into an acknowledgement that what they are after nature, Adam, could never please God: it is only what is of Christ that can please God. "And having brought them into his house he laid the table for them, and rejoiced with all his house, having believed in God." What a wonderful result from this river of divine grace which flowed into that jail, and then into the jailor's house. What a change in a man! He

was changed from a jailor charged by the magistrates to keep Paul and Silas in the inner prison into a man who is rejoicing “with all his house, having believed in God”. How wonderful this river of divine grace; it has continued for over two thousand years, is still flowing, and is bringing persons into blessing.

In Ezekiel 47, there is not only a river of God's grace, but also I would suggest a river of God. We read locally in Exodus 7 as to the first plague which turned the water into blood; there was no life in the river of Egypt; the whole thing was turned into blood and it stank, v 20, 21. Corruption set in, and corruption abounds in the world in which we live. The only sure source is God, and the only blessing for you is to relate yourself to that pure source. It speaks a little in the psalms as to the rivers. Psalm 65: 9, 10 refers to the river of God and what it does:

The river of God is full of water;
thou providest their corn,
when thou hast so prepared it:
Thou dost satiate its furrows,
thou smoothest its clods,
thou makest it soft with showers;
thou blessest the springing thereof.

That is the river of God; it is full of water, and it has never dried up. The broken cisterns of this world, which we have all tried, are drying up fast, and have limited resource; God's resource is limitless. Ezekiel 47 refers to a river that has its source in the house; so that is like the gospel going out. The gospel goes out from the house, flowing out and getting deeper and deeper. When the Spirit came it widened out into the gentile world. The river flowed to Philippi and has increased right down to our own day. So this river of God is flowing out from the altar and goes “under the threshold of the house eastward” which speaks of the coming of Christ. Later in the passage it speaks of waters that went to the ankles, then to the knees, then to the loins, and then it speaks of “a river that could not be passed through”; “for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed through”.

I would especially like to attract the young amongst us to come into this river of blessing. There is water to the ankles, and you might have experienced that. You might have trusted in the Lord Jesus and asked for the Holy Spirit, and I suppose in one sense the waters are to your ankles, but what about the waters to the knees? Have you started being interested in divine things? Have you known waters to be at your knees? It then says, "And he measured a thousand and caused me to pass through: the waters were to the loins". That speaks of your affections; have your affections been stirred by the Spirit through reading of the Lord and His work, through living ministry amongst us, by what we were talking about earlier today in our enquiry together, and by what our young brother gave us yesterday in the address? If your affections were stirred, then I am sure you would desire to remember the Lord, to honour Him and to acknowledge the divine claims of love upon you. That would be the normal process in a believer of being affected by this river, the river of God. And then, "he measured a thousand; it was a river that I could not pass through, for the waters were risen, waters to swim in". Can I just encourage your hearts? You might not have understood a lot of what was said in the reading today, but go into the river and the Spirit will help you. He will help you to swim spiritually, and will help you to enjoy these things. Do not be afraid. The service of God on Lord's day morning also gives each of us a wonderful opportunity to respond to divine longings. That is like waters to swim in, the enjoyment of divine grace, the enjoyment of divine love, waters to swim in. As a younger man I used to think, 'Will I ever understand these things?'. It is as we seek help from the Holy Spirit to read our Bibles and the ministry, pray about what we have read, and then listen to what is proceeding in the meetings. I especially encourage the young men amongst us, because the Lord's testimony is going to be in your hands. Older brothers whom we respect and love will not be here for ever, and many have been taken to be with Christ in recent times; so, if the Lord does not come for us, His testimony will continue in a living and vital way in those who have experienced the blessedness of these things.

