

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 127

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LOVE FOR CHRIST MAINTAINED

John 1: 29, 35-39; 14: 15-26; 15: 9-15

DJW We read in the first meeting in Revelation 2 of Ephesus falling from their first love. It was not intended to dwell too much on that, but to use it perhaps as a backdrop. What I would like us to be occupied with together is to see how our love for the Lord Jesus can be maintained in freshness in such a time as we are in. God in His grace has provided things Himself that would help us, and we might also be occupied with certain features that marked persons who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

I thought we might look in this reading at the title “the Lamb of God”. It is most attractive to us; and it is that One who takes away the sin of the world. It speaks of Him walking, and His way was from the manger to the cross; and He attracted disciples to whom He became the Centre in their affections. And flowing out of that, in the part we did not read, He becomes the Centre of what is collective. I was encouraged by the opening hymn we sang -

Thou art, O Lord, the Centre
Of that vast world of bliss (Hymn 259).

Andrew finds his own brother Simon Peter, and Philip finds Nathanael, and they bring them to Jesus. So you see how the Lord Jesus becomes the Centre. He must be the Centre, dear brethren; nothing else will subsist. Then there are other features in chapters 14 and 15, features that are to mark those that love our Lord Jesus Christ. He says, “If ye love me, keep my commandments”; that flows out of affection for the Person. It is not a legal requirement, but it flows out of affection for Christ if we keep His commandments. And that seems to be ground which paves the way for the reception of the Holy Spirit: “I will beg the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth”. I think the Holy Spirit has a vital part in maintaining us in affection for Christ because He would occupy us with no other man. He links us to the ascended Man; He links us to a world in which Christ is the

Centre. It is a wonderful thing that a divine Person is still here. He dwells in the believer, and sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, Rom 5: 5. He also indwells the assembly, where He is able to maintain everything in relation to the Person of Christ. As we converse together on such an occasion as this, how dependent we are upon the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. As we know, the Lord is preparing His own for His departure in chapters 13 to 17, and this is what He speaks of. He will send another Comforter; it is not that the Lord Jesus ceases to be a Comforter to us; He is in the glory and is a comfort to us, but additionally there is the Holy Spirit here. It is a wonderful system of support that, entered into vitally, would keep us fresh in our affections for divine Persons.

In verse 23 it says, “Jesus answered and said to him, If any one love me, he will keep my word”. Notice the change of word from “commandment” to “word”. We could say that for us the commandments are in the Scriptures. They do not change. His word is the conveying of His mind to us, whenever that may be. We spoke in the first reading of discerning His movements; I think we discern His movements by His word. And, as it comes, we will keep it: “If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him”; that is another additional thing.

I trust that we will find these things attractive to us, dear brethren, that these conditions bring us into a conscious sense, not only of the Lord’s love, but of the Father’s love. Then He adds, “and we will come to him and make our abode with him”, and you see how everything is carried forward in the Holy Spirit, “whom the Father will send in my name, *he* shall teach you all things, and will bring to your remembrance all the things which I have said to you”. As you read through the gospels, you see time and time again that the disciples did not really understand what the Lord was saying to them, but they had what could be brought to remembrance after the Spirit came and they understood.

Then, in chapter 15, you get the expression, “abide in my love”. I think that is something attractive and something important for us, because it is a love that is unchanging. We are in a world that is

unstable, where everything keeps changing; but abiding in His love brings a real sense of support and stability in a changing world. Then it goes on to the matter of friendship, another very attractive thought for those that love Him: “Ye are my friends if ye practise whatever I command you”. He has said, “I call you no longer bondmen, for the bondman does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends”. Abraham, you will remember, was called, “Friend of God”, Jas 2: 23. God made known to him His mind in relation to Sodom and Gomorrah. So it opens up a relationship in which His mind is conveyed particular to those that He calls His friends. The young ones may know what it is to have a friend; you can tell them things that perhaps you would not tell others. James tell us that “friendship with the world is enmity with God” (Jas 4: 4), but what a close relationship is known in these bonds of affection. “I have called you friends, for all things which I have heard of my Father I have made known to you”. He has not held anything back. What the Lord has conveyed to us!

DMW Would you say a little more as to the title “the Lamb of God”?

DJW It is a title that goes through; at the end of Revelation, you get that title maintained, the One that was slain. And there was the lamb introduced into the households at the passover (Exod 12); the Israelites would have become attached to the lamb. But that lamb had to die, and the Lamb of God is the One that has laid down His life. We have that sacrificial course from the manger to the cross; and I think therefore it is a title which attracts us to Him initially.

DMW I was thinking that it is an attractive title. Would it also convey as to His Person, that He was great enough to do this? The reference you made in Revelation to the Lamb that has been slain (chap 5: 12) is a different thought, a diminutive; but this One spoken of here in John 1 is great enough to undertake what is before Him. It is interesting that the first thing here seems to be that persons are being attracted to Him.

DJW He is the only One great enough to take away the sin of the world. What a thing that is; how everything hinged on the Lamb of

God. Everything for God hinged upon Him, and everything for us hinged upon it, taking away the sin of the world. Think of it being taken away, never to be brought up again. The sin question has been resolved once and for all for God and for us in that precious death.

HWJ The sacrifices were often a bullock or a ram, or a goat; you think of this as the *Lamb* of God, the wonder of presenting the taker away of the sin of the world in a Lamb! It is marvellous to think of it; it is so attractive to us!

DJW Yes, I wondered that; and that is the first step, the principle of attraction to the Person. It goes on to attachment and affection, FER vol 3 p69; vol 16 p322. That is the way that true affection for Christ is arrived at.

NJH Was the sacrificial life and death of the Lamb of God not only to meet the sin question, but also to bring men into the presence of God?

DJW I wondered if that is what comes out in the later verses we read. It is not so much a question of our need there, but it is a question of being in the presence of the One who has become so attractive to us. John the baptist is a model servant to two of his disciples. He says, 'He is the one you are to follow': "Behold the Lamb of God".

NJH The Lord is really leading them into tabernacle conditions; "the Word ... dwelt among us" (v 14) involves tabernacle conditions which have eternity in view.

DJW They do. There is something very attractive about that, and by the presence of the Spirit we can touch something of it now.

JW Isaiah says, "he was led as a lamb to the slaughter", chap 53: 7. I was thinking of the feature of submission that was found in the lamb.

DJW Yes, He was "as a lamb is dumb in presence of him that shears him", Acts 8: 32. Think of the One who stood before the governor, One who was falsely accused but answered not so much

as one word. The moral glories of Jesus shone out in those sufferings at the hands of men. But then there were also the sufferings at the hands of a righteous, sin-hating God.

TRV I was struck by it being “of God”, not just “the Lamb”. Why is it “of God”? Does it bring in what you spoke about, the complete satisfaction of God bringing men before Him for His pleasure?

DJW God has approached man in a Man. In order to gain man, God has approached us in that way, the most attractive way.

