

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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DAB We spoke last Wednesday a little as to the mighty men that are found at the end of 2 Samuel and linked that passage to the mighty men that are the Lord's in this dispensation. Following up the thought afterwards led me to an address where the comment was made, in relation to this first scripture, that the Lord does not say definitely that there will be mighty men here at His coming, but He intimates it; He intimates there would be some such as John, JT vol 96 p341. It is a most encouraging thing to see that the Lord is well able to maintain right up to the end of the testimony here those characteristics that were formed in John which delighted Him. That is the positive side, but this scripture also raises the question as to whether or not I am exercised about these characteristics. What was particularly on my mind was where it says, “This word therefore went out among the brethren, That disciple does not die. And Jesus did not say to him, He does not die”, v 23. There must be a reason why this passage is recorded for us today; it is not simply to meet confusion at the time, but I wondered whether we can see that the Spirit here is seeking to meet any complacency on my part in just assuming that John's characteristics do not die. I am to be exercised rather that they will be found. With that in mind I wondered whether we could use these scriptures to inquire together as to what these characteristics like John are, what marked John out. We might think more about the disciple John than about his gift, or his apostleship. And that would help us to be exercised that such features would be found among us.

KJW I think that would be helpful. To begin with, would you say something about the way that John refers to himself through the book as “the disciple whom Jesus loved”? We have it in verse 20 in John 21, “Peter, turning round, sees the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also leaned at supper on his breast”. Perhaps as a start, we could inquire into that, because that was clearly something

that was of such value to John. He recognised the Lord's love towards him, and the closeness that he had to Him.

DAB So John really knew what it was to be complacent in the affections of the Lord. He "leaned at supper on his breast"; it was actually his resting place. He was so content in the knowledge that the Lord loved him that it was where he desired to be. In John 13: 25 what we see is the relationship John had with the Lord. The Lord speaks about one of them being about to deliver Him up; they all wonder who it is, but it is John who asks, and it is to John the Lord answers, v 26. You get an impression of the liberty John felt in inquiring of the Lord, even over such a sorrowful matter.

KJW I think what you say is helpful as to the restfulness that John felt in the presence of the Lord, and the relationship therefore that was established there between himself and the Lord. It is certainly something that I would seek to know more of myself.

PSB Could more be said as to that? It is noticeable that it speaks about the disciples looking at one another, doubting of whom the Lord spoke (John 13: 22), but you get the sense that does not include John, who is described as being in the bosom of Jesus. Perhaps there is a suggestion of self-judgment? Is that a necessary characteristic for someone like John today?

DAB I think so. I think someone with the characteristics that mark John would be at peace, even when those around are in turmoil, or concerned about a particular exercise. Something had been drawn attention to, that affected the testimony, and none of the disciples knew how to meet it. John did not know either, but he knew where to abide. And what we find is that John's nearness to the Lord was so obvious to Peter, that he made a sign to John that *he* was to ask the Lord; Peter did not ask the Lord himself. Peter knew, because of John's position, that he was the man to inquire of the Lord. I think that passage has been used in ministry to bring out the point that, when times of conflict or confusion are present among the saints, it is those that are nearest the Lord to whom the Lord is pleased to make known His mind.

PSB Yes, so, looking back at that passage, it is the character of one who can enter in feelingly as well, with the Lord. It was Jesus who “was troubled in spirit” (v 21), which announces this to them. Do you think that is another characteristic, that John, who has been leaning on the Lord’s breast, would in some way enter into the feelings of the Lord about such a matter? That can only be done by being in direct relationship with the Lord Himself.

DAB Yes, that is helpful; and further confirms the idea that these features will be found until the Lord comes. There will always be those sympathetic to the Lord’s feelings upon the earth while the Holy Spirit is here. But in connection with that, I was pondering why it was that the Spirit records how some said, “That disciple does not die”. I think it shows that we cannot be complacent about it; yes, the Lord’s work cannot fail, but there must be exercise on my part; that is what John is correcting. It is not just a matter of assuming that the Lord has such with those characteristics, but the question is whether I am marked by them.

RJF So that there are the two aspects to it; on the one hand these characteristics that the Lord desires will not die because He has His own. But it is very right to highlight that there needs to be the exercise in relation to it. I am interested in what you suggested, because something that struck us this morning was that God has those in whom He confides, and always has had. We were particularly struck this morning that God says about Abraham, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing?”, Gen 18: 17. As to what you are speaking about here, with John being in the confidence of the Lord’s affection, we have a parallel with Abraham. God would not hide from him what He was going to do. That was in relation to judgment; here it is in relation to the one who delivered the Lord up. There is divine confidence in those who have these characteristics.

DAB That is quite confirming. I am glad of what you say; that is exactly what I was thinking as to the aspect of the two sides. I find it a very encouraging thought that the Lord intimates that He will have His own, and we can almost leave that with the Lord. But He does not say so expressly, because He also wants to stir up exercise amongst us. What you say in relation to God always having those in

whom He could confide is helpful, and it expands what I had in mind. This was God's desire; how often men rejected God through the Old Testament, but God's desire was that He could have those in whom He could confide.

RJF That is the impression given in chapter 3 of Genesis when Jehovah Elohim calls to man, and says to him, "Where art thou?", Gen 3: 9. We tend to think of that scripture as a question of judgment, but it was not really - it was a question of desire, that God wished to commune with His creature.

KJW I am just thinking about what we have at the beginning of 1 John: "that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes; that which we contemplated, and our hands handled", then it goes on, "the life has been manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us", v 1, 2. It seems to be something particular which was shown to John.

DAB I like that thought, especially in relation to what we are saying, because it means it was not just open to the apostle John to know these things. It was shown to John because John takes up a position that is available to all. Is that what you were thinking?

KJW Yes, that helps, and I was thinking about this thought of contemplating as well. That was a feature that marked John, was it not? Maybe that is one of the characteristics that we could desire to have more. Even at the beginning of John's gospel it says, "we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father", chap 1: 14. So that was clearly a characteristic of John, that he contemplated these things and therefore could be confided in with more revelations.