Then it says, "And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? And he led me, and brought me back to the bank of the

river.” What did he see? Trees; “very many trees on the one side and on the other.” As we enjoy these divine things maybe we will venture in to see what is happening, and what will you find? Others who have similar exercises to yourself, similar thoughts and desires to enjoy these waters to swim in. So the river of God's grace flows and acts in persons and acts on our consciences, hearts and affections. May each one of us have our affections stirred for Christ and heavenly things! We have been speaking today about eternity; the river of God's grace brings us into what is eternal. We enjoyed that thought in our reading together in 2 Corinthians 4 as to what is being established in the hearts and souls of persons - “an eternal weight of glory”.

So in closing I would appeal to you to allow the river of God's grace to operate in your soul. Do not just dip your toe in the water. Go in and enjoy these waters. May these blessed things be for the encouragement of every soul in this room. For His Name's sake.

Bo'ness

16th November 2014

“BLIND, LAME, WITHERED”

Calum McKay

Genesis 3: 9

John 5: 1-9, 14

Acts 19: 2 (to ‘believed’)

We read in Genesis of God asking man a question: “Where art thou?” I suppose God would ask that question in the glad tidings tonight of everyone here. Where do you stand in relation to God? What is your standing before Him? I suppose it would be easy to think that you do not need to answer that question, you do not need to be concerned about God, you do not need God’s Son. You may go to work or school and see persons that have no regard for God at all going about their daily lives. They do not seem even to think about Him and their lives go on, you might say, in relative normality. So if it appears to be all right for them not to be concerned about God, then why do you need to be concerned about where you stand with God? When the Lord Jesus was here, He spoke about the days of Noah. He says, “But as the days of Noe, so also shall be the coming of the Son of man. For as they were in the days which were before the flood, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day on which Noe entered into the ark, and they knew not till the flood came and took all away”, Matt 24: 37-39. That is, persons were going on unaware of the impending matter: God was going to bring in a flood, and it was going to take them all away. Their lives carried on as normal; they were “eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage”; they were indifferent to God and independent of God. But the glad tidings are being preached because there is another matter, which is that this day of grace, which God has allowed in His great patience to go on for nearly two thousand years, is going to end. We are not told in Scripture when it is going to end, and when it does end, it will end even faster than the time we read of. In that day the flood came, and there was rain for forty days and forty nights. We might imagine some persons trying to climb hills to try to escape the judgment. It was futile, of course, but there would be a certain period of time. Scripture says this

dispensation will end “in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor 15: 52), that is, much less than a moment. There will be no time for consideration then, no time to wonder if I will really believe the glad tidings and all the testimony that has been borne to me? Will I repent of my sins? Will I get right with God?. No, the day of grace will be over, and it will be too late. What a frightening prospect that is!

But the blessed news in the glad tidings is that God does not desire to judge men. Indeed, He desires your blessing. What God has in mind for every man is the greatest possible blessing, and He has provided the means for that blessing for you in the gospel that is still going out, in order that you might avail yourselves of it. What is it that I need to get right about with God?. The simple matter is that we each have a sinful history. If you look at the history of man all through Scripture, you can see that it is a history of failure. You see that God created this garden of Eden and He set Adam in it. It was the most blessed environment in which man was set. Adam was to till it and to guard it, but the serpent was allowed in, and, I suppose, there was some failure in relation to that, and man was tempted and he failed. When you look at man as under the law, you see that God gives the law in order to prove man through the nation of Israel, and it is a history of failure. And your history, and my history, in relation to what is due to God is a history of failure. Scripture speaks of God as “judge of all” (Heb 12: 23), and it will be true that those who reject the glad tidings will come under the judgment of God, forced to account for their histories. The question would be for everyone here - it is a solemn matter but it is real - that if you have rejected the glad tidings, what will you be able to say to God about your history? Will you hope that perhaps God will be happy to accept your estimation of your history? That can never be so. Will you hope that a righteous and holy God will overlook your history? That can never be so. God is absolutely righteous; compromise is not of God. God has never compromised His righteousness, but the blessed news in the glad tidings is that He has established a righteous basis whereby you can be before God completely clear of your sins, your history no longer standing against you, and it is all in the Man that we read of here in John’s gospel chapter 5.