DMW So John’s gospel opens with His title “the Word”; and then the title “the Lamb of God” comes in. His personal glories are involved, are they not? Genesis 22: 8 says, “God will provide himself with a sheep for the burnt-offering”. So “the Word” is God Himself in Manhood to express the heart of God and to describe the relationship that God had in mind for man, sonship; that this whole matter - not my sins exactly but the sin of the world - had to be dealt with by One who personally could do it. He was great enough to do it.

DJW That is right. He is therefore set before us as unique - apart from every other man, because He came into a condition of flesh and blood but sin apart. No other offering for sin was acceptable to God but the offering of the body of Jesus Christ. It must be One “who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God”, Heb 9: 14.

WSC Do you have something to say about the verses between the two statements about the Lamb of God, where John speaks about Him and also about his own place in the matter?

DJW John the baptist was the forerunner of the Lord Jesus; that was his specific service, to go before Him. And something had to be removed. John the baptist’s ministry provided for that in order to pave the way for receiving the ministry of grace exemplified in the Lord Jesus. So we come into something far greater than John the baptist did. He completed his service, and he speaks of another coming after him, “the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to unloose”, the Lamb of God: He is the One to follow. No doubt he

had made Him attractive to those disciples of his, so that he did not seek a following after himself, but he drew attention to the One who was after him who was greater than him.

WSC I was just thinking about the preaching, and our testimony and what it would be, and how He is magnified beyond any self-seeking on our own part.

DJW Well, I wondered if that was not one of the great values of the gospel preaching, because it is another occasion in which the Lord Jesus is magnified. There is no other One to preach about; it is “God’s glad tidings ... concerning his Son ... Jesus Christ our Lord”, Rom 1: 1-4. We end the Lord’s day with that.

HWJ I was thinking of what was mentioned, and it is remarkable, that after saying what he did in verse 29, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”; then he testifies about the Spirit coming down upon this Man, this Lamb of God; and that He is the Son of God. I suppose that was something also which these disciples heard from his lips?

DJW Yes I think so; so that He was distinguished as unique, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him and abode upon Him, v 32. He had not done that - could not do that - to anyone else. There was nothing to repel in the Lamb of God.

AML Would there be attractiveness and glory in the movements of Jesus here? I was just struck that John sees Jesus coming, and then we have the thought of Jesus walking. Christianity is a living system, is it not? And it is going forward, going on.

DJW Well, there were persons who witnessed that walk in the gospels. There was no other man that had ever entered this scene in perfection, and there has not been since. But they saw Him walking, and they followed Him. His course took Him from the manger to the cross. Now it is in this gospel also that the Lord says to Simon Peter, “thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me after”, chap 13: 36. We sing -

None could follow there, blest Saviour,

When Thou didst for sins atone; (Hymn 298).

As we have said, it was only He, in His greatness and in His perfection, that could deal with that. But we follow after; that is our day when the Spirit has come when we can follow Him. But now He is a Man in the glory.

AML Would it be right to link what we are saying now with the word in Revelation, the One “who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamps”, chap 2: 1? Would that be the present movement of the Lord Jesus?

DJW Well, that would be included in it, so that He moved among the golden lamps in a judicial way there, did he not? He took account of the condition of things in the assemblies. But then also in Revelation 2 and 3 you get the Spirit’s voice to the overcomer: he that hears what the Spirit says to the assemblies. So that there is what has been added in that way in the Spirit’s constant speaking. Now, who does the Spirit draw attention to? He draws attention to the Lamb of God.

TRV Are Philip and the woman of Sychar to be taken as representative of us in our day. Can we say, as Philip did, “Come and see”, v 46? It is that line of attractiveness to that very One that the Spirit would bring before us. Then in John 4: 29, what the woman says is, “Come, see a man”. So these would represent those indwelt by the Spirit and attracted by the Spirit to that very One?

DJW Yes, I think that is right. We get the onset really of what is collective, and the Lord Jesus is the Centre of attraction; He is the great magnet to us in our affections; He is a great rallying point to our affections. That is one of the great things about the Supper when we come together; it is a great rallying point to us in our affections. It says in chapter 3: 35, “The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand”; that gives the idea of an administration set up under His hand; and the next chapter shows what that administration does in the securing of that woman as a worshipper; to “worship the Father in spirit and truth”, v 23. Now that

is the end in view; it is not just a question of our needs being met, but that we can have part as being subjects of grace, to be brought into this administration of grace. The Father has committed all things into His hands.

NJH John is a characteristic follower, is he not, from this chapter through to chapter 21?

DJW Yes, he is. The Lord had to say to Peter: “But he said this signifying by what death he should glorify God. And having said this, he says to him, Follow me. Peter, turning round, sees the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also leaned at supper on his breast, and said, Lord, who is it that delivers thee up? Peter, seeing him, says to Jesus, Lord, and what of this man? Jesus says to him, If I will that he abide until I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me”, John 21: 19-22. Irrespective of what others do, we need to follow Him.

DMW Would the title that *they* give Him be important in understanding His administrative authority? They give Him a title when they say, “Rabbi, where abidest thou?”. Would that be an important feature of being a characteristic believing believer?

DJW Yes, and they would have got the full gain of that in going to the place where He abode. They would get the full gain of His teaching. I was thinking of Mary who sat at His feet and was listening to His word, Luke 10: 39. She had chosen the good part which should not be taken from her, v 42. She would have appreciated Him as the One who was the Teacher.

DMW Quite so. Do we not learn everything from the Lord?

DJW Yes, I think that is right. In Matthew 11: 28, 29, we have, “Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and **learn from me**, for I am meek and lowly in heart”. Everything, every aspect of the truth, was set out in perfection in Him, and He is the One who is available to us to go to, to learn from Him.

KRO Say some more about verse 39; they had heard Him, they had seen Him walk, and they follow Him, but their occupation is with where He abides.

DJW You get to know a person best, do you not, by going to where their abode is? You get a greater knowledge of a person by going to where their own abode is. You get the atmosphere and the characteristics that mark the person. I think that is involved in this; it brings us close, do you think?

KRO We will be with Him where He is in due course, will we not?

DJW Just so. John gives us the spiritual side of things; he does not describe the abode, but the fact is that a Person was there. Now, the cave of Adullam was mentioned this morning; there was nothing attractive about the cave of Adullam, except that it was David that was there. Is that what attracts us, do you think?

MTH Do we get the other side to what we have mentioned this morning in Luke 24? It says, "And they constrained him, saying, Stay with us", and it goes on to say, "And he entered in to stay with them", v 29. Then we get what is opened up to them both before and after. It says, "And having begun from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself", v 27. But is "Stay with us" the other side of what you are speaking about?

DJW Yes, I think that is right. So, on that journey, there was something about the Lord that attracted them, and they did not want Him to leave them. They were going away to Emmaüs, persons who were downcast because things had not worked out in the way they had thought - and maybe we have been a bit like that, a bit downcast and saying things have not worked out in the way we thought. So, He made Himself known to them, He broke the bread, and they recognised Him. Now, who can make our hearts burn other than the Lord Jesus? He did not tell them to go back, but from that touch they knew exactly where they had to go: back to Jerusalem, into the circle of the brethren, where the eleven were and where they had something to contribute from their own experience with the Lord.