DAB It brings to mind Mary, pondering these things in her heart; she kept them in her mind and pondered them in her heart, Luke 2: 19. She was one that did not really understand at the time, but she contemplated them. I can well sympathise with the thought of not understanding something, but it is good to contemplate it in the heart, is it not, and dwell upon it?

PSB So the first thing John does in his gospel is to bring the Person before us, and what has just been said about contemplating His glory is found at the beginning of the gospel; that is where it is to start, is it not? My mind went to Elijah, who was occupied with himself, and how he was alone. The reality was that God could say, "I have left myself seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed unto Baal", 1 Kings 19: 18. The importance is contemplation of Christ: not my conditions; John knew extreme limitations, but one thing that shines out in John is that he is not occupied with persons. Is that how we come into relationship and nearness with that One?

DAB You get the impression with John that this was simply where he was most at home. Naturally, after being away for a while, you start to miss home; it is the place where you are most comfortable. Really, this was what John was used to; he was comfortable there, dwelling on the breast of the Lord Jesus. So we find that presented both in his gospel and in the epistles. He began with the Lord; he began with what he knew, and what he loved. His desire in what he wrote was that others might come into the gain of what he already enjoyed. It was not an effort.

PHM I was thinking about the disciples; in the first scripture, just before where you read, the Lord says, "Follow me". In Matthew 4: 19 the Lord says, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men". Then at the end of that section it says, "and they, having left the ship and their father, immediately followed him", v 22. I was thinking how they acted there in faith; they probably did not know what it would mean to be fishers of men. But they were attracted, were they not, to the Lord Jesus? They obviously saw something that was attractive such that they were willing to leave behind what they knew to follow Him. You can see an act of faith; they had a desire after Him, and where the Lord sees that, these revelations will follow. We see that too in the disciples - they loved the Lord and followed the Lord, and there was that which was revealed to them by being in His presence. Do you think this is open to us, even in our day? Because if we love the Lord, and are subject to Him, He will reveal what is of Himself to us.

DAB That is helpful; they would not have known what it meant to be fishers of men, but they were attracted to the Person. And another thing to consider is that the only way that was possible was if it was given of God. These disciples were recipients of the sovereign grace of God. We too, are recipients of the sovereign grace of God; He has chosen us. We speak of the gift of faith. Faith is not that I have decided that I would believe; God gave me that gift of faith. What a wonderful privilege. You wonder at it, just to contemplate what God has done, and how He has presented Christ. What you said is important: it starts with that movement in faith, but then maybe to contemplate what it was that made me move in faith. God loved me so much that He presented Christ to me to attract my heart, and it is His desire that that would be where my home is, and that would be where I am comfortable.

RJF This is not to be an exclusive thing. From one perspective John had a particular place, but really it was open to others to have entrance into that. It is almost as if John represents that innermost place before the Lord, but it is not just that John was there; in a certain sense, it is open to all. I may feel that I am not a John and therefore I am disqualified, but I do not think it is like that at all. Peter asked this question here of the Lord, "what of this man?", and he received an answer, and the answer was to have the effect of bringing him in. So the Lord gives a specific instruction to him, "Follow thou me". John was one who followed, according to verse 20, but Peter was also to be one who followed.

DAB Yes, that goes back to what was being suggested, that we are all able to contemplate these things. Now if we do consider Peter briefly - I trust I am speaking carefully, for of course it is the Lord's prerogative who He uses - I do not think this is a day for another Peter exactly. It speaks of "first ... Peter" (Matt 10: 2), and we can see in Acts how he was the one that first preached, with very significant results for God. Now before breakdown came in, there were those that were distinctly used in a very prominent way, and Peter seems to bring out that side of things. But John is very interesting. We find in the Acts that John goes out of sight very

quickly. We read of him accompanying Peter to begin with, but then not much more is mentioned.

I think our next scripture in John chapter 19 tells us what service John was carrying out during that time. I would suggest this is more what the Lord is seeking today, not another Peter, not the great deeds and large displays of the power of the Holy Spirit. He needs those - and this is available to us all - who are dwelling with the Lord, contemplating His things, and being available for whatever service He gives them. And this is John here. He is one that leaned on the breast of the Lord Jesus, and now he is found at the cross; I find that a lovely touch. We often say that John's gospel is the gospel for the last days. Well, it is the only gospel that says there was anyone "by the cross" that loved the Lord, chap 19: 25. John is found by the cross, and because the Lord knew of John's affection for Him, He was able to commit to John a service that was close, speaking reverently, to the Lord's heart. I think this is what the Lord would be looking for in service today. It was not a grand service; we never hear again of what John did, and how he cared for the mother of the Lord, but it was a service he undertook faithfully, quietly and dependently because the Lord committed it to him. And that is what is needed today really in service. Would that be right?

RJF I think so, and what we have in chapter 19 really represents the whole characteristic of this service, that is, caring for the saints. You might say this is a simple thing, and it is, from one perspective; but exercise comes into it. There are only seven utterances recorded in scripture that the Lord makes from the cross itself, and this is one of them. Therefore, it is a very important thing.

DAB It helps to remove the idea that anyone can say, 'I am not a John', because this service - precious service though it is - is something we would be able to carry out. We can all see how to do it, if the Lord leads us, and as dependent upon Him. So, even in service, it is not beyond any one of us to be able to serve like John.

RJF The scripture our brother has brought before us not only refers to what we have contemplated, which is an activity of the mind, but also "that which ... our hands handled". What do you say about that?

DAB I do not know if this helps at all, but it did just cross my mind that John was called into service having already had experience with the Lord. He already knew what it was to dwell with the Lord. So “our hands handled” links really to experience, does it not? The Lord would only use in His service those that He has prepared, even in what we might assume to be a small service (which it is not): caring for the saints is very exalted. But to care rightfully for the saints I need history and experience with God. Would that be right, and does that link to “our hands handled”?

