

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 118

January 2017

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“THAT THEY MAY BE ALL ONE”

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We are in a school setting here for these meetings; so I thought I might give everyone an assignment. When a brother reads the scriptures, you sometimes wonder how he is going to connect them. So, can you discern what I am going to speak about? Secondly, I would like you to find where it is the Lord is praying for you and me in the portion read first in John 17. This is distinctively the Lord's prayer. The prayer that the Lord Jesus taught His own is often referred to as the Lord's prayer, where He told them to speak to their Father as their heavenly Father. "Thy kingdom come, let thy will be done", and so on, Matt. 6: 9. But this is really the Lord's prayer in John 17. We have another one of course, which we will not read today, His prayer in the other three gospels in Gethsemane; what a prayer that was, in perfect subjection to the Father's will.

I may refer to another scripture later besides these I have read. Perhaps you have already determined what I have in mind to speak about? We have been speaking together in these meetings of the marvellous character of this present dispensation, and the marvel of the fulness of the *time* of this dispensation. Scripture says, "when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son", Gal. 4: 4. There was a great period of time that elapsed before Jesus came into this world; but the fulness of time has come and we are in it. We are in the fulness of time when the Lord Jesus Christ has come down into this world and been here among men. Oh, it is a wonderful time because God had in view this time from the outset of His operations, before the beginning of His movements here on the earth and in heaven; He had this time in mind in His purposes. Think of God making purposes, long before the world was even made. "The counsel of his own" will is referred to in Ephesians 1: 11. You wonder at the counsel of God's own will. It says there in

Ephesians 1, “according to his good pleasure”, v 9. God has had good pleasure in working out the purposes of His thoughts, and we are in that time of their being worked out. We are in the time He is working out the greatest of His purposes in relation to the assembly. What a wonderful time it is! We were impressed, too, with what our brother has said about the dispensation being one of the administration of things. God is administering things through Christ by the Spirit, and we are in that administration. How wonderful that is.

Now I read in John 17 and I gave you an assignment to see if you could tell where the Lord is praying for you and me. It is not in verse 11. In verse 11 He is praying for the disciples who were there with Him, the men that God had given Him, men that the Father had given Him. It is wonderful to think of that. The Father sovereignly picked out certain men there in the area of Galilee, and you might say He assigned them to Christ, like assigning them to a class and assigning them to a teacher. And those men had followed the Lord Jesus through His pathway here and here He prayed for them: He prayed that the Father would keep them; He prayed that the Father would sanctify them. Where I read He prayed that they might be kept as one. He says, “as we”. Who are the “we”? He was speaking about Himself and the Father. How wonderful the perfection of that oneness! He has in mind that these disciples should be maintained in oneness, as He was in perfect oneness with the Father. Think of the perfection of the oneness of Jesus with the Father. We have spoken during these meetings of how every word of the Lord Jesus was in full accord with what the Father would say to men at that time. Everything that the Lord said had in view the revelation of the Father. His ears were opened to hear what the Father would say day by day. Think of a Man like that here on the earth, a perfect Man in every way. And He had these disciples, and He desired that they might be kept in oneness. It is a similar word to unity, is it not? It is similar - but I think it could be thought of as even more intimate. Sometimes you see a man and a wife who have lived together for some time and you say that they are just like one together: they think together in the same way; they reason together in the same way. Their purposes are alike, and so on; that is what

oneness involves, I believe. And He had in mind that these beloved disciples of His, who had been with Him all this time, should be maintained in oneness. And they were.

If you turn to Acts 1 and 2, you find that they were in perfect oneness. How wonderful that was, even before the Spirit came. When the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven it says that they came back to Jerusalem and went into the upper chamber, and they were together as one in continual prayer. How wonderful that was, that they were taking on the Father's grace to be kept as the Lord had prayed for them. Then in chapter 2, on the day of Pentecost, they were all together in one place when the Spirit came down. What oneness there was with them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Three thousand were added to them in the first preaching of Peter. And they were all in oneness together, persevering "in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in breaking of bread and prayers", Acts 2: 42. They were united and in oneness; the Lord's prayer was carried out by the Father as they were there together in oneness.

Now the Lord has in mind that there should be oneness with us, and that is what He prayed about in verses 20 and 21 in John 17. He has in mind more than those disciples who were present on that occasion, more than the twelve and the three thousand that were added - although the three thousand are included in verses 20 and 21. He says there, "I do not demand for these only, but also for those who believe on me through their word". Well, those three thousand persons believed on the Lord Jesus through the words of Peter. That was a wonderful result from a first preaching of the gospel concerning the Lord Jesus exalted in heaven, was it not? What a wonderful result that was! It shows how God can work in the souls of a great many at one time. How wonderful that He can work in the souls of everyone in this room at the same time, because of who He is. He is God; He is sovereign and He has the Holy Spirit here on His behalf. The Holy Spirit is God; He is able to work in every one of our hearts, and I believe He has been doing so in these last two days, and I trust He will do so tonight as a result of this address: work in our souls. We have been reminded that that work

is going to be carried out to perfection. We were speaking about that this afternoon. He will not leave the work incomplete in anyone. Is that not wonderful? Think of the completeness of the assembly in the day to come when everyone is then in perfect oneness.

We have been speaking about all the wonderful positive things that are related to the present dispensation, but sadly there is what is negative that has come in, because there is an enemy who is against you and me, and against the assembly. We have the wonderful assurance of the Lord Jesus that hades' gates shall not prevail against the assembly (Matt 16: 18), but it does not mean that Satan will not try. And from the outset he has been seeking to bring in disunity, seeking to divide the people of God. That is the negative side of the present dispensation. Many divisions have come in. Why do we think there are all kinds of churches around even in these small towns like Aberdeen and American Falls? There are hundreds of churches in Los Angeles where I live, all with various titles and names of sectarian groups. More than that, there have been divisions among brethren who have professed to receive truth that has been recovered. How many divisions have come in since the days of recovery just two hundred years ago? How has that come about? Because the enemy is against what God is seeking to do. What God has purposed to do He is going to bring about, but the enemy is set against Him. And he is set against you and me; keep that in mind. Someone was saying to me just yesterday that the enemy comes along when we come to these meetings. He is not far away, and he is always seeking to bring in disunity, and always seeking to cause division. These scriptures I read have that in view, that we should understand that there is what is against God in this present dispensation, and what is against His people in this present recovery. And he will continue to work in his own nefarious way to bring in that kind of division among the people of God.