GMC Is it as abiding with Him that we learn about the Father? I would like to know more about the Father, because that is a unique thing that was coming in where we are reading in John's gospel, something new that was being opened up; and I was wondering if it is not related to where He abides.

DJW I think it is. The Lord could say, "He that has seen me has seen the Father", John 14: 9. All that we know of the Father is seen in Him. So I am sure what you say is right and important, that as we love Him and keep His commandments, we then come into the conscious sense of the Father's love. It is a most attractive thought.

SWS I was wondering as well, when they ask Him the question, "Where abidest thou?", if there was definitely an exercise on their part to experience a place that would take its character from Christ. I was wondering if that was instructive to us as well, to realise that there are certain conditions that are suitable to His presence.

DJW I thought that came into the second two scriptures we read: "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will beg the Father, and he will give you another Comforter". It seems that there is that underlying moral condition which is suitable for persons to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now, after the end of the gospel, you see persons at the beginning of the Acts, who went to the upper room; there were one hundred and twenty in the upper room and they represented the fruit of the Lord's own ministry. And, after ten days, at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon them. They were persons who were suitable for the Holy Spirit to come upon. These things are most attractive, and these things are learned in the Christian circle such as we are in today.

DMW Taking away the sin of the world has tabernacle conditions in view, family conditions, where that contaminant of the human race has all been taken care of; so that we are in the Christian circle as free to love the Lord and to experience His presence - and to love one another.

DJW And the world knows nothing of that experience. The power and presence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian circle is something

the world knows nothing of. It is a world that is agitated, a world that is unstable; and yet over against that we have the inner circle, which John 13 to 17 brings out; and persons who were the direct fruit of the Lord's own ministry. They did not go back into the synagogue in Acts 1; they went to the upper room. There was a certain instinct about that, a moral elevation; and there was going to be a new beginning which had a new Centre.

DJK Is it helpful to see the way it is put in Exodus 12: 3, "let them take themselves **each** a lamb"? I was thinking about what is being said, that it is attraction of each one individually to Christ but it is worked out in the Christian circle.

DJW Yes. The lamb was taken into the household there. It was there from the tenth to the fourteenth day and they would become attracted to that, and it would have affected them that that lamb had to be sacrificed; that was the passover. The passover precedes the Supper (1 Cor 5: 7); we do not become so occupied at the Supper with the sufferings of the Lord Jesus in relation to the judgment of sin; we see them more in relation to the way that the love of God has been revealed to us in His death. But the passover has an important part in our preparation for entering into the Supper, do you think?

WSC Is there not another point in our experiences, that "he first finds his own brother", John 1: 41? That was the effect of spending time with the Lord in His abode.

DJW You are emphasising "his own brother"? It is a sphere where affection is known, where brotherly love is known. And that paves the way for tabernacle conditions in which normal Christianity can be known and enjoyed.

WSC I was also thinking of Hebrews 3: 6, "but Christ, as Son over his house, whose house are we". That really incorporates that idea of brotherliness, does it not?

DJW It does, yes.

DMW It has been said that the brother is a greater idea morally than a servant.

DJW Yes, that is right.

DMW The Lord stressed the fact that morally these are “my brethren”: “My mother and my brethren are those who hear the word of God and do it”, Luke 8: 21. We have the mind of the Lord in the Christian circle; it is not much of a circle if we do not have a Centre.

DJW The scripture you refer to as to those who do the will of God draws attention to the idea of brethren in a moral way, and that has to be in place if we are to enter into higher truths, what it means to be united to Christ. Hebrews 2: 11, 12 gives us the highest sense of it when it says, “For both he that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises”. The moral aspect, in doing His will, paves the way for the experience of those verses.

DMW It does indeed. So “he that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one” is manhood; “not ashamed to call them brethren” is one seed: it is manhood.

DJW In Judges 8: 18 it says, “each one resembled the sons of a king”. Gideon says, “They were my brethren”. We might say, each one portrayed some feature of Christ, suggesting for us manhood after Christ.

TRV Why is there another “if” in chapter 14: 15? And we know there are other “ifs” in Romans 8 relative to the Spirit as well - “for if ye live according to flesh, ye are about to die; but if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live: for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *these* are sons of God”, v 13, 14. I did not want to digress but there seemed to be a link, and I was wondering why there is an “if” in John 14: 15.

DJW He says, “If ye love me, keep my commandments”. It seems to be what flows out as a consequence, it is an “if” of consequence; “If ye love me”: the consequence of that is that you keep “my commandments”. It flows out of affection for the Person.

TRV That is very helpful; a simple obedience comes in then to His commandments; and the consequence is the blessing of another Comforter, actively working.

DJW I think that is right. There is the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit; and also the Father sending another Comforter. There is a collective setting here; we get the gain of the Comforter's service in its fulness as assembled as we are now. He has this important title of "the Spirit of truth": He maintains the truth in its totality in a spiritual environment, an environment that is known in the assembly. He will guide us into *all* the truth: how dependent we are upon the Holy Spirit in that way. As we see in sects around, there may be a certain truth brought forward and it may be at the expense of other truth; but as the Spirit is made way for, "he shall guide you into **all** the truth", chap 16: 13. The whole truth is kept before us, and that preserves us from anything of a narrow character.

DMW So the Spirit dwells in us and is thus concerned with our state. I was just thinking of family conditions and tabernacle conditions, and how they work out; our affections are quickened by the Spirit. But we need light; we cannot live without light. For these affections to be developed and stimulated we need the Spirit of truth.

DJW You are thinking that the Spirit of truth brings in the light; and then there is a state which responds to that? The Lord's word is something that constantly comes to us; we would look for that on an occasion like this. His word comes to us, and we have spoken of His movements. Do you think the Lord's movements are discerned by the ministry which He gives by the Spirit?

DMW I think so, and I believe we can be strengthened in faith by taking account of that. There is feet-washing, and it is really the Lord doing it through vessels; so these family conditions, tabernacle conditions, are livingly maintained as we see Him moving in the circle of His own company.

DJW So you can see how the family side is strongly connected with John's ministry.

JHH You drew attention to two statements - "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will beg the Father, and he will give you another Comforter", and "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him". You are drawing attention to keeping "my word", and here we have the Father too, not only the Comforter but the Father making His abode. Would you open that up a bit more?

DJW "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love **him**". Now, what does the Father love in us? It must be that He loves features of Christ in us, and it is that order of manhood that is so delightful to the Father. On Lord's day morning, as coming into the presence of the Father, we are sons like Christ. Think of the delight that is to the Father Himself. Christ is standing in His own distinction of course, but we are sons like Him. It is that order of manhood that the Father delights in; He does not delight in anything else.

DMW It is the unity of nature coming through. I am thinking of verse 20 - "In that day", which would be the Spirit's day in which we are, "ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you". Is that not the unity of nature?