RJF Yes, I think that is a good application of it, and I think too, handling implies closeness. We have to be careful that Christianity does not become something that is theoretical with us. It is easy to say that, it is easy in a sense to read the Scriptures, to speak about these things, but the question is whether the heart is engaged. Of course, that is something that is underlined by these scriptures that you have read. John is speaking about what he had touched with his hands, and he had handled with his hands, and really brings out that it involves both mind and body. Being practical about it, might it be related to the matter of the Lord’s supper? That is not something that is a theoretical thing; it involves handling the loaf and handling the cup. That is one of the challenges we have got in this current situation. This new virus has created worries about ‘touching’, and understandably so, but we must not forget that it is something that is fundamental to Christianity.

DAB Yes, I am not sure I can add a lot to that save I think that John would love to be at the Supper. The opportunity to serve the Lord in that way, I suppose, is the greatest service, that we can remember Him in the breaking of bread, then be subject to His leading to the Father’s house. I think that John would love to be able to do that.

RJF You could certainly think that John would be very rich in such service, because he would be speaking about the experiences he had, with the One he knew, the One he loved, the One he knew who loved him.

PSB How much John would be in sympathy with those who during this current period have not been able to celebrate the Lord’s supper - he knew what it was to be alone, so that privilege would not have

been available to him. But it did not change him whatsoever, did it? Because he knew what it was to be close to the One who we are privileged to remember Lord's day by Lord's day.

DAB You have jumped on to the last scripture, but I like your link. He was put through that because the Lord had confidence in him. He speaks in Revelation of being "in the Spirit on the Lord's day". This was one who had such experience with God, and I will be careful: obviously we are not glorifying a man here. This is one who God has worked with in such a wonderful way that he was able to be put through a test where he could not gather with the saints on the Lord's day, but he could be in the Lord's mind, and he could speak of himself as a fellow-partaker with his brethren even though, physically, it was not the case. He very much entered in spirit into the exercises and the fellowship of the testimony, even though practically he could not experience it. Would that be of encouragement to those who are isolated? The Lord knows, and He has confidence in them, deep though the exercise is, and He is able to use them still for His service.

PSB What you say is interesting; so in John 19 we have what is entrusted to him. I was also thinking of chapter 21 where they go to fish. It is John who says, "It is the Lord", v 7. John's character would always draw attention to the Lord, would it not? And what happens? Well, they are all drawn to the Lord as a result; do you think that is something we should covet? To be available to the Lord, that what He may give us would result in an answer in the heart of those with whom we share His things. I do not think John ever became cold in his affections, and although at that point everyone was led astray by Peter, what you find with Peter, once John draws attention to the Lord, is energy. That would be features that need to mark us today, the closeness to the Lord seen in John and the resultant energy seen in Peter, so that our relationship is strengthened with the Lord, do you think?

DAB So a characteristic particularly of John is that he seems to be a stalwart in the local assembly. At the time of the Lord's resurrection; he gets to the entrance of the tomb first. And as you said, *he* said, "It is the Lord" first. He recognises the Lord; and when

he says that, Peter casts himself into the sea to get to the Lord. He is dependable to the point that his local brethren have confidence in him. 'Respect' is the wrong word, but you would honour what was found in him, and so when he says that it is the Lord, there is authority there, and there is a result in the affections of the company. He just seems to be a dependable person in a place that the local brethren can have confidence in. Maybe it comes back to what was said in meetings in Birmingham - he is one that was able to flood his local company with good; he was sensitive to the movements of the Lord. And in times where things may be beginning to slip, he is able to point to where the Lord is.

PSB And that comes down, does it, to entering in sympathetically with the Lord's own feelings? We have already touched on it earlier, but that is really the character of it. It is not following particular regulations or traditions, but it is being intelligent to the Lord's movements and the Lord's feelings. I wish I knew them more, but that is what John brings out all the time, is it not?

KJW What is being said is helpful. I was just thinking as you have both been speaking of the beginning of John's gospel where it speaks of "looking at Jesus as he walked". And then the words, "Behold the Lamb of God", John 1: 36. Think of the depth that there was in that, first to call the Lord the Lamb of God, but then it is drawing attention to Him. The result of that was that the two disciples heard him speaking and followed Jesus; they were freshly stirred to follow Jesus, v 37.

DAB Yes, that's helpful; so although John the baptist said that, it is John the apostle here that records those words, he had obviously contemplated it. I do not know if he was one of those two disciples that followed, I am not sure whether we are told, but, if I may extend your thought a little, John is able to be like that because he had had the experience of another rendering that service to him. John had the experience of one pointing out the Lord to him, and as appreciating that service, he can then render that service to others. Would that be a right thought?

We can move on to our next scripture. We find here that John was one who loved the brethren in truth, but I would like to suggest

that he would love them *into* the truth as well. I wondered whether that is brought out here. So John in his epistles is now an older man, perhaps having passed through much sorrow. Presumably, a number of the apostles had been martyred at this point. Yet he was one who was marked by love for the Lord and love for the brethren, and therefore he would love them in the truth - that is the truth revealed in Jesus. And his desire would be that they would get the gain of it; so he would love them into the truth too.

RJF Could you describe it as characteristic of Timothy also? He cared with genuine feeling how the saints were getting on, Phil 2: 20. There is something similar between the two. John rejoiced exceedingly when the brethren came and bore testimony as to one holding fast the truth. This is really the characteristic of nurturing and shepherding. It is not done abstractly but with the affections entering into it.

DAB That is helpful. He comes from a position of the greatest strength because it was what he loved himself. It has often been said that I cannot bring anyone further into the truth than I have got myself. I think someone suggested that I have to get further myself in the truth before I can bring someone along so far. The way I understand that thought is that I may sometimes in my experience get fresh light as to some aspect of the truth and I thoroughly enjoy it; but I cannot seem to be able to express it properly, and I feel that what I express is a rather poor example of what was in my heart. I wonder whether that is what was meant. But John here is coming from the greatest strength - he dwells in the truth which he loves, and therefore he has the power and the strength to love others into it.