I read in Corinthians because the city of Corinth was like a locality that we may have part in. You may have part in the locality here in Aberdeen, or in the locality in Calgary, or other big cities like Los Angeles, Glasgow, Edinburgh and so on. Wherever the locality is it is something like Corinth. In fact, in the ministry of those who

have gone before, they have often said that most of our localities are very much like Corinth. But the wonderful thing is that Paul addresses the company in Corinth in this letter that he wrote to them as “the assembly of God in Corinth”. Is that not wonderful? He says, “Paul, a called apostle of Jesus Christ, by God’s will, and Sosthenes the brother, to the assembly of God which is in Corinth”. Think of the Lord Jesus taking account of the brethren we meet with here in Aberdeen. We must not say that they *are* the assembly of God, of course, because, as we have been reminded in these readings, the assembly of God is far greater than just those brethren we may be able to break bread with now. But brethren here in Aberdeen, in Los Angeles, in Calgary, whatever the meeting is, seek to meet in the light of the assembly. They have the light of it; is that not wonderful to have the light of it? Paul opened up a great deal of the light of the assembly to this company in Corinth and they needed it. As we read further on, he says, “I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all say the same thing, and that there be not among you divisions; but that ye be perfectly united in the same mind and in the same opinion. For it has been shewn to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of the house of Chloe, that there are strifes among you”. Is there any strife in the company we are met with here in Aberdeen? Do we have any strife among us in Los Angeles? Is there any strife in your local meeting? That is what Paul was exhorting them about; that there was a need for them to say the same thing and be of the same mind. He was exhorting them to realise that they had been called by God as called saints, sanctified in Christ Jesus and called saints. Then he says “with all ... in every place”. “With all ... in every place” includes Aberdeen; “with all ... in every place” includes your locality.

This epistle to the Corinthians is so valid in our day. After this long dispensation we can still read this epistle to the Corinthians and find great help from it; great teaching for our learning. There is wonderful teaching in the epistle to the Corinthians, and they needed it. There were things going on there in Corinth that were abhorrent to God and they were allowing these things. And they were allowing them because of the strife that was going on in the meeting there, and division that had come in. They were not walking in accord with

the calling of God. They had been called to be a heavenly people; they had been called to be here as saints. We too have been called to be saints. In fact, it says in Romans, "the called of Jesus Christ", Rom 1: 6. According to the calling of God every believer is a saint, you know. I know there is an organisation - a religious organisation - that believes they can canonise saints every so often, and that their great leader has that power to canonise saints. Not at all! You are 'canonised' already as a saint by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Is that not wonderful? If you have faith in the Lord Jesus, and have the Holy Spirit, you are a called saint! Oh dear young people, take that in. Can I move as a saint, and can I act in accord with my calling? Can I live that way in accord with the great high calling that is ours? That is the test, is it not? What a test it is all the time. Paul says further, "God is faithful, by whom ye have been called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." What a calling that is: called into the fellowship of God's Son; and we have part in it beloved brethren, do we not? It is a wonderful calling to think about! This was written about two thousand years ago, and the same thing applies at the present time. There is such a thing as "the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord", and we have part in it. That is part of the wonder and glory of the present dispensation that has been extended to our time and generation. How wonderful that is. But can I live in accord with the high calling of God in Christ Jesus? What a test that is day by day!

Well, I read too in Ephesians because it is remarkable that as Paul wrote such an outstanding epistle to the assembly in Ephesus concerning the greatest heavenly line of truth that there is in the Holy Scriptures, yet he has to speak to them about the importance of walking worthy of the calling. It says there in chapter 4 where we read, "I, the prisoner in the Lord, exhort you therefore to walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye have been called". Oh, the exhortations of Paul, how important they are! And how we need to take account of them because they are for our benefit; not only for the Ephesians but for us. We should be here as believers walking worthy of the calling, the calling of God. Sometimes, I suppose, we are hardly aware that that God has called us, called us out of this world, to be apart for Him; called us in view of being separate and apart as we

have been speaking of it in our reading today, separate and apart from this world, and realising that we have a heavenly portion. That is what Paul is exhorting them to do. Think of him as a prisoner in the Lord writing these things. You wonder at it, Paul in prison and, rather than bemoaning the fact that he was in the prison, writing to the various assemblies and various individuals while he was in prison. He was writing of the glorious things of God to them, exhorting them to walking worthily of the calling. He says about our walk, “with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love”. What wonderful features those are to mark any believer: meekness, lowliness, bearing with one another. That helps us in our localities, does it not? Sometimes things come into our local settings and we may be too quick to bite and devour one another rather than exercising long-suffering with one another. But then he goes on to say, “using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace”. I want to focus on that word ‘diligence’, “using diligence”. How diligently are we pursuing the things of God? How diligently are we pursuing this matter of unity? I fear from some of the things I hear at times that brethren have forgotten that they need to be diligent about maintaining unity and oneness with their brethren. It is a vital matter to realise that we have that responsibility. The unity of the Spirit is one thing, but we have a responsibility to seek to maintain that and to use diligence to do so. I think it is remarkable that this is brought into the epistle to the Ephesians. It shows that even persons who have received the highest level of ministry concerning heavenly things, and the purposes of God and all that God has purposed to bring his people into, the blessings, the rich blessings that we have been reminded of; “every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ” (Eph. 1: 3); that company needed to use diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace.

Then I read in Philippians because I think we get in Philippians 2 the way that this can be worked out so easily as we come under the great influence of the One who has descended, who went down. Let us remember first of all that Paul was also writing this from prison. Here you can see his feelings in these first few verses of chapter 2. What feelings he had for God’s people. He says, “If then

there be any comfort in Christ". Oh, think of how the apostle needed comfort in Christ being in the prison where he was. "If there be any", he said; "if any consolation of love". Think of how he loved the saints and he was seeking for "consolation of love" from those beloved Philippians where he had been in prison before. He had been in prison in Philippi once before and the outcome was that a local assembly was formed there, a local company was formed. Lydia was there, "whose heart the Lord opened to attend to the things spoken by Paul", Acts 16: 14. The jailor who was converted as a result of the earthquake that took place that night at midnight was there. A company of saints developed as a direct result of the Lord's own work in Philippi. That is the company that Paul is writing to here. He says, "If then there be ... any consolation of love"; oh, how he loved those persons and they loved him. Then he says, "if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and compassions, fulfil my joy, that ye may think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking one thing". Oh how intimate that is. That is true oneness, you know. He is speaking about oneness here; unity, yes, but true oneness. "Let nothing be in the spirit of strife or vain glory"; what a test that is, because sometimes things are not easy in a local setting. Sometimes things develop that cause this kind of spirit of strife. He says, let *nothing* be in that spirit - "let nothing be in the spirit of strife or vain glory, but, in lowliness of mind, each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves; regarding not each his own qualities, but each those of others also". What a high standard Paul is seeking to keep the Philippians on. And he would keep us on a high standard too, in lowliness, and in meekness - which is not natural to us, most of us anyway. Thank God that there are some that are meek and lowly in their nature, but most of us need this exhortation.