Round about this pool in Jerusalem, Bethesda, “lay a multitude of sick, blind, lame, withered”. I suppose they might represent the mass of humanity. They all had a need. Their needs varied, but we can say simply that every one of us here, speaker included, has a need, a need for salvation, a need that their sinful history might be met, a need to get right with God. I suppose the various conditions that are spoken of here could be applied to those who have not yet believed the glad tidings.

Some were said to be “lame”; a lame person cannot walk properly or normally. In Acts 3 we read of a man who was lame and he has been likened to the nation of Israel. They were taken up by God, but any walk in relation to God was inconsistent and feeble, although there was some recognition of God and what was due to Him. There is another man in the Acts of the Apostles in Lystra; it said that he “had never walked”, Acts 14: 8. He represents the Gentile - that is you and me. We were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel”, Eph 2: 12. He had no share in Israel’s claim upon God by any means at all, and was unable to please God. And why is it that we are unable to please God? It is because of sin. It is found in the garden; the serpent deceived the woman. The woman ate the forbidden fruit and offered it to Adam, and he ate it. He disobeyed God. Sin is not just the transgression of the law; sin is lawlessness, that whole principle. Man sinned, and that poison has entered into every generation, I am a sinner - I know it in my own heart - and because of sin we all seek to do our own will. Isaiah in chapter 53 says, “All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way”, v 6. That is, I have done my will, and you have done your will. God has rights over you; He has rights in creation, and His rights have been disregarded; God has been wronged. Every time I have done my own will I have sinned. I may have sinned against other persons, perhaps members of my family, perhaps persons at work, perhaps strangers, many persons I may have sinned against, but in every one of my sins, God has been offended. The younger son in Luke 15 came back to the father and he said, “I have sinned against heaven and before thee”, v 21. In every one of our sins we have offended God, and the question in the glad tidings is, how can you get right with God about your sins? Job

asks that question, “how can man be just with God?” chap 9: 2. God has provided the answer in the glad tidings, that you can be right with God and have your whole history settled; and God has much more to give besides.

Then there were those that were “blind”, which could also be applied to those who have not yet come to salvation. If you have not yet come to Christ and come to see something of the glory that is in Him, blindness marks you. We read in 2 Corinthians 4 about how “the god of this world has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving, so that the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine forth for them”, v 4. It is shining; “the glory of the Christ” is shining, and I suppose it shines in heaven, but for certain persons the glory of it is not apparent to them. And why is that? It is because “the god of this world”, that is, Satan, “has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving”. He has prevented them by one means or another from seeing the glory of the Man that God is presenting in the glad tidings, the Man that is at the centre of everything for God. And so, would to God that He might, if never before, in this time, give you to see something of the glory that is in Christ. It is not outward glory; it is not the kind of glory that man attributes. Scripture contains a lot of teaching as to that; the nation of Israel chose Saul, a tall man, a good-looking man, and that is the kind of man that man wants. You will notice men who become popular tend to be those that are taller and more handsome; that is the type of man that people like. The natural man has no appetite for Christ at all; Isaiah speaks of that too. He says, “and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him”, chap 53: 2. That is that God’s man does not appeal to us naturally, does not appeal to the flesh at all, but would to God that He would work in your heart and give you to see something of the moral glory of Christ. It shone beautifully in that life of perfection down here. It shone all the way through; there was perfection at every stage. What manhood it was for God! You read that even at the age of twelve, there He was, the Saviour in subjection to His parents. Have you ever thought about that? Here was One who was God Himself, manifest in flesh, a divine Person here in the form of a Man, in one sense no different to look at outwardly, and yet God Himself there,

and at the age of twelve He is in subjection to His parents; It is a beautiful moral feature. His parents, Joseph and Mary, were very fine persons, and there are a lot of positive things that could be said of them, but they were sinners just like you and me, and here is a sinless One in subjection to them. There was moral beauty at every stage in Christ's life. God delighted in that life: "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth!", Isa 42: 1. God delighted in that blessed Man, the One who is the Saviour of sinners, and would to God that you might get some view of the glory that attaches to Him and see by faith all that He has done; and come into the blessedness of it.