PSB It is interesting what was just said about Timothy because shortly before that reference we get mention of Paul's joy because of their fellowship with the gospel, Phil 1: 4-5. He is rejoicing in the saints and rejoicing in seeing the work of God in the saints grow. You pointed out that John loved them in truth and loved them into the truth, and we can see that they are rejoicing as to what they see of divine workmanship, as they see the work of God being brought to fruition in the believer. This is really in accord with how divine

Persons rejoice as to what has been worked out. I think that is most wonderful, that we *can* enter into what divine Persons feel, as we see the work of God coming to light in believers and growing and shining out. John loved that; Timothy loved that; Paul loved that. It is not ended; it is going on today, is it not?

DAB Absolutely.

PHM I am wondering about the sequence that is brought in here. First it is “love in truth”, then “holding fast the truth”, and finally, “walking in truth”. Some might say it is presumptuous to say that we desire to walk in truth, but what precedes that is the love for the truth which brings us together. But then what we are seeking, as awaiting our Lord’s return, is to hold fast to the truth. And because you love the truth, and have a desire to hold fast the truth, that enables us to walk in the truth. It is not something that is presumptuous, but it is all underwritten by the love for the truth.

DAB Yes, that is helpful. I have made the mistake of making some great statement of truth, and I have somewhat tripped over myself because I do not really know it. Loving the truth begins on my knees, does it not? Maybe with my Bible open, there is something I do not understand, but I am before God, seeking to understand it as He will present it to me. And having got the gain and the light of that, I then value it and I do not want to let it go. So because I do not want to let it go, my testimony corresponds to it; I am walking according to what I now know in my heart. So there, by experience, is the order: I love the truth, I hold fast the truth, I walk in the truth.

PSB What has just been brought in is available to everyone, not just a select few, and the desire would be that everyone should come into it as well. I was thinking of the desire to hold the truth and walk in the truth that is found in the assembly in Philadelphia: “thou hast a little power” (Rev 3: 8) and, “hold fast what thou hast”, v 11. That is today, is it not? We may feel we are very limited; and how little I know, but that is not the point. It is, “hold fast what thou hast”, v 11. Walk in the light of it, and God gives greater light.

RJF In your earlier scripture, it is interesting it speaks about the women by the cross, but it does not speak at first about John by the

cross, though he was evidently there.

DAB Open up more what your thought is, please? My mind immediately goes to what has been taught: how women, in scripture, represent condition, Addresses and Other Ministry by William Johnson p281. I like what is found in John's gospel, that there was affection for the Lord at the cross. You might say that it is representative of those found in the last days that love the Lord that much, that they will be identified with His cross. I wondered if that is why the women are named at first without John; it brings out the condition that is to be found over against position. But do you have another thought?

RJF Only that things may not always be obvious. John was there as one who loved the Lord, and he carried those things in his heart, and he was within earshot of what the Lord had to say so that he heard it. There is something of that characteristic here - he was not there as one who makes himself prominent, but he was there as available when needed. You might say again it is what we have in Timothy: "serviceable to the Master", 2 Tim 2: 21.

KJW I was thinking about John saying, "I desire that in all things thou shouldest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospers". It seems that he had a care for every aspect of their lives. Clearly the soul is prominent, and the truth, as we have been bringing out; but it seems that he cares how they are getting on in every way.

DAB So another aspect we find is that he was one to confide in about how the brethren were. Perhaps you carry a concern about a brother, or you have an encouraging word about a brother. John is one in whom you would confide because you would know he was one who would have fellow feeling in relation to that brother. What you share and what you enjoy, he would share too. It just seems to me to be the spirit of the man. He is a godly man. And so, he would care not only spiritually, but practically how the saints get on. That is because the Lord cares practically too, and in everything it is, "seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you", Matt 6: 33. In all practical matters we can take confidence that the Lord, because of His love for us, cares also about these things.

KJW I think we can probably all see examples of that in our lives, that there have been brothers and sisters like this. Maybe it is a characteristic that has been seen more in sisters that have cared in this way and have brought the Lord before us whenever possible. That is another characteristic that the Lord would be seeking.

DAB And that brings us back to the point that you were bringing out earlier, that John, having had one point out the Lord to him, was able to do it for others. We can think back over our lives as to those who rendered that service, and we are to imitate them. We are to imitate their faith so that we would be available to render such a service to others so that the testimony can go on.

RJF You were speaking earlier about not being able to help somebody further than we have got ourselves. That is right, and an interesting characteristic is what John speaks about in his epistle, about those who can set forward on their journey, v 6. Now that might involve them going further than where we have got. Setting forward is something that is really very positive - it is pointing in a direction, and that is something that I think one with the characteristics of John can do: they can set someone forward.

DAB That is helpful, because it reminds me of something that I have been pondering regarding the passage already mentioned as to John getting to the entrance of the tomb first. I am wondering whether we see in it a pattern of how the Spirit often brings forward something fresh in relation to the movements of the testimony. John gets there first, he sees the linen clothes lying; Peter gets there next, and sees the linen clothes lying and the handkerchief in a distinct place by itself, John 20: 4-8. He is able to fill out in more detail the line of truth that John has brought to attention. Then we find in Paul an opening out of what that handkerchief represents, completing the ministry that others had begun to get an impression of, and so the truth is worked out. It seems instructive to me that it is John who first sees the movements of the ark, he has those priestly instincts, which is a characteristic needed today. Would that be a correct application of that scripture?

RJF Yes, I think that would be a right application and it underlines the importance of condition. We should not be prescriptive in

speaking about what is typical or anything like that, but John is very much one who set out condition by example. He knows the love of the Lord, he is conscious of it, and he is one who loves the Lord; that is all really condition, is it not? The result of that is that not only does he establish the grounds for the brethren in those early days, but he continues in those conditions in the testimony which stretch down to this day.

PSB You have already drawn our attention to the fact that we do not get much of John in the Acts. What we find is he is standing with Peter, and then he seems to fade out, though I am sure he is always there. And then we have what comes in through Paul; then we get John again at the end of it all, faithful all the way through. Linking on with the way things come out, he is supporting Peter, and no doubt he was supporting Paul; and then the Lord uses him to bring out what is for the working out of these things in the last days, which is the character of John, is it?