DJW "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you". The same nature is developed in the saints; yes, I think that is right.

DMW Everything has been personified in the Lord Jesus Himself, but we all participate in Christ; "in the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body", 1 Cor 12: 13. We participate in Christ, so that it is the same unity being expressed, I think; and would it not help us to see Judas here - or Jude as he is also called - who has a very short epistle as to the very day in which we are? It seems to take on a new important meaning to us.

DJW Yes, I think that is right. Judas says here, "how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us and not to the world?", John 14: 22. That points to an inner circle of things which the world knows nothing about, but it is something that we can experience now through the

power and presence of the Holy Spirit. I think that is very attractive, and perhaps something for us to set our minds to experience in a deeper way; but it must be underpinned by a moral condition that is suitable to it.

NJH Would the Spirit of truth have a very separative effect? It is a dispensational view; He stands over against all untruth and wickedness and everything that marks the world.

DJW It does. So it gives us a line of demarcation for our walk here, between light and darkness. John often speaks about what is true - "the true vine" (John 15: 1), "the true God" (1 John 5: 20); and all that stands over against what is counterfeit.

DMW Do we find what is counterfeit in Jude's epistle? Then we have the expression, "but, ye beloved" (Jude 17 and 20); there were lovers of Christ in the midst of the seeds of apostasy sown here. We would want to fit into that - "but, ye beloved", would we not?

DJW Yes, and it stands in contrast to what is all around us. I do feel the importance of this, beloved brethren, if we are to be preserved in a difficult day. Paul says, "in the last days difficult times shall be there" (2 Tim 3: 1), and we are in the midst of those days, beloved brethren. There is a provision, but to enter into it involves a moral condition suited to it.

WSC Would you commend Judas for asking this question?

DJW I would; would you?

WSC Yes, I would. I think it is a particular question which we sometimes wonder ourselves, and it is a good thing to be honest about it and ask the Lord. He will help us.

DJW It is remarkable what comes out of the question. You have been to a reading perhaps sometimes when a young person asks a question, and it is amazing what comes out of it. If it had not been asked, it would not have come out.

JHH You said that "If any one love me, he will keep my word" was more current? Can you open that up, please; that is what we need now, is it not?

DJW I think it is important for us, that if the word comes, as we trust it will as we are together, there is an answer to it in my soul. If there is an answer, it is my salvation; but if there is no answer to it, we expose ourselves to the devil.

JHH We are to wait for the word, and move when it comes.

DJW That is right; and if the word comes freely, it must relate to the place that the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, has in the company.

HWJ One of the prophets says, "The word ... and my Spirit, remain among you", Hag 2: 5. It is the same now, is it not? Those were remnant days such as we are in.

DJW Well, sometimes the word of God is testing: "the word of God is living and operative, and sharper than any two-edged sword", Heb 4: 12. It dips into our inner thoughts, our very motives. But if we are ready for the exposure and answer to it, it paves the way for blessing.

DJK If there is an attraction to the Person? It would normally follow that there is an attraction to the truth, because it is in the Person.

DJW It is. The truth was fully personified in the Lord Jesus. He said, "I am the way, and **the truth**, and the life", John 14: 6. Everything was seen in perfection in Him.

GMC That would link with the Lord saying, "Will ye also go away?", John 6: 67. Peter says, "thou hast words of life eternal".

DJW That is right. John 6 is a testing chapter; it was testing to those that heard it. When the Lord says to Peter, "Will ye also go away?", he says, "Lord, to whom shall we go?". It is not 'to what shall we go?' He says, "to whom shall we go? thou hast words of life eternal; and we have believed and known that thou art the holy one of God". That was an experience, was it not, that Peter could speak about, that he knew from his experience that the One in whom the words of eternal life were was the holy One of God? And when many persons were going away - and we are in a going-away time, and that in itself might be a discouragement to us - Peter's answer is one that we should come to ourselves: "Lord, to whom shall we go?".

NJH He speaks on behalf of those that remain - is it not a fine thing to gather up our brethren: “**we** have believed and known”? Those who went away walked with Him no longer, but with those who remain, we carry them along in devotion to Christ.

DJW I think that is right. Peter is often the spokesman in the gospels but the twelve are in mind. These are the persons who would launch the dispensation in which we are; they turned Jerusalem upside down. Think of the power of the preaching in Acts 2! These are the persons who had been in the company of Christ: “Lord, to whom shall we go?”.

DMW So we have believed based on their witness and report. And of course Paul comes in to set the standard especially at the end, for remnant days. So you get the further step in verse 24, “my words”; verse 23 is “my word”?

DJW “He that loves me not does not keep my words; and the word which ye hear is not mine, but that of the Father who has sent me”. There are many words, I suppose; the word may come many times in different ways, but persons have not responded to it. So he goes on to say, “the word which ye hear is not mine, but that of the Father who has sent me”. So your attention is immediately drawn to the source in the Father.

DMW I think that helps; it can come at any time. I was just wondering, since He is still speaking to Judas, about how in that epistle the writer would have spoken to them about their common salvation; but he writes as to the “faith once delivered to the saints”:. Would that include the detail of the truth that the Spirit is engaging us with as we continue together?

DJW I believe it is; and it seems to me that there are three things that go together that we are to love - we are to love the Lord, we are to love the truth, and we are to love the brethren. The three things go together.

KRO We have had keeping his commandments and keeping his word, and then in chapter 15: 14, we have to “practise whatever I command you”.

DJW Well, that is more than just assent; practice is seen in my walk and ways here. Persons can take account of our walk. “Ye are my friends if ye practise whatever I command you”. The Lord Himself takes account of our walk too. He took account of the walk of persons like Abraham; and where that walk is pleasing to Him, He is free to reveal His mind to us. It is another way in which we get the gain of His movements. It goes on the same in verse 15: “I call you no longer bondmen, for the bondman does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends”. There is an intimate relationship developed there.

KRO So we should be under no mistake that there is a practical - almost habitual - bearing to this. I feel measured by this myself; not only that I have to be attentive to what He is commanding us, but it is to be habitual with me.

DJW I think it is important for us to maintain those things; as we have said, it is a greater thing to maintain something than it is to reach it. If we are to get the gain of these things in this most attractive form, it involves the maintenance of relationship with God and a conscious sense of abiding in His love.

SWS I was thinking about what was mentioned as to practice; it is something that would be characteristic of the saints. At least, that is what the Lord is looking for, and He is looking for consistency and continuance, especially in the day that we are in. I think that is especially important for us to realise. We have been much helped locally as to faithfulness, and I think this thought of consistency and continuance in this word “practise” would relate to what we are speaking about.

DJW I think that is good, consistency and continuance. I think it has been said that the proof of reality is in continuance. However difficult things may get, we continue. It is characteristic of saints.

MTH It is also important that it is “whatever I command you”. There was a time when some said, “This word is hard”, and they walked no more with Him (John 6: 60, 66), but it is “whatever I command you”.

So it is consistency and continuance, and “whatever I command you”; that is a test.