And then he says, "For let this mind be in you". Oh, what an example: "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus". How often we have read this, have we not? Over and over again we read this, "For let this mind be in you"! Let this mind be in me. Let it be. In other words, do not block it. Do not get in the way of a mind like Christ; a descending mind; a going-down mind. It is just one step down at a time that Paul goes over here. He says, "who,

subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God". Can you take that in? Can you understand that? How great that is! Then he goes on to say, "but emptied himself, taking a bondman's form". Oh what contemplation we should have over those words. Meditate on these things, dear young people; take time to meditate. Our brother was saying you need to take time to read the Scriptures, too. Take time to pray. All of these things are important. But meditate on this passage as to the down-stooping grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the descending mind. Is that the kind of mind that I have? To go down? To be lowly? To take on service like the Lord did? It says, "taking a bondman's form". Think of the Lord of glory, who is God Himself, coming into manhood, being here among the human race, and taking a bondman's form. Then it goes on to say, "taking his place in the likeness of men; and having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross". How often we have read this but we need to ponder it. We need to meditate upon it, and it fixes our hearts in love for Christ, does it not? How He loved us! All this was in view of His love for His people and His love for the assembly and His love for His God and Father; that He would come into this form in full accord with the great counsels of God, so that He might reveal His purposes and make them known to us. He took a bondman's form, in the likeness of men, to make known to His people the great thoughts for this present dispensation that we have been going over together. How wonderful that is!

Next we should just remember those other verses that we read, and they tell us that He is exalted. The result of His down-stooping is that the Father has had great delight in exalting the Lord Jesus. It says, "God highly exalted him, and granted him a name, that which is above every name". What a name Jesus has. I have a little pamphlet on the Name of Jesus; the writer of this pamphlet tells how the name of Jesus has continued to be in glorious power in spite of it being assailed over the centuries, and it continues to be the precious Name that is available to men for salvation and eternal blessing. Then Paul says that "every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father's glory". Every knee shall bow;

every tongue confess. It is not that way in the world now. I assure you that this scripture will be fulfilled in a day to come. Every knee, somebody said, not just one of your knees - every knee will bow. It is very remarkable to think of that.

Finally, the apostle says one more thing in verse 14: "Do all things without murmurings and reasonings". Murmurings and reasonings are things that are common to us, are they not; murmuring about this, reasoning about that? He says to do all things without that "that ye may be harmless and simple, irreproachable children of God". We know how children ought to be, harmless and simple. This is the children of God. And we are exhorted to be simple; simple and irreproachable. That is, nobody can cast stones at you, or reproach you, because of the way that you are conducting yourself. And then he says further, "irreproachable children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation; among whom ye appear as lights in the world". Well, how testing that is. Am I really that? As I move about in my neighbourhood, as I move about in my community, is there any light that shines from me? What a test that is! As you go to school, is there any light that shines from you in your school life? As you go to your work, is there any light that shines? It does not mean that you have to go in preaching all the time. There is a certain element of light that is shining out of a believer in the way that he conducts himself, and the way that he does not take part in certain things that transpire in his surroundings at work or at school. All those things make God's children like shining lights in the world, and that is what the apostle has in mind for the Philippians and for us. It is a wonderful thing to think of that.

All of this is in view of being united in these things, is it not, dear brethren? And being in oneness with one another. The enemy is always going to seek to bring in division. He is never going to let up, never going to give up. He will always seek in some way to bring in murmurings and reasonings and schools of opinion. I was noticing a very remarkable thing in Galatians. There are certain things that the apostle writes about to the Galatians that he calls "the works of the flesh". And then he speaks about the fruit of the Spirit. It is in chapter 5 of Galatians and it says, "Now the works of the flesh

are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strifes, jealousies, anger", v 19, 20. I suppose we would all agree that those are the works of the flesh, would we not? But then he goes on to say, "contentions, disputes, schools of opinion". Those are works of the flesh too, "schools of opinion"; and yet how many times schools of opinion have developed have arisen among brethren. Those are works of the flesh according to what Paul is saying here. We would all agree about murders and drunkenness and so on, would we not? Can we agree that schools of opinion, contentions, disputes and so on are works of the flesh? But then the positive thing is that he outlines this cluster of nine things as the fruit of the Spirit. That is in verse 22: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control: against such things there is no law". Oh what a cluster of fruit that is! We had fruit there at the table at noon today, all those different fruits. This here is the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is seeking to bring about fruit in your soul and mine. These wonderful aspects of the fruit of the Spirit – "love, joy, peace ..." - ending with self-control; oh let them be, dear brethren, worked out in our souls as we continue on in the fellowship of God's Son and bearing fruit by the Holy Spirit.

One other passage I would just like to read because it is very, very solemn; and it is also in Galatians. It is in chapter 2: 11 which may bring home to us forcibly how the enemy can work. It says, "But when Peter came to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be condemned: for before that certain came from James, he ate with those of the nations; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing those of the circumcision; and the rest of the Jews also played the same dissembling part with him; so that even Barnabas was carried away too by their dissimulation". That is a most remarkable thing that Paul wrote to the Galatians, showing how the enemy attempted to get in so early in the history of the assembly, so very early using the great apostle Peter in this matter of dissembling. Now if the enemy could get in through such a wonderful servant as Peter, and seek to divide the brethren, he can certainly do it through you and me. Let that come home to us. And he has done that throughout the dispensation. There have been

great men who were teachers even, among Christians, who have brought in dissimulation, men who have done just what these men were doing; and Paul had to withstand them to the face to correct the whole matter. How wonderful that he was able to do that in the power of the Spirit.

I just read that as a warning to us that there is that possibility always present. No matter how far along we get in the development of the truth amongst us, there is always that great danger. I am not seeking to end the meetings on a negative line but only to remember the exhortations of Paul the apostle and the prayers of the Lord Jesus that the saints be maintained in oneness. Even as the Lord Jesus said, “as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me”. What a prayer that was! May we be maintained, dear brethren, in oneness and unity, bearing fruit by the Holy Spirit that indwells us, glorifying God in our movements and conduct here and being worshippers in the assembly. The Father seeks such as his worshippers, such as you and me.

May it be so for His Name's sake.

At three-day meetings in Aberdeen, ID

2nd July 2016

CLOTHING

John C Gray

Isaiah 61: 10

Zechariah 3: 1-5

Luke 15: 17-24; 24: 45-49

The population nowadays makes a great deal of clothing: it is a vast industry. The clothing industry provides for persons of all desires and types from the tramp that covers the countryside, who probably only has one or two changes of garments in his lifetime of tramping, to the people who want to be modern and dress themselves up to pay attention to themselves, to other people who go to business and think that they need to show that they are in business, to royalty, where you have got magnificent robes, some of them embedded with precious stones: a vast variety of different clothing, and people make a lot of it; people in the world spend a lot of money on clothes which may not appear very grand anyway.

But God is providing for a different kind of clothing. God is providing “garments of salvation”. He is taking away filthy garments of sin, and He is clothing them with “festival robes”, He is clothing them with “the best robe”, that is, Christ, and He is clothing them with the Holy Spirit – “power from on high”. These are the kinds of clothing that God is giving people. Now I am speaking about a moral clothing; it is not anything that you literally put on your shoulders. It is a great thing that Isaiah, the Old Testament evangelist speaks about: “the garments of salvation”. That is, there is a great result that comes from salvation; but then we have to see the way in which the salvation has been secured before we can get it. Isaiah speaks to these people about “the robe of righteousness”, and the bridegroom with his priestly turban, and the bride with her jewels. This means that God is preparing people to live with Him, to be with Him, not just to be in the ordinary course of things in the world, but to dwell with God, to dwell with Jesus.