DAB Yes, the more I think about it, how appropriate it was that the Lord used John as the means of communicating this book to the seven assemblies. We have been able, through helpful Spirit-given light, to trace how the addresses to the assemblies all apply to what has happened over the history of the testimony, and they were given to John to give to the assemblies. This again gives me the impression that we can have confidence that the Lord will have what marked John until the end. It ever remains that he is a “brother and fellow-partaker”, Rev 1: 9. He is one of the brethren, if I can just put it like that. He has not been prominent exactly - he takes on the service given. He is a fellow brother, a fellow-partaker, and there is a list here: in the “tribulation and kingdom and patience”, Rev 1: 9. All those things are important for the testimony, are they not?

RJF We should just seek to say a little about this characteristic “your brother” in Revelation 1: 9. It is something that is vital. Again it is not necessarily prominence. I remember a burial meeting of a brother in London who was very much a brotherly brother - you understand what I mean by that. It was something of that characteristic that was brought out in that occasion: the vitality, to a degree, of the brotherly covenant, but the characteristics of the

brother as well as one who supports the saints and sets them forward. He was just quietly there, reliable, and responsible, not necessarily prominent, but as one in whom the Lord could place His confidence.

DAB The term, “your brother” seems to be one who has committed himself to serve the brethren. He is not ‘a’ brother, not ‘one of the brethren’, but “your brother” - He has committed himself to serve the saints so that he can identify himself as, speaking carefully, almost owned by the brethren, “your brother” - would that be right?

RJF It is somebody that can draw alongside and just simply speak to someone. We have an expression that is used in the world - ‘being there’ for someone - but that *is* actually what a brother is.

PHM What do you say about these two phrases, “your brother and fellow-partaker”? This would be heaven’s view of us. I was thinking of what has been given example of. How much more so the view of heaven for an individual as a brother, and collectively as fellow partakers. Do you think that is a way in which heaven views the saints?

DAB Yes, I think that would be right. It is probably why John goes on to speak of “the tribulation and kingdom and patience”. The thought of the kingdom really belongs to our experience down here, what is to govern us, and that is a collective thought - the kingdom. And then patience, to be restfully patient, awaiting the time when we shall be called to be with the Lord. These would be characteristics that heaven observes. How much the Lord was marked by patience here! That must surely be replicated still upon the earth in those who are becoming like Him. I think that would be right, that would be heaven’s view.

RJF Revelation speaks about John being “in the island called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus”, chap 1: 9. That is another of the characteristics of John, that he was there and ready to stand for the word of God and ready to be there and stand for the testimony of Jesus.

DAB Those are two things that at the moment definitely remain upon the earth: the word of God is here in our hand, and the

testimony of Jesus is here because the Spirit is here. After the rapture, the word and the testimony will be different, but here and now there are those who are here for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. How stabilising, that even today in a day of breakdown it is here, the Spirit has ensured that it is so.

SUNBURY

26th July 2020

Key to Initials

(all local):

D A Barlow; P S Barlow; R J Flowerdew; P H Morris; K J Walkinshaw

THE RADIANCY OF THE GLAD TIDINGS

John A Brown

John 1: 4, 5, 9, 10

2 Corinthians 4: 6

Luke 22: 52, 53; 23: 44-47; 24: 1-6 (to “risen”)

Colossians 1: 12-14

The scripture that has been on my heart as thinking of this gospel meeting is this one in 2 Corinthians 4, "that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts". There was a time about three hundred years ago when people made advances in logic and science, which was called the Enlightenment. But there has been an incomparably greater enlightenment, not involving physical or intellectual light, but *moral* light, and it shone, as we sang,

When Christ, the holy Child, was born
(Hymn 366).

For four thousand years of recorded Biblical history, mankind, with certain exceptions, were in darkness. Perhaps for aeons of time before that there was darkness. It says in verse 2 of Genesis 1 that "darkness was on the face of the deep". That was not how God had created this world, but it says there that "the earth was waste and empty, and darkness was on the face of the deep". That was because disruption had come into the universe even before man was in it. We read in Isaiah of Lucifer falling from heaven, chap 14: 12. In all his pride, that enemy of God, Satan, came into the universe; somehow the perfect heavens and earth that God had created (Gen 1: 1) was spoiled, and the result was darkness. But God acted in recovery from verse 3. The first thing He said was, "Let there be light", and there has been light, physical light, ever since. Then God created man in whom He could have pleasure, with whom He could commune, but Satan came in again to disrupt that; man was disobedient, and the result was moral darkness. Man as a sinner had to flee from the face of God. Oh, what darkness there was, but as we sang,

See mercy, mercy from on high,

Descend to rebels doomed to die.

What darkness there was for 'rebels doomed to die', but then

'Tis mercy free

What good news it is that there is light of divine mercy shining from heaven, and no one can stop it. Satan cannot stop it; the efforts of man cannot stop it. Indeed, I would say that, in the history of the church, the harder the enemy has tried to stop it, the brighter it has shone. We know that from church history, because when the suffering and opposition were greatest, that light shone brighter, and there was a testimony in that to the message of the gospel.

John speaks in his gospel about this light coming into the world, and it was in a Person. It is not a philosophical or theological idea, but it shone and shines in Jesus, the One who was and is the Word; "the Word was with God, and the Word was God", John 1: 1. What glory came into this world and shone here when Jesus came into this world: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men". We know from the footnote that that can be turned round and that can equally mean that 'the light of men was the life', and the impression that I have is to speak about light as something which is shining from the heart of God. He desires that it might shine in our hearts, in our affections. Everyone in this room has heard the gospel many times. I do not know how many times I have heard it, maybe three thousand times. Some of the younger ones here will have heard it hundreds of times. But it is light, shining into hearts, and it shines tonight in all its radiance. There is a blessed attractiveness about the simplicity of these first verses in John's gospel. There is a profundity about them, but there is a simplicity; "In him was life, and the life was the light of men". That light is shining tonight. It is shining in China, it is shining in Islamic countries and it is shining in this dark country. I do not suppose there has been a darker scene morally in this country for hundreds of years. People talk about the post-Christian era, but the light is still shining. No one can stop it because it comes from the heart of God, and it is shining tonight. I trust it has shone and is shining still into every heart in this room.