DJW That is good; and as you spoke, I thought of Caleb, he “wholly followed Jehovah”, Num 32: 12. He did not pick and choose as to the words but he wholly followed Jehovah. And the land was in his heart, all through forty years in the wilderness; and therefore he continues. And his death is never recorded in scripture; so it is an element that goes right through.

DMW Would the reference to practice and walking lead us back to the Lord and the way He walked? I was thinking about, “walk about Zion” (Ps 48: 12); would we have the same interests before us as He has before Him?

DJW Yes; His chief interest is the assembly; and we come into much blessing by making that our chief interest.

JHH It says, “we are become companions of the Christ if indeed we hold the beginning of the assurance firm to the end”, Heb 3: 14. That is like Joshua and Caleb: they held the beginning right to the end.

DJW That is right, and they were the only two of that generation that actually went into the land.

JMB One of the features that runs through all this is love. I was thinking of your remark that hatred is something of the world. This is not known here where love pervades and underlies everything?

DJW We are affected by the love of God as it has reached us in Jesus, and that is what forms us; so that we come out in the same nature. “God is love” (1 John 4: 8), and we come out in the same nature; and that is what is attractive to the Lord, and what is attractive to the Father.

DMcF Help me as to the “all things which I have heard of my Father”. I am thinking of what was referred to earlier, as to what relates to our state, what we are able to take in because of our state? The Lord will hold nothing back if we are able.

DJW He has not held anything back. All the Father's thoughts in blessing for us in purpose have come within our range in Christ. It involves His death; how affecting that is. But Paul could say in Acts 20: 20, "I held back nothing of what is profitable"; and he says in verse 27, "I have not shrunk from announcing to you all the counsel of God". Now we see all the counsel of God in the epistle to the Ephesians; nothing has been held back. Paul did not hold anything back from the Ephesians, and in the epistle gives us the full light of that. We referred earlier to the way that Paul's ministry stands in its own distinction, and you can see that if you study the book of the Acts. In the launch of the dispensation, it was the twelve who were important; but then the development of the assembly involved Paul's ministry. It was given to him "to complete the word of God", Col 1: 25. So it stands in its own distinction, and it is that ministry which the enemy attacks in the day in which we are, but it is that ministry in which we have the top note of what God has in mind for us.

AML Does the perseverance in the beginning of the Acts lead on to Paul's teaching? Is the moral bearing seen in these features, persevering "in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in breaking of bread and prayers", Acts 2: 42?

DJW It does have a bearing on it, if you see that those who truly love the Lord; and breaking of bread and prayers. That is something that we continue in. God in His goodness has seen to it that we have the Supper each week, to maintain us in the sense of the sacrifice that has been made to secure us, and for us to keep fresh in our affection for Christ.

At three-day meetings in Denton, Texas

14th April 2017

Key to initials:-

J M Bedford, Birmingham; G M Chellberg, Wheaton; W S Chellberg, Wheaton;

N J Henry, Glasgow; J H Hibbert, Calgary; M T Holland, Calgary; H W Jensen, Los Angeles; D J Klassen, Aberdeen ID; A M Lidbeck, Aberdeen ID; D McFarlane, New York; K R Oliver, Denton; S W Selman, Denton; T R VanderHoek, Denton; D M Welch, Denton; J Webster, Fraserburgh; D J Wright, Tunbridge Wells

HEALING

G Bruce Grant

Revelation 22: 1, 2

This is a millennial setting; it is very attractive what will pertain then. What I am thinking about is the last phrase, “and the leaves of the tree for healing of the nations”. These are the leaves of the tree of life, and that speaks of the Lord Jesus. What trouble there is amongst nations, the awfulness of politics! We see it so much at the present time, distrust amongst nations, one nation seeking to be more powerful than the other, building up armaments for the destruction of others. That is what pertains amongst nations, and if we did not know that the Father was over all, we would be very fearful. The Father *is* over all. We are very thankful to have that light; He is in control.

But there will come a time when the Lord Jesus is given His rightful place, when there will be “healing of the nations”. What a blessed administration it will be! It will be for the good of all. There will be peace. The river is “going out of the throne of God and of the Lamb”. Then there is the tree of life on each side. It seems as though God and the Lamb are on the throne. Think of a Sufferer being a ruler! What a Ruler! How worthy He is to rule! He suffered to uphold everything that was right in God’s sight. The throne would speak of that. Whatever it cost Him, He never relinquished what was right, and He did that sufferingly, and it is right that He is on the throne, ruling.

But there are these leaves with virtue in them, and they are for healing. What pertains then ought to pertain now. The leaves, we often say, are for the nations; the leaves are for us also. There is healing power in the leaves, and they come from Christ. You need to be near the tree of life to appropriate these leaves, and they are available to us. I think it is a good thing to have the desire that there might be healing amongst us. Things go on in the history of the testimony and issues seem to be solved, but afterwards there is a

rumbling on, and things are not really healed. That is just one example, not that I was specially thinking of that. I think it is good to desire to have the ability to bring in some healing. The Lord Jesus was a great Healer here; He healed and healed and healed. It was not only physical; He did do what was physical, but He also healed in a moral and spiritual way. It says, “and the Lord’s power was there to heal them”, Luke 5: 17. That was not physical; that referred to the moral condition of the Pharisees, “and the Lord’s power was there to heal them”; that was to bring about a change in them, morally; there was power there to heal in the Lord.

What an attractive Person the Lord was as a healer. He did not come to cause disruption and wounds and sorrow and bitterness. He did not come for that. He came to heal. He came to heal “the broken-hearted”, Isa 61: 1. What a thing it is to be broken-hearted, but the Lord can heal that, and we can operate in the way of healing as being near the Lord; take a leaf from that tree and apply it in healing. Think of the leaf of grace, the leaf of forgiveness! These things all marked the Lord, the leaf of “esteeming the other as more excellent than” yourself (Phil 2: 3), the leaf of “a meek and quiet spirit”, 1 Pet 3: 4. All these things tend towards healing, but as I said, we get it from the Lord. We have to be near Him, learn from Him how we are to bring in healing. It is a very attractive thought. If you hurt yourself, it is amazing how the body heals, and it is very comforting, and you feel so much better once you have healed from a disease, or an injury. The leaf of compassion and comfort! These things are all needed for healing.

When the children of Israel came out of Egypt, what marked them was murmuring and complaining. I think the first time they did that Jehovah says, “I am Jehovah who healeth you”, Exod 15: 26. If there is hurt or sorrow, and there are these things, healing is intended to be operating in the body. It is interesting that Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12, “have all gifts of healings?”, v 30. Now we know that was inaugural; that was physical; but healing is intended to be operating in the body in a spiritual way.

I find the thought of healing very attractive; it results in conditions improving. It is sad to see sometimes that things do not seem to improve; healing is what is needed. It will certainly happen amongst the nations. This is a greater dispensation than that time; we have the blessed Holy Spirit to keep us in freshness. The water of life would speak of that, the “river of water of life”. When I come in amongst the saints, do I have that effect of improving, healing? It is a test for me. The resources are there in the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit. There is always room for improvement in our state, individually and as together, and I think healing helps towards that.