Then, too, at this pool there were some who were "withered". We read in another gospel about a man with a withered hand. I suppose it might speak of damage coming in. At one stage it may have been healthy, but it has been damaged. This world is a damaging place to live in. I am speaking about the world in its moral sense, the sin-system, because Satan, is "the god of this world". He has brought about a system, independent of God, and it ministers and appeals to the flesh that is in me and the flesh that is in you, and persons come under the thrall of it and they come under the domination of Satan, and they get damaged by it. They damage themselves; they get damaged in their minds; their physical bodies become degraded. It is a damaging world to live in, but God has in mind that if you are in any way enthralled by it or under its domination, you might be emancipated and brought in to see something of all that is in God's world and enjoy that world where things are satisfying and eternally satisfying.

So these persons who were gathered round this pool were waiting for something. "For an angel descended at a certain season in the pool and troubled the water. Whoever therefore first went in after the troubling of the water became well, whatever disease he laboured under". What was the value in that? It was a divine visitation, and the value of it was good for one person and one person only. It says he "descended at a certain season". It does not say how often that happened; it may be that this only happened once each year. The value of it was for whoever managed to get into the

pool first. That is, whatever they were suffering under, the damage or the sickness or the lameness or the blindness, was reversed - perhaps for the rest of their lives. Now that was blessed and that must have been wonderful for that one person, but I cannot help seeing something of the contrast between the efficacy, the value of that one visitation that was available for one, and then the efficacy and the value of what Christ has accomplished for all of mankind, for you and for me.

The Lord Jesus was God, the self-existent One, "over all, God blessed for ever" (Rom 9: 5), and yet He came into this world in order to draw near to man, to make known the love of God to you and to me. He did that to demonstrate, to show forth, all that God is - to reveal Him. It has been a very full revelation, the revelation of God in Christ. He was here among men in lowliness, setting out exactly what God desired to see in man. The whole history of man had been a history of failure, grievous to God, and finally here on the earth was one green spot in whom "all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell", Col 1: 19. What divine delight was in Him, but He came here not in any haphazard way but He came here in line with the purposes and counsels of God in order to die, and in order to be the Sin-bearer. The whole system which was of God, which had been set up before, the system of offerings under the Jewish dispensation every single offering all pointed forward to Christ. You sometimes wonder at these offerings. In Solomon's time there were thousands upon thousands of animals slain, offered to God, but then there was one offering of Christ which ended that whole system and settled the whole question of sin, not only sins but sin. In order to qualify to be the sin-bearer, it had to be a perfect offering; you can see that in the typical teaching. Only animals which were without blemish were to be offered to God, and there was a time in Israel's history, when they offered the torn and the lame and the sick (Mal 1: 13) and it was displeasing to God, but the perfection demanded of these animals all spoke of the perfection that would be seen in Christ. And so He walked a perfect life, "holy, harmless, undefiled" (Heb 7: 26) and undefilable. This character of manhood was an undefilable order of manhood. The acacia wood, the tabernacle wood, used to make the boards of the tabernacle and the ark speaks

of an undefilable character of manhood. "The ruler of the world comes", He could say, "and in me he has nothing", John 14: 30. There was nothing which Satan could get a hold on in Christ; He was entirely undefilable. When the Lord was tempted at the start of His public service, Satan came to tempt Him, and it says, "And the devil, having completed every temptation, departed from him for a time" (Luke 4: 13): "every temptation". Satan did his utmost to divert the Lord Jesus from the path of absolute devotion to the will of God, but he found One who was superior to it - one Man who was beyond his grip, and Jesus went through in victory. There was opposition all the way through. I remember a brother speaking about the contrast between Adam, the first man created, and Christ. He said Adam was put into the most congenial and blessed circumstances in that garden, and what do we find? We find that he fails; that is the history of man. Then you find Christ who came into a world which was entirely strange to Him. He came from heaven where the will of God was done, and He came into a world where sin ran amok, a completely strange environment where everything was against Him: "the reproaches of them that reproach thee have fallen upon me", Psalm 69: 9. All the enmity of the heart of man against God found its target and centre and focus on Christ, and what we find is, in the most difficult and hostile environment, Christ excelled in every way. He went through with everything for God in order to secure a basis for which God could come out in blessing towards man. What a wonderful thing!