So “the light appears in darkness” and then, “The true light was that which, coming into the world, lightens every man”. That is an interesting word, and similar in meaning to the effect of the shining garments of these men in the tomb about whom we read. The footnote says, ‘Or ‘is light to every man.’ Not ‘enlightens,’ but ‘sheds its light upon’’. It is shining upon persons, and the glorious message of the gospel is shining upon persons today. It is a dark scene, but the presentation of Jesus as the Light of the world is shining today, and every minute of every day, and the question for each one of us is, ‘Am I aware of its shining into my heart?’. It is not just knowing about its terms, because we have all here in this room been coming to gospel meetings like this all our lives. We know the terms of the gospel, and that in itself can become a barrier to allowing the light to shine into our hearts. We can know the truth of the gospel, and we need to, but the gospel is a radiance. It is the idea of radiation that has its source in the heart of God, in the heart of a God who is love in His nature, and that radiation is emanating, spreading, shining. It is shining on this dark world, and nobody can stop it. Satan cannot stop it; men cannot stop it. Communism tried for seventy years to stop it in Russia, and it could not, because the gospel light kept on shining; what an effect it had even there. Today, the enemy would use secularism and materialism, as well as persecution, to stop that radiance shining into hearts. But nobody can stop it because it is shining from the heart of God, and He desires that it might shine into our hearts, into every heart. It would affect them, it would change them. What I desire for myself and for each one of us here and, indeed, for every soul that hears the gospel tonight, is that the radiance of the glad tidings might change us, have an effect on us, and warm our hearts, perhaps in a fresh way in which it has not before.

It “lightens every man”. It shines upon them and, as our scripture in 2 Corinthians says, “it is the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine”. That would be a reference to Genesis 1 because that is what happened - by faith we believe that that actually happened then. Into that darkness, there came light, but it is a moral matter “that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts”. I trust that it has shone into every heart here,

and if it has not, that is why we are here tonight. The preacher cannot assume anything. We have heard of persons who had been attending the gospel for years, and then suddenly this light shone into their minds and hearts, they realised that what they were going on with was just in terms, and their heart was warmed towards Christ. This blessed Jesus is the Light of the world, and God is appealing that there might be an answer in every one of our hearts.

We will come back to “the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God”, but I wanted to speak first of how much the Lord Jesus suffered that this light should shine. It says very affectingly in the first section that we read in Luke 22 that Jesus spoke to those who were the representatives of the Jewish religious order of that time. It was not the rabble to whom He spoke, saying, “this is your hour and the power of darkness”; it was to “the chief priests and captains of the temple and the elders”. The light that Moses had been given by God should have been in the hearts of these persons; they should have recognised that this Man, Jesus, was their Messiah but instead they rejected His teaching again and again. Read Matthew’s gospel, and what a story it is of the utter rejection of Jesus by those who should have known better. What darkness! Here was the Light of the world standing before them, and He said to them, “this is your hour and the power of darkness”. How Jesus felt that. How He felt the opposition of these religious people. The first time He preached, they “wondered at the words of grace” (Luke 4: 22), and then they took Him to the brow of the hill and would have thrown Him over the cliff (v 29) because they hated what He was saying. “This is your hour and the power of darkness”. How Jesus felt that, the opposition of these religious leaders. Another verse in John 1 says, “He came to his own, and his own received him not” (v 11); they rejected Him. “This is your hour and the power of darkness”; I do not want to be imaginative, but I am sure that Jesus said that in sorrow. It was not just a rebuff to them; He was not just saying, ‘Well, you do whatever you want’. He said, “in the temple ye did not stretch out your hands against me; but this is your hour and the power of darkness”. What sorrow He felt. Oh, if there is anyone here in whom anything like that is found in your heart, and I say that as knowing my own heart, may the radiancy, may the light that is shining from heaven, the love

of God expressed in a blessed Man who went into that darkness for me, affect us! May it change us. May it warm our hearts and may there be something “shining forth”, as 2 Corinthians 4: 12 says.

In a sense, Jesus could have walked away from this scene in the garden; He could have destroyed these people. The light that was in Him was greater than the darkness that was against Him, but He submitted Himself, and allowed Himself to be laid hold of. It says that in the next verse, “And having laid hold on him, they led him away”. One of the gospels says that they “bound him”, John 18: 12. Think of the Lord of glory, this blessed One, allowing Himself to be bound with cords and led to the house of the high priest for a mockery of a trial. He was tried; He was condemned to death; and again it was the religious leaders of the day who cried out to Pilate, “Crucify, crucify him”, John 19: 6. It was not only the common rabble. It was the Jews who did that. How Jesus must have felt it! Everything that is recorded in Luke’s gospel as being said by them was heard by Jesus. He was there and He heard it. How much He suffered. The Psalms and the Old Testament prophets are full of references which show us very clearly what it meant for Jesus, the sinless One, the One through whom the light of God was expressed, to be rejected by His own to whom He came, and what He felt about it. What a sorrow it was.

Then He was taken to “the place which is called Skull”, and hung on a cross. It says in verse 32, “Now two others also, malefactors, were led with him to be put to death”. The Lord of life was to be put to death, but what a wonderful thing it was that the light of mercy shone there at the cross. Jesus says in verse 34, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”. What a gleam of radiance that was in that dark scene at Calvary; the crowd surrounding the cross, the Roman soldiers crucifying Him, and yet He said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”.

By the sixth hour, the Saviour had been hanging there for three hours, suffering, the nails through His hands and feet. He had suffered in His spirit as He listened to the taunts of the Jews; He had suffered physically as He was struck by the Roman soldiers, and as He was nailed to that cross; He suffered in His spirit as He hung

there listening to the jeers of the people whom He had come to save. They said in mockery, "He is King of Israel; let him descend now from the cross, and we will believe on Him", Matt 27: 42. Jesus hung there and heard that. Oh what darkness!