May the Lord bless the word!

Word in a ministry meeting in Dundee

8th November 2016

OUR PLACE IN CHRIST

Bert Taylor

1 Corinthians 1: 1-2 (to “called saints”); 30-31; 3: 16, 23; 6: 11, 20

In reading these verses I am reminded of what God says to Isaiah, “Speak to the heart of Jerusalem”, chap 40: 2. A very up and down history they had, but it says, “Speak to the heart”. In Jeremiah God says, “I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land not sown”, chap 2: 2. What a God we have to do with! And in the days in which we are, we need to appreciate where we are in God’s heart. You wonder that Paul wrote so much to Corinth; he writes two epistles to Corinth. Why was that? Because God told him, “I have much people in this city”, Acts 18: 10.

Well, Paul never lost sight of what the people were in God’s sight. There is no point in telling somebody how bad they are; he writes to “the assembly of God which is in Corinth”. You have to remember where we are in God’s mind. It reminds me of the high priest going in with full dress, Exod 28: 29. You would have liked to have seen it. There it was, a dress “for glory and for ornament” (v 2), and the names of the twelve tribes on his breast. Paul in writing had some sense of where those names were on the breast. And we need that very much; there is no point in telling people how bad they are, but can you draw near to tell them of their place on the breast plate that never altered? Christ did not go in alone, dear brethren; He went in there, you could say, with the saints on His breast. All God’s promises were secured when Christ went in. And I love to think about it: He went there with our names on His breast, and that is what Paul is saying to these Corinthians. He knew the state but he says, “the assembly of God which is in Corinth”. Later he says, “do ye not recognise yourselves?”, 2 Cor. 13: 5 They were misbehaving; well, these things are not unknown to us.

And now I wanted to speak about that verse at the end of the chapter. It is very precious to me, because I recall a brother quoting this verse, and it was impressed upon me, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus”. That is where you are with a name on the breast: “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who has been made to us ...”. And if you look at these few things you have there everything that you need for the pathway, everything you need to live here above the storm. First, He says, “wisdom from God”. How much we need that; it is there. Christ has been made it. The One who died for us, He is living for us. We often speak about the Lord dying for us, but it is a wonderful thing to realise in your heart that He lives for you in His glorified position. What better counsel could you get? It reminds me of the addresses in Revelation 3; the need is for an ear to hear. “And righteousness”; well, we need that. And where do we have it? By turning over a new leaf? No, we get it by seeing that we have it in Christ, our Patron with the Father, 1 John 1: 1. He is Jesus Christ the righteous, the One who has the names on His breast. We need righteousness. We do not have it in ourselves. Paul is not speaking in the passage that I have read about anything we work up to. He is saying, ‘It is already there’. Lay hold of it in your heart; grasp the opportunity. He “has been made to us ... righteousness, and holiness”. Now that is a great need, is it not? You will never improve the flesh; you will never reach it by turning a new leaf, but you reach it by realising that it is all there for you, and you are it. It is available to you in Jesus.

He “has been made to us ... righteousness, and holiness, and redemption”. What a wonderful thing redemption is. I think we sung it in our hymn, did we not?

Redemption gives faith’s holy boast (Hymn 427).

It is a very fine thing to know that you have been redeemed, like Job, who says, “I know that my Redeemer liveth”, chap 19: 25. “Ye have been redeemed, not by corruptible things ... but by precious blood, as of a lamb”, 1 Pet 1: 18, 19. Oh, what a basis our righteousness stands on, dear brethren! We get away from it, and we get occupied with the lack of doing what is right, and so on. But

here it is, it is all here for us in Christ: He “has been made to us ... redemption”. There are some beautiful chapters in Isaiah about redemption; once you get on in the book it is in almost every chapter. “The redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of Jehovah shall return, and come to Zion with singing”, he says, chap 35: 9, 10. That is what redemption does: it lifts you clear from everything else, and that is where you are before God in Christ. So Paul says, “that according as it is written, He that boasts, let him boast in the Lord”.

Well, these things are very attractive to us if our heart is touched that we may be enabled to know that the Spirit of God dwells in us. It puts you to shame as you think of your conduct at times, but ye are not your own, “for ye have been bought with a price, and the Spirit of God dwells in you”. And then he says, “of him are ye in Christ Jesus”. Think of being able to look on one another as God sees them; not what men say about them, which will fade and die away, but what God thinks about them. “Ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s”. It reminds us, dear brethren, that there was a great price paid for this to be true: a great price. And that is where we will come to the realisation, that it is not only to be true *for* us, but it is to be true *of* us, as we come to value the price that was paid. It was a wonderful day when what we see in the New Testament came into expression. The Old was not only superseded; God was looking on new ground. The earth had a green spot when Jesus was here, and it was equally wonderful when Jesus arose, because He left something. See the change in Peter in the Acts; see the change in Philip, and so on: look at them all. What changed men they were when Christ went in, bearing their name on His breast. He went in as the great High Priest. As I have quoted so often: as the Apostle He maintains the calling at its height, but as High Priest He maintains the people at the height of their calling. What a wonderful High Priest; He has gone in. That is what He is to us, our great High Priest up there that we may be able to realise what we are. No wonder Paul says later on to them, “do ye not recognise yourselves?”; “ye are Christ’s”.

That word has stuck in my mind all my life. Remember *who* you belong to; you are Christ's. Would He go there? Would He do the things you do? Would He say the things you say? Well, remember, "ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's".

In chapter 6 Paul goes over these same things again. He says, "Do ye not know ... ?". He says that a lot to the Corinthians; he was touching their state. He tells them what they are in God's mind, and then he says, "Do ye not know ... ?". Well, why do you not know? "Christ Jesus ... has been made to us wisdom ... and righteousness, and holiness, and redemption. Why do we not know? He says, "Do ye not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God; and ye are not your own? For ye have been bought with a price: glorify now then God in your body", v 19, 20. I leave you with that verse, dear brethren. "Ye have been bought with a price: glorify now then God in your body."

For His Name's sake.

Word in meeting for ministry, Kirkcaldy

17th January 2017

HEALING AND OPENING

George A Coull

Luke 5: 12-17

Acts 16: 23-34

1 Peter 2: 1-7 (to “preciousness”)

In the section that we read in Luke, my mind was attracted to the expression in verse 17, “and the Lord’s power was there to heal them”. It is a wonderful thing to think that the Lord of glory had been in the place of supremacy and magnificence, but took a bondman’s form. It says that He “emptied himself”, Phil 2: 7. This is part of the glad tidings, friend, that there is One who has come here from heavenly glory. It says in John’s gospel about the Lord Jesus that “he came out from God and was going to God”, John 13: 3. And during that time, there was an expression here on earth, in a Man, a perfect Man, of everything that God had looked for right down through all the dispensations of time. And Jesus moved amongst men. Sadly, John also says that “He came to his own, and his own received him not”, John 1: 11. But he goes on to say that “as many as received him, to them gave he the right to be children of God ... who have been born, not of blood, nor of flesh’s will, nor of man’s will, but of God”, John 1: 12, 13. In that, dear friend, is contained the kernel of the glad tidings.