And so it involved His death, a death unlike any other. When we come to the end of our lives, we lose our lives; Christ said Himself of His life, "I have authority to lay it down", John 10: 18. That was a different kind of death, that He had "authority to lay it down". He says in Revelation, "I became dead", chap 1: 18. That is, there was divine control over the whole matter, and the whole matter involved that He should go and suffer, suffer at the hands of man. A great deal transpired at the cross. One of the hymns says:

This world's judgment stands recorded
(Hymn 404).

So the judgment of the world on Christ stands recorded, and that judgment was, "Away with this man", Luke 23: 18. So we see the enmity and the hatred in the heart of man, but we see the love of God in its depth in that the Lord Jesus did not shirk any of it. Man was allowed certain scope to do what he would by way of physical sufferings and reproaches and reviling, and the Lord Jesus went through it all perfectly, "when reviled, reviled not again" (1 Pet 2: 23), and the blessed matter is that on the cross the Lord Jesus bore the sins of every believer. Every single sin of every single believer who has put their faith and trust in Christ was borne there in those three hours of darkness, which are hidden from the eyes of man. That is a remarkable matter, is it not? I remember a preacher saying that every sin received its righteous and just retribution. That is, that the punishment that was rightly due for each individual sin was not overlooked, was not spared; Christ bore it in His body on the tree, v 24. Is that not a remarkable matter? The whole question of sin was dealt with there because He was made sin. He who knew it not: that is, there was no sin in Him; not a sinful action or deed or thought or word or motive was ever in Christ. "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him", 2 Cor 5: 21. He was made the very thing that He hated. What deep matters these are! What it was to God! But the blessed matter is that not only did He bear them but He exhausted the judgment, and we know that because He could say, "It is finished", John 19: 30. That whole period of suffering was finished after a certain period of time. Then He went into death, went into the heart of the earth, went into the tomb for three days and three nights. He could not only say of His life, "I have authority to lay it down", but He could say, "I have authority to take it again. I have received this commandment of my Father", John 10: 18. You can see something of the glory of that dependent manhood: "I have received this commandment of my Father". Every single movement, you might say, controlled and in communion with His Father and in absolute subjection to His Father. What a Man for God! What a blessed Object for faith He is!

And so He rose again: one of the hymn-writers could say,

Christ is risen! Hallelujah!

(Hymn 369)

He rose and appeared to many He was received up into heaven. Peter says, "whom heaven indeed must receive", Acts 3: 21. It was a moral necessity that Christ should go back into heaven, that the One who glorified God on the earth should go back into heaven, and there He has been installed at God's right hand. He "set himself down on the right hand of the greatness on high", Heb. 1: 3. Another scripture says that God had done that, has "set him down at his right hand in the heavenlies, above every principality, and authority, and power" (Eph 1: 20, 21) but He is now available as a Saviour, as an Object for faith, and you can come into the good of all that He has done by way of "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ", Acts 20: 21. That is, it is not just being sorry about what you have done, but you have come to something of God's estimation of what your history has been. You see how much has offended God, and you come to see how awful it is. It does not exactly depend on how much you see that, but it is by simple repentance. That is, you repent towards God. God has been offended, and you ask the Lord Jesus simply to save you from your sins and come by way of faith. Perhaps you say, 'I do not have faith'. There was one man in the gospels who said, "I believe, help mine unbelief", Mark 9: 24. He had a measure of faith but he felt his weakness. God loves to grant faith. You ask God for faith. God does not hold back faith if we ask in genuineness. Why would He not grant you the faith to believe? Think of what God gets from a repentant sinner! Think of the joy that is in heaven over repenting sinners! What a wonderful thing!