But then it says that "the sun was darkened"; now there was a darkness that could not be compared with anything else in its intensity. It was incomparably darker, this darkness that came over the whole land from the sixth until the ninth hour. This was not the darkness of sin; this was not the darkness of rejection. God drew a veil over the sufferings of His precious Son. He had hung there on that cross for three hours listening to these jeers, and then the sun was darkened. There was darkness for three hours and in that darkness, I can say that He bore my sins in His body on that cross. I thank God that I can say that; I could not stand here and speak as I am doing unless I knew that He did that for me. Can you say, 'He did it for me'? Not that you have heard it said so often that you know the words, but do you know in your heart that He did that for you? It is a personal transaction. I have heard of a person who had listened to the gospel for sixty years, and had been breaking bread for most of that time, but then they came to it in a gospel preaching that they did not have this transaction with a living Saviour. The light had not shone in and had this effect. Here is Jesus in the darkness, and all the time that had led up to this, He had been in the perfection and the comfort of communion with His Father, but now God forsook Him. "My God", Jesus cried at the end of these three hours, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?". He cried these words, these words from Psalm 22: 1, in the darkness.

At the ninth hour "the veil of the temple rent in the midst". During these three hours, Jesus bore the sins of every single person who has ever believed, who has put their trust and faith in Him. Their sins, my sins, were borne in the body of this blessed One, the Sin-offering. Oh what it cost Him! But now He can cry with a loud voice, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit". He says, "Father" again. There was still much to be done vicariously. He was buried vicariously for us. His resurrection was for us too - it says, "raised for our justification" (Rom 4: 25) - but the judgment of sin, the whole

question of sin and sins, was addressed there in the darkness. Oh what it was for Jesus to bear it there. We will never understand it, but what He accomplished there on that cross was not only for my blessing, and, I trust, for yours, but for the glory of God eternally. All that God is, a God who is light and love and all these other things, was fully expressed there at the cross as nowhere else. Oh, dear brethren, let us be freshly affected by what it cost Jesus to go that way so that we might be able to say, 'My sins were taken away there':

And brighter still in splendour shone
When Jesus, dying, cried, 'Tis done!

There was an effect immediately; I marvel at it. The centurion who was in charge of these Roman soldiers who had crucified Christ was affected by what he saw and heard there. We know from Mark's gospel that he said, "Truly this man was Son of God", chap 15: 39. What a testimony that was to the radiancy shining out from God into the heart of that hard centurion. We do not know anything about him, but Luke records him saying, "In very deed this man was just". What grace it was that the light could shine into the hard heart of that centurion, and there was an answer in these words.

There was an answer too for these dear women who went early in the morning. "And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre". There was witness to the fact that Jesus had overcome the power of death. We were speaking this morning after the Lord's supper about the way in which, when Jesus went into death, He broke its power. In the type, as soon as the priests' feet touched the Jordan, the waters of Jordan went away backwards. Death could not stand in the presence of the Saviour. He went into death as a Conqueror and He broke its power, and now there was a witness. Our hymn says,

Complete in power when He arose
And burst the bands of all His foes.

What a thing it was that these women went into the tomb where Jesus had been lying. It says that "they had entered". It would be a dark place; there would be very little light in it. The stone had been

rolled away so maybe there was a little light coming through the entrance, but it was a hollowed-out tomb. I have seen photographs of these ancient tombs with shelves at the side where the bodies were laid. It is dark. And these women went into that darkness because they loved the Lord Jesus. They wanted to know what had happened to Him. Was His body there? Then, “two men suddenly stood by them in shining raiment”, and again that word is ‘lightens’, the same word that is used in John 1. The tomb would be filled with light. These two men were standing there beside them “in shining raiment”, and they say, “Why seek ye the living one among the dead? He is not here, but is risen”. What a wonderful light that is, the light of the risen Saviour, the living Saviour! What a marvellous message it is! Light shines from heaven, and it is light that testifies to the fact that Jesus is alive, and He is available to every man and woman and child in this world.

I trust that everyone here is in the good of His death, the shedding of His precious blood, that blood shed for remission of sins. I thank God often when I kneel down in His presence that I do not need even to think about my sins, awful as they have been, because they are all washed away in the precious blood of my Saviour. He was dead when that soldier came and, in an act of callous and careless brutality, plunged his spear into the side of the Saviour, the dead Christ, and “there came out blood and water”, John 19: 34. It is a wonderful thing to know for ourselves the light that shines and the preciousness of what God has done in Jesus. I can say from experience that sin is darkness. As you get away from God, or if you do not know what it is to have salvation in the Person of Christ, it is darkness, and you flounder around in it. There is no knowing where you are going when it is dark, but the light of who Jesus is and what He can do for you is shining tonight. May every soul here know that radiancy shining into our hearts!

Jesus says in John’s gospel, “The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand”, chap 3: 35. The verse we read in Colossians 1 speaks of “the Son of his love: in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins”. We can present this as God’s proposal in the street preaching, although we could not

assume that people who were passing all have redemption, or have the forgiveness of sins. I trust I can say here, "in whom we have redemption". I trust this light has shone into every heart here down to the youngest boy and girl in the room tonight. "In whom we have redemption": there is no doubt about it; there is no wondering whether it will be all right with you. A recent conversation with a dear brother on the Continent reminded me of the blessedness of being able to say - and I will make it personal - 'in whom / have redemption, the forgiveness of *my* sins'. What a wonderful thing it is to be sure! Many dear believers believe that they cannot be sure that they have salvation until they get to the judgment seat, and then they will find out which way it will go. That is a terrible doctrine. There is no doubting the love of God. The security of salvation through faith in Jesus, the light of that which shines into your heart, is not a flickering light. It is not one that may come and go. You get it in your heart; your heart responds to it; and you can be certain not only of your eternal destiny but of your blessing every day of your life until the Lord comes.