And so in looking at this scripture in Luke, I was recalling that it is thought that Luke was a Gentile. We were speaking about the Jews and the Gentiles today. Matthew was a Jew; I think Mark would have been a Jew as well; John would have been a Jew. James, Peter, they were Jews, but here is Luke and he is writing “with method” (Luke 1: 3), and he is a Gentile; nevertheless, God’s power was there to heal. Whoever it may have been, God’s power was there to heal. Well, you say, ‘I am feeling quite well - not really suffering from any malady’; thank God for that! Nevertheless, there is healing required, because we are sinful persons who are in need of healing.

Just before we came to the meeting today I was looking at hymn 446, 'Just as I am'; and the second verse is -

Just as I am - poor, wretched, blind;
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need, in Thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come!

It is a wonderful thing to think that the Man who was here was God Himself, moving amongst men; having come to heal. He also came "to seek and to save that which was lost", Luke 19: 10. So there is healing required, and there are also persons who are lost that need to be found. In the earlier part of Luke 15, we are told that a woman had lost a piece of silver. She diligently swept the house until she found it, v 8. A man had lost a sheep; he looked and found the sheep and put it on his own shoulders and brought it back. Persons are being healed and persons are being found. So, dear friend, now is the time, I can say with all care and with all joy in my heart, now is the time for persons to be healed, and now is the time for persons to be found. May it be that the Spirit of God may sweep diligently until someone is found in this room tonight.

It might be that you are far away from Jesus in your mind or in your affections, away from God. Even in that situation, the Spirit of God would sweep diligently until He finds. The Lord's power is here to heal. It says there that there were Pharisees, and doctors of the law, and then the Spirit of God puts in that remark through Luke, "and the Lord's power was there to heal them". Wonderful thing! Who would have thought that, looking at these doctors of the law and these Pharisees - probably healthy persons, very active persons, although certainly very negative persons. They were able to quote the scripture and able to speak about Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, able to quote all these things, and yet it says that "the Lord's power was there to heal them". A wonderful thing. So that healing is needed. If your mind is poisoned, your mind needs healing. If your heart is filled with other things, your heart needs healing. It is a wonderful thing to think that God in His love for you

and me as sinners, has sent His only begotten Son into the world to heal persons.

We read at the beginning where it says, “And it came to pass as he was in one of the cities, that behold, there was a man full of leprosy”. You might think, ‘I can understand that; it is very obvious that this man was needing to be healed’. But there are things that may not be obvious to the eye of man when persons need healing. And so divine power, my friend, is able to bring in healing - *whatever* the need may be. Another hymn says -

If it's the hopeless case Thou lov'st to meet (Hymn 423).

Persons are caught in the web of sin, persons are burdened by their sin and leprosy is a typical example. A leper was shunned by men. In the old dispensation, they were put outside the camp, and then it was necessary for them to shout, “Unclean, unclean”, Lev 13: 45. It is obvious they were needing to be healed. But friend, no matter what the malady may be - morally, spiritually, whatever it may be - God's power is there to heal. And it is in Christ Himself. This was the Man who came out from God, no one else. It says that “he does not indeed take hold of angels by the hand”, Heb 2: 16. Angels have their work to do as distinctive beings, but He passed by angels. There was only one Man who can effect something in your heart and mine, and that is Christ.

And so it says that He was there; “And it came to pass on one of the days, that *he* was teaching, and there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by”. One of the days; it may be that this is one of the days in your life when you come in contact with Jesus, and you know the healing power of His hand. Lying behind all His power is love; God's love has been expressed. It says, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son”, John 3: 16. That is one of the salient points of the glad tidings, that persons have to come to an understanding that God has moved. We could not do anything to clear ourselves of our sinful state, but God has taken up our cause. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but

have life eternal". What a provision in Jesus! So there is power to heal, and behind that power lies God's love, that never ebbing tide. The hymn writer says that it is 'a never-ebbing tide', Hymn 400. His grace -

Is flowing o'er the barren place
Where Jesus died. (Hymn No 13)

Jesus had to die and become the Sin-bearer; but that does not mean that God's love has ceased. Having found an answer in Christ, God's love continues to flow and there is power to heal you and me today.

So the leprous man was healed. Whoever heard of a man touching a leper? But Jesus touched him freely; what power! What an amazing thing to take account of, in a person who must have been shunned because of a defiling disease. But it says that Jesus touched him freely. That means that God has taken up your cause and mine, and the result is that Jesus was the Sin-bearer. He has taken on what the leprosy speaks of. He has been made sin. It says, "Him who knew not sin God has made sin for us", 2 Cor 5: 21. Oh, the awfulness of that. And so it says that He touched him freely. The Sin-bearer is no ordinary person. This is One who had come out from God and He was going back to God. How could He go back to God if He died? Friend, that is another point in the glad tidings: Jesus was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. What power there was, power to heal, power to raise the dead, power to cause lame to walk rightly, to cause dumb persons to speak, deaf persons to hear. That is divine power, and it is available to you and to me today through our Lord Jesus Christ.

I pass on to Acts 16. What a picture that is of power to heal. "Sirs", the jailor says, "what must I do that I may be saved?". Those Pharisees and doctors of the law had needed to be saved. Persons need to be saved from their sinfulness. It does not mean that you have to study the Scriptures and get letters after your name or whatever it may be. You can do these things as long as you like, but you still need to be saved, because you are in a sinful state. It is

impossible for you to appear before God in a sinful state, and therefore God has provided you a Saviour in Christ. So the jailor says, "Sirs, what must I do that I may be saved?". Wonderful thing to see a person coming in faith to Christ. These two men were the emissaries of God. Jesus had died and gone to heaven by this time, but there were persons continuing the work. They were not divine, we need to protect that, but they were persons full of the Holy Spirit, and it says here that they were singing at midnight. The prisoners listened to them. One of our hymns says,

Open wide stands mercy's door (Hymn 208).

That leper in Luke 5 would have entered in through mercy's door. Have you entered in through mercy's door, friend? Have you? It is a wonderful place to go in. As you go in over the threshold of mercy's door, you are welcomed there. You may ask, why mercy? God is a merciful God and He has provided a basis that you may come to Him in all your sinfulness; you can be cleansed, you can be healed, and you can enter in through mercy's door.

What a provision! The way was barred before and there was no access, but now the way is open. In the past dispensation, there was certain distance, persons could not draw near to the presence of God in the same way as we can draw near. It is on the basis of the blood of Jesus. It is a wonderful thing to think that God Himself has taken up your cause and mine, and He has opened mercy's door. Now He says, 'I have opened this door, and you can come in through it'. The leper entered in through it, the lame man, the blind man; many others have entered in through this door. It came to me that as the earthquake took place, it says of the prison that "all the doors were immediately opened", Acts 16: 26. Whoever heard of prison doors being opened in this way before? There is a time, of course, when prisoners are released, but what I am speaking of is a whole moral scene, dear friend. You may not realise it but you are in captivity if you are still in your sins: you are held in bondage. In fact, you may be in the inner prison; I am speaking of this morally. As far as Paul and Silas were concerned, they were unjustly looked upon as felons, and they were put into the inner prison because it was

reckoned that they needed this special security. But in applying this, you may be in the inner prison, bound with chains, surrounded by darkness. And the jailor called for lights and said, "Sirs, what must I do that I may be saved?". Mercy's door was standing wide open.