Well, it says, "But there was a certain man there who had been suffering under his infirmity thirty and eight years. Jesus seeing this man lying there, and knowing that he was in that state now a great length of time ...". The Lord Jesus knows all about your history; He knows how long it has been. I would say simply that God knows your history better than you know your history yourself. He knows every single one. I suppose I must have forgotten the vast majority of my sins, but I am glad to be able to say that by virtue of faith in Christ, they are gone from before the eye of God. "Their sin will I

remember no more", (Jer 31: 34), God says. It is a matter of righteousness that God should not remember them. If Christ has borne your sins and righteously borne them, and exhausted God's wrath for them, how could God bring them up again? That would be unrighteous, would it not? You can rest your faith in that too, and you can rest your faith in the fact that God is perfectly satisfied with the One who bore your sins, because He has received Him up into heaven and given Him great glory and honour: "granted him a name, that which is above every name", Phil 2: 9. That is what God has done with Christ; so you can be certain that God is satisfied with what Christ has done. You are able to know this by faith in what He has done, His blood, that efficacious blood, having been poured out, in order that you too can be clear of your history.

And so this man says, "Sir, I have not a man". What a thing it must have been, "thirty and eight years". That would take us back to 1977 if we were to talk about it today. What a length of time! He had been there so many times when the angel had come and had disturbed that water, and the man had maybe seen it most of these times, but he was not able to move. That speaks of you and me too in the glad tidings, that we do not have the power within ourselves to save ourselves. We can do nothing to satisfy God: Scripture says, "our righteousnesses are as filthy rags", Isa 64: 6. This man did not have a man, but he found Christ. Christ came to him and He is the Man. "For neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved", Acts 4: 12. Christ is the only Saviour of sinners. So Jesus says to him, "Arise, take up thy couch and walk".

I just want to say a little as to the efficacy of the work of Christ. We spoke about it in the reading, the value of it and the scope of it, and I could not say I comprehend it at all, or how much I apprehend it. But, you know, in the epistle to the Hebrews you get some fine touches as to what Christ has done and you can see the delight of heaven in Him. In Hebrews 9 it says, "But now once in the consummation of the ages he has been manifested for the putting away of sin by his sacrifice", v 26. I think what it means is that sin is gone from before the eye of God, the whole question of it, all that

opposed God, all that stood out, the whole matter, has been dealt with by Christ. Then it goes on to say, "And forasmuch as it is the portion of men once to die, and after this judgment; thus the Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many", v 27, 28. Think of the pool being moved and one person being restored, and that is wonderful. How much greater what Christ has done! The "many" takes in the scope of every single believer, no doubt millions of persons, and their whole history is cleared and their eternal future secured. How much greater the work of Christ! How efficacious it is! And He "shall appear to those that look for him the second time without sin for salvation, v 28". That is, He is coming again "without sin". The footnote to that is interesting; it says, 'The first time He bore our sins, and was made sin (being sinless); but now, having put sins wholly away for them who look for Him, and having made them partakers of the whole fruit of his sacrifice to put sin away, He appears to *them* without having to say, or need to have anything to say, to it'. You just get a sense as you read that of something of the greatness of what He has done. It goes on to say, "For by one offering he has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified", chap 10: 14. What a wonderful work He has done! How full and complete it is! How we can have perfect faith and confidence that if we place our faith and trust in what He has done, we will never come into judgment ourselves.