I hope we all understand that it is very important that we know that salvation has been effected by the Lord Jesus. The last verse of

Zechariah 2 says, "Let all flesh be silent before Jehovah; for he is risen up out of his holy habitation". Think of the majesty of that, that God Himself has come in the Person of the Lord Jesus into a body in manhood, and He has gone in a way of obedience to the Father's will to the cross. Now I can say, 'He did not need to do it for Himself, because He was a sinless Man; He did it for me'. Can you say that? Can everyone here say that: He went to the cross, to the cross, for me? We need to have faith in the Lord Jesus who has been to Calvary's cross and exhausted the wrath of God in the three hours of darkness. What was done then was unknown to the world because it was not seen, but in these three hours the Lord Jesus bore the judgment and He bore my sins. Ultimately, the universe will be cleared of sin by virtue of His work. You can come to Him in faith and put your trust in Him, believe on Him; believe too that He has been raised from the dead, because not only has He been on the cross but He has been in the grave and risen again, and your sins will be forgiven.

He shed His blood: that too is important. His blood was shed on the cross - a miracle. We might say that was the final miracle before He was raised from the dead. The Lord Jesus bowed His head and died, and when a soldier pierced His side there came out blood and water. Now that is, so far as men are concerned, impossible but we are speaking here of the Son of God. The Man who died on the cross is, was, and ever will be God. So it is a wonderful thing that the Lord Jesus has shed His blood, that God's price demanded for redemption to bring us back to Himself has been paid. He owned us as a Creator. He created you and me, and He owned us in that sense. But He wanted to bring us back without sin, and Jesus has borne the penalty for that. God is satisfied; He has raised Him. So that the garments of salvation are manifest: we are to be clothed with all the blessings that God has in mind, that is, we are to take them on morally ourselves in our minds and hearts.

Now, we come to Zechariah. This is a remarkable reference because it introduces Satan; Satan is there to resist. Satan comes to the preaching, as well as the Lord Jesus; He comes to resist. The Lord Jesus speaks about the seed: the sower sows his seed and

some that falls is snatched away - Satan does that, Matt 13: 19. You might get an impression of the Lord Jesus in the preaching, and you think it over, and Satan sometimes puts wrong thoughts in your mind about Jesus, and he snatches the word away. There is power in this prophecy of Zechariah. God says, "Jehovah rebuke thee, O Satan!". Think of that! Think of God superseding the intended work of Satan in my heart or your heart! It is a wonderful thing that God would intervene on our behalf, and He is intervening on behalf of the man in this scripture, Joshua.

Now, "Joshua was clothed with filthy garments". A New Testament verse corresponding to that is: "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God", Rom 3: 23. That is the basic way to start, to find out that we need to have a Saviour. Joshua was clothed with filthy garments; think of the idea of sin clinging to a person, and we see that in the world; the scripture refers to sin becoming, "exceeding sinful", Rom 7: 13. It is like the darkness. We were once in a country hotel, and I was amazed when facing the mountains, without a house to be seen, that when you opened the curtains at night it was pitch black; you could not see a thing. That is like sin: and it clings on to people. "Joshua was clothed with filthy garments". These ones have to come off! And then you have to be clothed with festival robes. The Angel says, "Take away the filthy garments from off him". It is very important that you take it to yourself; the Lord Jesus did that work on your behalf, and if you are going to find salvation, the garment of salvation, then you have to "confess Jesus as Lord, and believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from among the dead"; and, as the scripture says, "thou shalt be saved", Rom 10: 9. It is so straightforward, you see: the gospel is not complicated, but it is that we might be clothed in a better way, not with the filthy garments clinging on to us, clinging on to our hearts, clinging on to our minds, but with festival robes: what are they? Well, I think it is just what Isaiah speaks about, "the robe of righteousness", and a turban on your head: that is, that you are now ready to speak to God. You can speak to God with freedom; you can speak to the Lord Jesus. and if you have the Holy Spirit, you can speak to the Holy Spirit with freedom. Righteousness, holiness, redemption, being clear, chosen in Him, without blame: these are the

garments of salvation. God has a celebration in mind since you are a triumph or a trophy of divine love, of divine success: a trophy of God's love that you might come into all the blessing that God has.

So the Angel says, "Take away the filthy garments. And unto him he said, See, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee": that is, to have the burden of sins removed. John Bunyan illustrated the way of salvation by talking about a great bundle on the sinner's back, and when he came to the place of the cross and sepulchre he saw the bundle fall off his back and it rolled away down the hill. That is just like your confession of the Lord Jesus, when you have your sins forgiven. "I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I have clothed thee with festival-robles". Then "the Angel of Jehovah stood by"; that is, that you have divine support all the time.

Now when we come to Luke 15 it is the same thing, only this is a figure of a man who knew salvation and got away: he thought he knew better, and thought he could do better than being in God's house, in the Father's house. How sad that was; he got his share of the inheritance and went away, but he came to himself. It is a wonderful thing when people come back in repentance. That is the key to the glad tidings, "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20: 21), the basic things that you must come to if you are going to find the presence of God in freedom, and have peace in your heart and soul, and know that no matter what takes place you will be with Christ in glory. That is one objective of the glad tidings: that you should have a hope.

Well, you come into these wonderful things by coming to yourself. This man wanted to be just a hired servant, but the father did not allow him to say that - once a son, always a son; how wonderful! If God has chosen me as a son, He will always regard me as a son, even if I am wayward and go away. The son came back in repentance, and he might have thought that the father, who is a figure of God, would have started to ask some questions: 'Why did you spend all my money; why did you go and make a fool of yourself?'. No, the father ran, and he kissed him; that shows divine love in its essence. Then the great result of this is that what he was wearing was no use for the father's house. In effect he needed to be

clothed with Christ: "Bring out the best robe and clothe him in it". The King James Version says, "put it on him"; well, you can put on anything; but the Darby Bible has "clothe him in it", meaning it fits and it suits you, "the best robe". And so you go out as the person who has not only had your sins forgiven. but you are going in cheerful with festival robes as a Christian, as a believer on the Lord Jesus, and you are not afraid to take that place. How wonderful and great that is! The younger son therefore had the best robe, and he was fit for the father's house. "Let us eat and make merry"; that suggests the service of God, and for that you need to be clothed with the Spirit from on high as the Lord Jesus says, "clothed with power from on high", Luke 24: 49. Think of the Spirit coming on you, and you being clothed in the Spirit, enveloping you, you being taken over by Christ, who is your Saviour and your Lover, but taken over also by the Holy Spirit so that your life might be for the service of God.