Friend, you can enter in *now* because of the blood, Christ's blood. Having accepted it in faith for the cleansing of your sins, *you* can enter in through mercy's door without a shadow of fear, no condemnation. It says, "now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus". Rom 8: 1. This is the provision that God has made for you and me, and for every man, for the whole of the human race. God's provision in Christ, my friend, is there for you to take account of and for you to put your trust and confidence in. Plead the blood of Jesus and your sins will be forgiven. What must I do to be saved? Oh friend, you need to be saved. We all need to be saved. You can imagine the jailor rising and drawing his sword. It amazes me, because Paul and Silas were in the inner prison, and they must have heard that sword coming out of its sheath, but Paul said, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here". I believe that divine power was there, containing that whole matter; you might say that whole prison was under divine control at that point. But sadly, the jailor was almost out of control. He was about to take his life, and Paul said, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here". And calling for lights the jailor rushed in and says, "Sirs, what must I do that I may be saved?" You can imagine the jailor with his keys, all the paraphernalia of a jailor, and he would have opened and closed these doors as and when he wanted, but there was a door swung open that night that he did not have the key to. Jesus opened the door. It is a wonderful thing to think that mercy's door was wide open for the vilest of sinners, and it was Jesus who opened that door.

In Revelation the Lord refers to Himself as "he who opens and no one shall shut, and shuts and no one shall open", Rev 3: 7. It is a different setting, not exactly the glad tidings, but there is power there. He says there - in the address to the Philadelphians - "he that has the key of David, he who opens and no one shall shut". The door is open. Divine power has opened that door and no one is going to

close it. You think of the Lord's word about those persons who had their lights burning: the word went out, "Behold, the bridegroom; go forth to meet him", Matt 25: 6. The lamps of the five foolish were going out; so they went away to buy oil; but the five wise virgins went in and it says that the door was closed. The foolish virgins came back and said, "Lord, Lord, open to us". That door was closed, friend and no one else can open it; when the end of the dispensations comes, that door will be closed. It says in the hymn -

And, to your loss, the door of mercy close (Hymn 202):

a sober consideration, friend. Let us consider, and let us understand that by divine provision the door is open at this moment, and you can enter in: enter in in liberty.

The jailor came in, and he was there under the leading of divine love. He says, "Sirs, what must I do that I may be saved?" You think of the bond then that was forged between these persons. When a person has faith and knows that he is in need, he says, "What must I do that I may be saved?". He was brought to know that he was a sinner in need of a Saviour. Perhaps he had heard Paul and Silas singing, but God in the mystery of His ways, is moving and touching a soul here and there. He says, "what must I do that I may be saved?". And the answer was simple. "The word is near thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart", Rom 10: 8. I think that was the situation with the jailor. The word was near him and it was *in his heart*. I believe that the Spirit of God had moved in that man and had caused him to use that word in simplicity but in all earnestness, "what must I do that I may be saved?". He knew he was a sinner, and knew he was condemned and he needed a Saviour. "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved". In that scripture in Romans 10: "the word of faith, which we preach: that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from among the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart is believed to righteousness; and with the mouth confession made to salvation", v 8-10. Wonderful thing. It has been said that prison was turned into a sanctuary. It says, "the prisoners listened"; they actually heard Paul and Silas singing praises to God in a jail.

Then it goes on to say that he fell down before Paul and Silas, and Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house". What a wonderful thing! He would have been his own man; he would have had everything his own way in his house, but then it says, "thou and thy house". It is a wonderful thing to think that persons can blend together having come in touch with Jesus. "Thou and thy house". It goes on to say, "And they spoke to him the word of the Lord, with all that were in his house". You think of these vessels, Paul and Silas, Paul himself having had the experience of being caught up to the third heaven. What a vessel!

He was able to sit down and convey something to this jailor. The jailor had been a prisoner in this sense, but now he was released. And they were able to sit down together; and Paul might have said, 'Look I have been in God's inheritance, and this is what it is like'. "And they spoke to him the word of the Lord, with all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed them from their stripes; and was baptised, he and all his straightway". What joy there must have been in heaven even over one repenting sinner! And there Paul and Silas imparted something of the joy of the inheritance to that converted jailor, a person now able to wash them from their wounds. He was now able to lay the table and enjoy fellowship, a bond, something that binds persons together.

These are wonderful things, and this is the glad tidings of God. It is the provision of God for you and me available through Christ Himself. He is the holy Sin-bearer. Paul would have spoken about the cross. He would have maybe touched on the Old Testament scriptures and the offerings, but he would have spoken about the cross. He would have spoken about the darkness. He would have spoken about Jesus being put into the grave. He would have spoken about Him being raised again. You know, the power of God is there for you and me. Friend, what a blessing in God's provision for you and me.

That is why I read in 1 Peter: "To you therefore who believe is the preciousness". Can you have anything in this world's provision

today that you can put alongside this and say, 'Well, that is good; it is maybe even better'? Friend, you are deluding yourself. "To you therefore ... is the preciousness". There is nothing to compare with God's provision for you and me in Christ. What a wonderful message. That whole section is a wonderful section. The jailor had become a living stone. He might have been a very hard and austere and unfeeling person before, but now he is a living stone. Do you know what that means? That is a man who has a heart for God; that is a person who is now able to find his place in this structure. It says, "are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ". These are the things that are ready for you and me to enjoy, and it is through the work of Christ. He shed that precious blood on the cross, and God has accepted that offering. The perfection of that offering will remain in God's heart forever. And it is available to you and to me.

May it be that all our hearts are freshly moved towards the Saviour and find these great things that Peter writes about. Peter was very forceful, and yet the Lord said to him, "I have besought for thee that thy faith fail not", Luke 22: 32. And now Peter is writing these precious words and he says, 'These are living stones that are being placed together'. Think of Philippi when Paul got the vision, Acts 16: 10. There was a man in Macedonia saying, "Pass over ... and help us". Amongst the first persons that Paul met, was a woman, Lydia, and he would have thought, 'It is a man that I am looking for'. But he found the man, and the man was the jailor. And you can see how God was working. Here was a living stone taken out of the jail, and formed in the jailor. There was another living stone in Lydia and in other households. And what you find is that persons are moulded together, "a spiritual house, a holy priesthood". Everything is the result of the work of Christ.

These are wonderful things my friend and they can be found in Christ. You can find it, I can find it; we can enjoy it together. May God bless the word for His Name's sake.

Preaching of the gospel, Aberdeen, Scotland

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