And so the Lord Jesus says to Him, "Arise, take up thy couch and walk". And it says, "And immediately the man became well". I suppose the simple point to make in relation to that is that we do not work up to salvation. As soon as you repent towards God and place your faith in Christ, your eternal salvation is secure, and it can never be undone because it does not depend upon what you do after that. It does not depend upon how you feel about it. It does not depend upon your estimation of your history at all. What it depends upon from that point onwards is the value of that work and the acceptability of that work to God. Christ is now beyond the scope of Satan; He is in heaven. The work is inviolate, absolutely full and complete: how wonderful that is! So He says, "Arise, take up thy couch and walk. And immediately the man became well, and took up his couch and walked". There was a change, a great change, an

evident change. It would be true to say that, having come to Christ for salvation, there should be an evident change in every single believer - a new power should become evident in their walk. If Christ died to save me from my sins and to bring me into such blessing, I should no longer live to myself. I should no longer be the centre of all my thoughts and plans, but Christ is to be the Centre, "that *he* might have the first place in all things", Col 1: 18. God has given Christ that first place and He desires that in your life, and in mine, Christ might have that first place and be the first consideration.

And then too, I thought it was a touching thing in verse 14, "After these things Jesus finds him in the temple". It is fine to see the persons that Jesus finds. Jesus also found the man in John 9. He was cast out of one system, the Jewish system, but Jesus finds him. It is like a fine, personal touch. It is true to say that God is "preserver of all men," but it says "specially of those that believe", 1 Tim 4: 10. There is a special, personal interest in those who have come to Christ, and Christ would make Himself known in order that He might have a relationship with them, and that they might have a living relationship with the Saviour.

Jesus says to him, "sin no more". Well, where is the power going to come from for a walk that is going to be pleasing to God? I think the answer is in what we read of in Acts 19: "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye had believed?". The power of the Holy Spirit is the power for walk. Deuteronomy speaks of Asher: "And let him dip his foot in oil", chap 33: 24. It speaks of a walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. God in His great love has not only provided a Man for your eternal salvation, in whom your eternal salvation is secure, but He has provided the power by which you can be here in testimony for God, and it involves availing yourself of the Holy Spirit. He has been given to those who obey, and if you come by way of the obedience of faith in the glad tidings you have started on that track. The Lord also says that the Father gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask. How good God is! Think of that: another divine Person is here dwelling not only in the assembly but in the hearts of the personnel of the assembly, in believers. One of the things He will do is He will help you overcome the flesh, that which is opposed to God within,

which we all have. Galatians says, “The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh”, chap 5: 17. He will help you to put to death the deeds of the body in order that you might be here walking pleasing to God, in measure, after Christ. Peter speaks of Him as the One who has been given as “a model that ye should follow in his steps”, 1 Pet 2: 21. He is the great Model for God, and God has absolute delight in Him, and He has great delight in the saints. The psalmist speaks about “the saints that are on the earth ... the excellent”, Ps 16: 3. That is what believers on the Lord Jesus are: they are morally excellent. They are persons who have come by way of faith and repentance and God has delight in them: “In them is all my delight”. It is not just in Christ, but now, by extension, divine delight is in believers who come by way of faith and repentance, and who are now characterised by the Spirit. And what would the Spirit do? The Spirit would form you after Christ. Is that not a remarkable thing for persons like you and me who were once away from God, having no thought of Him, acting in a way which was indifferent to Him, doubting that He even existed, thinking and doing things that were hateful to Him? What a triumph for God that He now has persons whom He can look at and say, ‘I can see features of my beloved Son in that person’. How is He doing it? It is not by imitation. There is that which is by way of imitation, persons trying to be like Jesus, and, while the motive is right, I think it has been said that it leads to one of two things: it either leads to pride because you feel as if you have been like Him, or it leads to disappointment because you realise you have not. But the Spirit is forming Christ *inwardly* in the saints. He is here to magnify Christ and He is here to form Him in you in a very real way; so you do not have to try to be like Christ. The believer is not trying all the time, but Christ is formed inwardly and, therefore, Christ is here in expression because a person is becoming in a real way more and more like Christ. What a triumph for God!

Well, may it be your portion tonight for His Name’s sake!

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