It is a great matter therefore that persons should remember the Lord Jesus in the breaking of bread, and enter into praise and song. That is the great objective of God; that is why we have "the best robe", Christ, on us. So the father brings out the best robe, clothes him in it, "and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet"; so he would be fit to go into the father's house. He was not going in in bare feet of the flesh but with sandals, the dignity that marks a person who is believing in Christ. So that "they began to make merry"; it does not say they ended: it just says, "they began to make merry".

Well, I hope that everyone will enter into the idea that we need to be clothed properly for the presence of God, not only having our filthy garments of sin taken away, but by confessing the name of the Lord Jesus and believing that God has raised Him from the dead, being brought into something which is beyond anything that man can imagine, and which will go on to eternity. And it is a wonderful thing also, that God is going to clothe the saints with bodies of glory literally. While we are here we are clothed with the Spirit, when still in the bodies in which we are in flesh and blood, but God is going to change that because He is going to translate persons and bring them into conditions which finally are suitable for His own presence.

May God bless the word for His Name's sake.

Glasgow

10th April 2016

“COME TO ME”

John Laurie

Matthew 11: 28

These words, dear friends, although written by Matthew, were spoken by the Lord Jesus. There is always a special appeal about the personal words of the Lord Jesus; I would love to be able to convey something of the fervency of the appeal that undoubtedly was in the Lord's heart when He uttered these precious words, "Come to me". There are many burdened hearts in this world; many under the burden of a guilty conscience. Maybe you feel burdened here tonight. It is a very precious thing that the words that the Lord Jesus spoke here are presented in a thoroughly unqualified way. He did not suggest any discrimination in regard of the persons who might be enabled to obtain the rest and blessing through coming to Himself, but the word is addressed so freely and so appealingly to all. He says, "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened".

Sin brings in distance. That is evident from what happened initially when, although Adam and Eve were in such favourable circumstances in the garden; as soon as the guilt of their disobedience weighed in upon their consciences they sought to hide. Nearness was lost, with its liberty and blessedness. That is what sin does; it tends to drive you away. But the Saviour's appeal would be to draw you near. You may say, 'I am not fit to come'. It is a very marvellous thing, dear friends, that in the gospel the God who appeals to us knows better than any the extent and guilt of our sin, but He has made such provision for our salvation through the work of His own beloved Son that He is enabled, in perfect righteousness, to propose mercy for the guilty sinner who would return in repentance and seek for His salvation. I find that a great comfort. You might say, 'Does God really know all about my sinful history and my personal guilt?'. He does! The all-seeing eye of God knows all these details. From one point of view that is an extremely searching thing, but from another point of view it is something to be deeply thankful for insofar as the mercy that God is proposing towards you in Christ Jesus will make a full and complete clearance of it. Such is

the value of the Saviour's work; God is presenting Christ as a mercy-seat: salvation is available in Jesus.

I will tell you a little detail that might be of interest. The mercy-seat was never set upon the two tables of stone that contained all the commandments. These two tables set out the demands of God's righteousness and it was sadly proved that none could meet them. But the mercy-seat was put on the ark. It shows that God is outshining towards us in Christ Jesus, the One who has answered to every detail of the will of God. The Person now known as the Son of God came here into a condition of flesh and blood in order that He might move in a pathway entirely in keeping with the will and pleasure of God. How perfectly blessed was the life of the Lord Jesus; necessarily so, for had there been a flaw in that life the sacrifice would have been unsuitable. We give God thanks for the perfection, inwardly and outwardly, that marked the Lord Jesus at every point; that made Him the entirely suitable Sacrifice. He went forward to the cross amidst opposition, amidst difficulty, but never ever turned aside. How beautiful Luke's comment about the Lord Jesus that "*he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem*", chap 9: 51. In the prophet Isaiah we are reminded that his face was set "*like a flint*", chap 50: 7. But there is a slight difference to be appreciated in the word used there by Luke, "*he stedfastly set his face*". There was still the same perfect devotedness to pursue the pathway to completion, but it was accomplished in all the grace that characterised the perfect movements of the Lord Jesus as a Man here. Think of that unswerving devotion that led Him to the cross; there He took up the question of my sins before a righteous God. I can say, through marvellous mercy, that my guilt and the whole charge that lay against me have been righteously removed forever by the finished work of the Lord Jesus; His precious shed blood bringing in that cleansing power that has set me free. Thank God for everyone who can speak with joy of the blessedness of being forgiven; how blessed to be forgiven!

There is a gravestone in this country on which there is only a single word written; no name of any person, no date of death, no detail of circumstances; simply one word on the gravestone,

“Forgiven”. Oh the blessedness of being forgiven. That is a scriptural thought: “Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven”, Ps 32: 1. Have you got the joy of that in your soul, dear friend? How blessed to have the burden lifted. It says here, “Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened”. How blessed to find the burden on our consciences gone through the joy of obtaining forgiveness; it is something we could never have accomplished for ourselves. If there is any suggestion that we might add something by our labours, then we may labour forever, but never be able to meet the requirements of a holy God. Think of men seeking, sadly, to do the best that they can in order to merit favour with God. It is right that we ought to do the best that we can but it is not the basis of our salvation; the ground of our salvation lies in the solid work accomplished by the Lord Jesus in perfect righteousness and in glory to God by the way it was done.

What cost it was to the Saviour! Have you any valuation and appreciation of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus? No tongue can tell what it cost my blessed Saviour to go that way. The gospel writers tell us a good deal about the circumstances surrounding the unjust trial of the Lord Jesus. They tell us about his crucifixion. They tell us about those hours of darkness. Matthew, Mark and Luke bringing out many of these details concerning the way that the Saviour went. But no one can tell us about the intensity and depth of all that the Lord Himself had to bear when forsaken there during those solemn hours on the cross when all around was darkness. It seemed as if God was screening the gaze of unappreciative and unholy men from all that the Saviour was enduring when forsaken of God.

I may add, in case there should be any suggestion of doubt, He was not forsaken on account of any personal guilt. He had continually enjoyed throughout the whole of His pathway such blessed communion, such holy liberty and nearness in the joy of His relationships with the Father. But then came the point when He was forsaken by God; He made Him sin for us, 2 Cor 5: 21. He became the Bearer of that guilt which required the full just judgment of God. Ah, thank God for the work of the Saviour; for all that was accomplished there on the cross, by His shed blood, by His going

into death, and by His triumphant rising from the grave! What a wonderful witness to the complete victory of all that was accomplished by the Lord Jesus. He is in glory now at God's right hand. You may ask me how I can be sure that God is completely satisfied with what Christ has done; there is a witness in that the Accomplisher of the work has been seated at God's right hand, seated on God's throne. No other will ever share the Father's throne; it is an exclusive place given to His own beloved Son. It is expressive of the Father's delight in the Son, but it is also expressive of the Father's full appreciation of the work that He has done, for He has been exalted to that point consequent upon all that He has accomplished.

O what a Saviour is Jesus the Lord!
(Hymn 169)

Do you then know the joy of having that burden of your sins lifted? What a blessed invitation comes from the lips of the Lord Jesus: "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened". God has that great thought in His heart for men that they should be brought near unto Himself. It will be the eternal enjoyment of those blessed, who have been liberated and cleansed from their sins and are in the enjoyment of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit's power, to know and prove eternal happiness and nearness. Oh, what a wonderful thing to be brought nigh unto God. It has been at great cost. By the blood of the Christ, the apostle says, we have been brought nigh unto God, Eph 2: 13. What cost has been involved in order that we should be brought nigh. But, oh, the value in that precious shed blood!

We may recall that a soldier pierced the side of the Lord Jesus, and precious blood and water flowed forth. A callous act in itself, but it did not call out revenge on the part of the Saviour; it gives us to understand that love brought out the answer which was superior to all the hatred of men. Oh that your heart might come into the joy of all that God would bring you into. We hardly know the fulness of the proposals of divine love. From one point of view, I would accept that they have been unfolded, and especially so through the service of the apostle Paul. He opened up the wealth of the counsels of God; but such is the richness of them that I think most of us would say we

have hardly taken in the fulness of the scope and blessedness of all that God would enrich us through by His own blessing. "Every spiritual blessing", the apostle Paul says in the epistle to the Ephesians, chap 1: 3. I have been speaking mostly about the joy of forgiveness and of the burden of guilt being lifted. But think of the enrichment that God would bestow upon the soul and, as the Lord Jesus Himself was proposing here, to bring us into the enjoyment of His love. For it is Jesus Himself that gives that rest. He says, "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and / will give you rest": "/ will give you rest." Oh what undisturbed repose to be held in the power and blessedness and nearness of the love of Jesus.

I have carried for a long time a precious thought to me about the love of the Lord Jesus. We were speaking in the reading about the appreciation of the spouse in the Song of Songs who had her beloved, and one of the interesting things that she says in the expression of her love is, "His hands gold rings, set with the chrysolite", chap 5: 14. I enjoy that thought; it appeals to me that we are held by the hands of the Lord Jesus in love, as if encircled by an unbroken circle. It is a love that cannot be broken, and that nothing can separate us from. How attractive in that it is likened to rings set with a chrysolite. What a wonderful impression of the encircling, abiding love of the Lord Jesus in all its distinctive blessedness! May it appeal to your heart, dear friend. May you come into the joy of being held by its power and blessedness, and know the rest that will come into your soul.

But then there are other things burden persons; I am conscious that there are hearts burdened here today for other reasons. What a blessed thing to draw near to the Lord Jesus, to unburden your heart to Him. It may be that there are things that arise in our lives and histories that we would not particularly care to tell to any other. It may be something arises that you think no other is really able to help you about. There is no matter too great for Him, and there is no matter that the Saviour will not be willing to listen to; and He is able to bring in His own touch of blessing in relation to matters, as we confide everything to Him. There might be times when you may feel it would not be appropriate to disturb your father and mother during

the night to tell them about something that is burdening you; the Saviour is always available: He never sleeps. You can speak to the Lord Jesus night and day at any point. You may say to me, 'Will He not tire of me continually drawing near?'. Such is the love of the Saviour's heart that He never tires! Oh how wonderful to have One to whom we can always speak. What a Friend we have in Jesus, what a Lover; what a Shepherd, what a One to carry us the whole way through!

And then to know the blessedness too of the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus said, "I will give you rest", but the Spirit of God is readily given to those who believe and are marked by obedience. The Spirit of God would bring such persons into the full consciousness of these things. He would bring us in to know the blessedness of the rest and to experience the joy of the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts. What a wonderful gift! He helps us; He strengthens us. I would seek to encourage hearts here that might be burdened, whatever the nature of the burden, to come to Jesus. The Lord Jesus does not indicate in this passage that only certain characters of burden, or certain types of difficulty, should be addressed to Himself, but He says, "Come unto me, **all** ye who labour and are burdened". How beautiful that comprehensive word is: "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest". Oh the sufficiency of the Saviour's love. Oh the wonder of that love that would bring us in to share in all that He enjoys. We have been speaking together about the joys of sonship, the favour of being before God as Father. The Lord Jesus would draw us to where we learn that we have become sharers of His joy. He did not hold back any words that His Father gave Him to speak. He did not hold back from doing anything that His Father had given Him to do. All that was in the Father's heart was so fully expressed in the Son in manhood here. He would draw us in to share in all the blessed proposals of divine love and bring us into the liberty and joy of sonship, to know our place in joy before His Father; to give us a hope! What hope could men truly have in this scene where so much is going into disarray and confusion? Our hope is in a Man in the glory; Christ Jesus is our Hope, 1 Tim 1: 1. He is coming again; He said so to His own. Those beautiful words come in as a comfort in

John 14: 1: "Let not your heart be troubled". It is as if the Lord would say that if there be any doubt in your hearts whatsoever, let this word come home with assurance to you. "In my Father's house there are many abodes; were it not so, I had told you: for I go to prepare you a place", v 2. And He is coming again to receive us to Himself.

May we be held in the brightness of that hope. It brings about a quickening in the footstep as we are looking towards the goal, keeping before us that blessed Object, and being preserved in the brightness of our hope. May it burn brightly in the hearts of all here. The days around may be dark but the hope is bright and the coming is assured. May you then put your trust in the Saviour. May you then come to Him if you have a burdened heart. He proposes it Himself: "Come ... and I will give you rest." May it yield joy and comfort to our hearts, and may it yield joy to the heart of the Lord Jesus as there is an increase in the number of those who love Him, and of fervency in the hearts of those who already do.

For His glory.

Aberdeen, Idaho

3rd July 2016

THE PLOUGHMAN

Phil E Hogan

1 Corinthians 9: 10 (from “For” to “hope”)

John 12: 35, 36 (to “sons of light”); 4: 31-34; 20: 1-17, 21

The phrase ‘going forward’ has cropped up once or twice in meetings recently, and it struck me that a ploughman is a very good example of one who can *only* go forward. A ploughman cannot go backwards; he will always go forward. Nowadays, ploughing is a sophisticated process, but years ago a man would have followed his plough hour after hour after hour going up and down the fields. How does the farmer know how to cut in a straight line? How does he cut that furrow from one end of the field to the other end of the field? It is because he has an objective, and an object at the other side of the field.

This led me to think that we also have an objective, but our objective is not at the other side of the field. Our objective is in our hearts, because we have the Holy Spirit, “who is the earnest of our inheritance” (Eph 1: 14), and who gives us access to that objective, gives us the reality of what it is to have to do with a Man in heaven. He gives us the hope that is referred to here, “that the plougher should plough in hope”, and so we also have an objective in Christ; the One who is “the leader and completer of faith”, as it says in Hebrews 2. This means that at any point in the journey we have One who is our Leader and that is how we can put our hand to the plough and continue to go forward. It is the only way we can continue to go forward. There are times when there is a tendency, with me at least, to look backwards and when we look backwards, what do we find? We find that we get disillusioned and we get confused; so it becomes necessary, vital, to go forward and to look forward.

I am not saying that the ploughman will not encounter stones along the way. He may encounter all sorts of difficulties, and we would all know something about that in our Christian pathway. No-one has ever said that there will not be difficulties and there will not

be exercises. It is just a question of how we deal with these exercises. For instance, the ploughman will encounter big stones and small stones. He cannot ignore them; they are there and they have to be dealt with. But in our pathway, in our journey, we do have access to a power that is greater, as it says in John's first epistle: "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world", chap 4: 4. What a power! We have access to the Holy Spirit so that when we do encounter these exercises, which may sometimes be external, and at other times internal (things which are in our own heart), if we bring God, and the Lord Jesus, into the circumstances we find that we become formed by these exercises.

So the ploughman, you could say, accumulates spiritual experience, and I think as we put our hand to the plough and continue on the pathway, we find that there is strength and there is formation in our hearts as we learn to deal with these exercises. The secret is to bring the Lord Jesus in; there is no exercise, there is no difficulty, that is too small, that He is not interested in. He is sympathetic; He is available; and He is very near, so that when we do find that there are problems along the way, whatever they may be, we find that something positive can come out of the experience when we bring in the help and the support and the resource of divine Persons.

The ploughman does not just force his way through the problem, or force his way through the exercise, but rather he knows how to deal with it. Perhaps he has had experience before. We know brethren who have many years of experience, and they have seen the exercises before, seen the difficulties perhaps, and they know how they can be dealt with, and they in turn can show us who are a wee bit younger how to deal with them, so that there can be glory for divine Persons, and something formed in us, in our hearts, as we deal with these things, and there is something positive worked out.

I thought the ploughman really needs three things. He needs light; he needs food; and he needs direction.

In the past, a ploughman was not able to plough at night; he needed light, and we also need light. That is why I read in John. It

says, "Walk while ye have the light, that darkness may not overtake you". Most of us have been brought up in an environment where there is light, and sometimes perhaps we take it for granted, but think of the light we have known as we have grown up, as we have been formed. It says, "While ye have the light, believe in the light"; so there is something active that has to be done. The light is there; it is emanating from the Lord Jesus; it is emanating from an ascended Christ; so it is there, but it has to be believed in. In other words, there is an active component. We have to "believe in the light, that ye may become sons of light". As we believe in the light, and as we become absorbed by the light, then we are formed by light; we become persons who know what it is to walk in the light, and as John's epistle also tells us, on that basis "we have fellowship with one another", 1 John 1: 7. It is a wonderful thing to think there are those who are walking in the light, and that there is a basis to have fellowship with them, to have a relationship with them, but first of all the relationship that is vital is the relationship with the Lord Jesus.

So the Lord does not say there is no darkness. He *does* say, "that darkness may not overtake you". We cannot ignore the fact that we are surrounded by darkness, and I think it is important as well that we can identify the fact. This world is marked by moral darkness and sometimes we tend to forget that, as we travel our way through it, but when we realise it is this same world where Christ was rejected, and where He was crucified, that puts into perspective what the world really is. But rather than be preoccupied with the darkness that is around us, we can be occupied with the light that is emanating from heaven and which illuminates our hearts and shows us the way to go; to be simple about it, that is what light does. It takes away the shadows and brings in illumination. As it says also in John's epistle, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all", 1 John 1: 5. So the God that we have to do with is a God who is light. Light itself flows out from God, and has flowed through this dispensation for two thousand years, and has flowed into millions and millions of souls. As we look around a room like this, we see persons who have been affected by light because light has an effect. It brings about growth, brings about warmth and brings about life. It is one of the properties of life. We need light; this light would have a positive effect on us

and, as we are in that sphere of light and remain within that sphere of light, we would know what it is to be formed by it as we are occupied with the Lord Jesus, and also the place where He is. We can then know what it is to be in an environment where the love of the Lord Jesus is known and where there are persons who love Him, which results in a circle of love.

So then I thought that the ploughman needs food. He cannot plough all day long without food, and the food that the ploughman needs is food that is nourishing, food that will give him sustenance over the distance. I think at the moment that is what we need; we need nourishment. We need ongoing nourishment, the kind of nourishment that would build us up, that would edify us, and also the type of nourishment that would form us after the Lord Jesus. There is no greater food than to feed on the Person of the Lord Jesus. The disciples said to the Lord here in John 4, "Rabbi, eat. But he said to them, I have food to eat which ye do not know". Then He said, "My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me, and that I should finish his work". Think of that! Think of the One here as a Man, who walked step after step after step, and every step He took He knew that what lay ahead of Him was that cross. That is unlike any other person; the Lord Jesus knew what was ahead of Him, and "*he* stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem", Luke 9: 51. The Lord Jesus never thought about going back, or going sideways, or any other direction. The Lord Jesus was characterised as One who kept going forward, and as He went forward; His food was the Father's will. Think of that communication that He had, as it says in Isaiah: "He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed", chap 50: 4. Think of that communication, every day, every hour of the day! Think of the relationship that was always there, and yet the Lord Jesus went on along that pathway. He says, "and that I should finish his work". So there is a work that only He could do, that was unique to Him, and He knew what that work was, knew what it involved; and in His love He went forward in order that the work should be finished.

Although it mentions the two disciples in John 20, it was Mary I had in mind, because she was given a message. She says, when

the Lord Jesus asked her initially, “Woman, why dost thou weep? Whom seekest thou?”, “Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away”. But then the Lord Jesus said to her, “Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God”. What a glorious message that was, and I think from that point Mary was someone who would go forward. Initially it says “she turned backward”; so in order for her to go forward, she had to turn. Sometimes we are like that; I would say simply, there are times when we have to be turned in order to be put in the right direction. But here was Mary; she had a message, and the Lord Jesus gave her that message. You could say it was a commission that He gave her: “go to my brethren”; so there were others who were to go in the same direction. So you and I are not alone as we go forward. There are brethren we go forward with.

Then across the page it says, “as the Father sent me forth, I also send you”; so there is this direction. I often think the Spirit acts like a compass; He always points towards the Lord Jesus. The needle on the compass always points in a particular direction, and that is what the Spirit does. He points us in the direction of the Lord Jesus, and then, as we put our hand to the plough, and as we go in that direction, we find that there is strength and there is hope, because the ploughman ploughs in hope. This means we also have joy because our hope is not insubstantial. It is a hope that has a glorious terminus: a glorious destination. Our hope is a substantial hope, and involves the Lord Jesus where He is presently, but also involves the fact that soon He is going to come and take us to be with Himself; so that is the hope that characterises our pathway here.

May we all be helped to put our hand to the plough, and to know what it is to plough in hope! May the Lord bless the word!

Word in meeting for ministry - Grangemouth

10th May 2016

TREASURE BROUGHT OUT

John Speirs

Luke 10: 30-35

Luke 15: 20-24

Genesis 24: 53 (to “Rebecca”)

Matthew 13: 52

I am impressed, beloved brethren, about what God is willing to expend on the believer. What treasures, what vast resources God has, but He is not selfish; He does not keep them to Himself He is willing to expend; He is willing to expend liberally, and skilfully too. Some persons in the world have vast material wealth, but do not know how to use it properly. God knows exactly how to use His vast resources, and He is willing to expend them on you, a believer in the Lord Jesus.

I read in this passage in Luke 10 of one who had terrible need, a poor man who was in a half-dead state: “But a certain Samaritan journeying came to him, and seeing him, was moved with compassion”. God's willingness to expend on us has its source in His love. It is interesting to note that the Samaritan in this chapter and the father in Luke 15 were both moved with compassion; it shows God's consideration for us in all our need. Perhaps you have known what it is to have been in a half-dead state. Perhaps you have known what it is to be far from God and robbed, as the world would rob you, of all your dignity and anything that you might have; but this man, “a certain Samaritan”, who is a type of the Lord Jesus, is moved with compassion. He saw him. Others saw him too, but it does not say they were moved with compassion. Not only does he take him to the inn and take care of him but it says, “And on the morrow as he left, taking out two denarii”. I thought that could be likened to the Lord Jesus bringing out just what was needed at that moment from His resource in skill, in care and in love for one that was in dire need. “Taking out” - it was within His possession; it was under His hand and He brought it out. The Lord Jesus knows

exactly what your need is and He is willing to bring out what would sustain you. The two denarii were brought out in view of sustenance in the inn until he came again; how the Lord Jesus in His boundless grace provides for believers in this scene where He is not! He has not yet come back: “I will render to thee on my coming back”. He will come back. How blessed it will be when He returns, but in the meantime, He has made full provision in the inn. Much has been said as to what these two denarii might represent. I cannot expand on that, but the impre He returns. He has committed it into the Holy Spirit's hand to administer, “whatsoever thou shalt expend more”. Think of that: there will be no lack in divine support until the Lord Jesus comes again. My exercise is that I might value the Spirit's expenditure and stay in the inn, stay where this wealth is being expended. That is where we will be supported, where we will be protected. If we wander from the inn, we might fall into the hands of robbers again. Stay in the place where God is expending. It would be for us the place where the assembly is known and valued. God is expending in skill and in love so that the testimony might be preserved until the Lord comes again.

I read in Luke 15. The father was moved with compassion. The younger son became a repentant sinner. That is what the parable in this chapter speaks about, different aspects of it but the one parable. The part we read speaks of the father being moved with compassion. The younger son was coming back in repentance. In type, God the Father said to His bondmen, “Bring out the best robe”. Here is something He has under His hand; here is something that He desires to give to His son. If the son is going to be suited for His presence, if he is going to have a part in the liberty and rejoicing of the house, he must be properly attired. When God looks upon the believer He sees the Lord Jesus; that gives Him delight. That is what the best robe is like. If you are clothed in that, you are clothed in Christ, and God sees that and it delights Him. That is proper to His house; it has its origin there. He does not send someone out for it; it seems to be within the house. It is in His treasury, you might say, and He brings it out. He brings it out with

skill and with love because He knows that is just what is needed, and He gives it to His son lovingly. He does not hold anything back. He does not hold any grudges against this young man; He does not say 'Why should I give you my best robe?'. No, "But the father said to his bondmen, Bring out the best robe". Nothing would stop the Father in His desire in clothing us in Christ. What a value God places on us: He "put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet". Others can say better than I can what these things represent, but God is willing to expend from His treasure so that the believer might be suited to His presence. We might not feel we are really worthy to be there, but God desires that you might feel free in His presence. We have been set free, not only by the truth but by the Son (John 8: 32, 36), that we might be there in holy liberty in God's presence, not only for our pleasure but for God's own pleasure, God's delight. "And they began to make merry"; it must suggest the Father's joy, speaking reverently. The whole house was a place of holy celebration, "And they began to make merry".

In Genesis 24 we have in the servant a type of the Holy Spirit, and it says that he "brought forth silver articles, and gold articles, and clothing, and he gave them to Rebecca". It says earlier in the chapter that Abraham's servant "ruled over all that he had", v 2, and it says too, "now all the treasure of his master was under his hand", v 10. Thus, the Holy Spirit has access to the full divine treasury; He knows just what should be brought out at any time. It is not here provision to meet a need or lack; this is adornment. The Holy Spirit knows perfectly what is suited to Christ's own heart. This is not suitability exactly for God's house; this is suitability for Isaac, who represents to us the Lord Jesus as the heavenly Man. The Holy Spirit brings out heavenly treasure at the present time, so that those who are believers in the Lord Jesus and have the Holy Spirit, who thus belong to the assembly, are suitably adorned. How does He do that? Perhaps it is in a meeting like this, perhaps in a reading meeting, perhaps when we are speaking one with another and we share what we have learned of Jesus, our impressions of Him. The Holy Spirit would do that. Think of what the Lord Jesus says about

the Holy Spirit in John's gospel; He says He "will bring to your remembrance all the things which I have said to you" (chap 14: 26), then further on, "He shall glorify me", chap 16: 14. Think of that: the Holy Spirit would always do that. He would bring out of the divine treasure to glorify the true Isaac. When he saw Rebecca, Isaac would have recognised these gold articles and silver articles, he would recognise the clothing. He would say, 'That is out of my father's treasure, and there is someone who values it, there is someone who is suited to wear it'. She has moral suitability; that was established earlier in the chapter and, beloved, how privileged we are to be in a place where there are believers who have the Holy Spirit and to whom God will provide everything that is needed so that Christ's heart may be satisfied. Let us value it more.

I read in Matthew because I think this householder with a treasure is to be a figure of ourselves, of a believer. How do we accumulate spiritual treasure? I suppose it must involve cultivating a living and sustained daily communion with the Lord Jesus, with the Holy Spirit and with God the Father, frequenting Their presence. These are the blessed divine Persons who have that treasure and are willing to bring out of it for your blessing and for their glory; stay near to them. Ask the Spirit to add to your spiritual treasury. "Every scribe disciplined to the kingdom of the heavens is like a man that is a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old". Do you have a treasury? If you do not have a treasury you cannot bring anything out of it. There might be a time when you need spiritual resource to help someone. Like the good Samaritan, you might be called upon to bring out from that resource to support someone who is in need. You might also be able to bring out something that would dignify one of your brethren and make them suitable for God's presence. You might do something that would facilitate the service of the Holy Spirit, in bringing Christ attractively before another believer in the Spirit's power so that there may be something fresh in them for Christ's delight.

I feel the test of what has been said, that we might have a spiritual treasure with things new and things old in it. Do not rely

only on what is old. Do not just rest on impressions you received many years ago. Of course, they can be expanded and added to, but desire to get something fresh, get it into your treasury, and you never know when the Spirit might prompt you to bring it out so that there may be more glory for God.

May the Lord bless the word.

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