Well, how blessed it is: "giving thanks to the Father, who has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light". In a sense that is what we have been doing this weekend, enjoying "the portion", sharing it together, "the portion of the saints in light". Our blessed Saviour God, who is our Father, has "delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love". In that kingdom the light is always shining, the light of the love of God, the light of what we have been enjoying this weekend, the light of what we participated in this morning. It is a wonderful thing that this light is beaming. The apostle Paul uses that word "radiancy", 2 Cor 4: 4. It is a wonderful matter to experience; it is not a mere doctrine although there *is* truth connected with the gospel; and it is certainly not an idea or a philosophy or a theory. That radiance is shining out tonight and it is in the Person of Jesus. May that light shine into every heart. May it warm every heart, and may there be an answer to it for the shining forth of something in our hearts in witness and testimony to the One who is the source of it, the One, our Lord Jesus Christ, who went into that darkness that we might be in the light.

May it be so for His Name's sake.

Grimsby

9th June 2019

THE CROSS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Graham J Gaskin

1 Corinthians 1: 17, 18; 2: 5

Galatians 6: 14

Hebrews 11: 24-26

I thought, dear friends, to speak simply about the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a wonderful thing that God has chosen to approach His creature in the way that He has - in the Person of a Man, and that Man being the Lord Jesus Christ. What a wonderful Saviour we have to speak of! Think of the eternal God intervening in time. Of course, God Himself had created the time-scene, and He has intervened in it, and at the cross of Christ He put right once for all the matter of sin and sins, and the matter of good and evil. What wonderful things these are! Mr Darby says, 'The cross of Christ lies at the centre of the history of eternity', which we might do well to think about, Synopsis vol 3 p361. It all was part of God's ways in bringing about what was going to be for His own pleasure and for His own satisfaction according to what He purposed in eternity past. While He principally had the Person of Christ in mind, His thoughts included His creature man, that man should be formed in the image of Christ and so should be for His glory - that is what God has in mind for eternity to come. Then God in His wisdom brought about the scene of creation, and Mr Coates said that he felt that creation was brought about as a theatre for the display of the glory of Christ, CAC vol 9, p375. God was glorified in that blessed One who came into manhood's form.

We spoke about the Lord Jesus in the reading, and I found it very attractive that He could so show out the compassions of God in His dealings with men. We know that God is love in His own nature, and we can see in the gospels how that divine nature shone out in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ in His days here. It says where we were reading of those persons that the Lord "dismissed them" (Mark 6: 46), but I do not think anyone went away dissatisfied. Those persons had been recipients, they had been fed, and I think the Lord's words would have come home to each one of them. I get

the impression that nobody would have gone away wishing to have spoken to the Lord and not having had the opportunity; He would have satisfied more than just their hunger. What compassion the Lord Jesus had!

But His coming into manhood had in view that He should go to the cross; what a dreadful and ignominious death was involved in the cross. He committed Himself in matchless love to dealing with the matter of what stood out against us that would have prevented our coming into the presence of a holy and righteous God. The first thing, of course, is the matter of our sinful state. That lies upon each one of us and it is something that we can do nothing about. Sin itself is a matter that separates us from God, and yet He has addressed that at the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. We read in the Old Testament, in Numbers 21, of the “serpent of brass”, v 9. You will remember that fiery serpents came in and bit the people of Israel, which was a type of sin working in the flesh and bringing about death. The word of God to Moses was, “Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole” (v 8), which speaks prophetically of the Lord Jesus being lifted up. It has been said that that brazen serpent was made like the fiery serpents but there was no venom or anything of that sort in the brazen serpent. The Lord Jesus came in “in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin” (Rom 8: 3) but “in him sin is not” (1 John 3: 5), that perfect, holy sinless One, and yet He went in blessed obedience to the cross and suffered at the hand of God for the matter of sin. The order of man that had sinned was terminated at the cross.

Perhaps I do not think often enough about the cross of the Lord Jesus. It says of the children of Israel when Moses made the brazen serpent, that they had to look upon it, and the footnote to that verse shows that the sense is that they ‘looked intently’, note ‘e’. Perhaps I should spend more time considering the cross of Jesus, and what was carried out there. As the Israelites looked, those that had been bitten lived. I think that is a lovely type for us to understand the matter of sin has been borne, and borne to the satisfaction of a just and holy God.

We were reminded in a recent fellowship meeting in Fraserburgh of the sufferings that the Lord Jesus went through at the hands of man, and I found it very affecting. The Lord Jesus suffered such humiliation: every wickedness that man could think of, every insult that man could devise, was directed at Him. Mankind there was under the influence of Satan, and Satan used him as a tool to bring about those dreadful acts. Mr Coates says that Satan or his angels would not have dared to spit in His face or buffet him (vol 4 p279) - he would have been afraid to have assaulted the Lord, and yet he put such hatred into the hearts of men there to induce them to do these things. What a dreadful thing that the Saviour should have suffered so intensely at the hands of wicked men, and yet the Lord Jesus in His perfect meekness, and despite all that man under the power of Satan could do against Him, completed that work on the cross.

But sin is not the only thing that separates us from a just and holy God; there is also the solemn matter of our sins, the things that we have done wrong. God addressed that at the cross too. First of all the Lord Jesus suffered for the sake of righteousness at the hands of men, but then there was the awfulness of the judgment of God falling upon the head of the Saviour. We often refer to the three hours of darkness, when He suffered in the believer's place. I remember reading a tract by a doctor who had known the grace of the Saviour. He was a doctor attached to the prison service many years ago, in the days when corporal and capital punishment were still carried out, and he had the task of medically examining prisoners who had to suffer punishment for what they had done wrong. He pointed out that no one offered to undergo the punishments due by taking the place of one of the prisoners. They were all manifestly guilty, and knew that the penalty that came upon them was justly theirs. The doctor then said that a time came when he himself was brought to realise that he was manifestly guilty before a just and holy God, but he found that Someone had already taken his place and had exhausted the judgment that he deserved.

The work of the Lord Jesus is available for everyone. We read in Leviticus 16 of the great day of atonement when the blood was

sprinkled once on, and seven times before, the mercy-seat, and by the value of that blood God's rights were satisfied, and He was propitiated. We read in Romans that now the mercy-seat has been "set forth" (chap 3: 25) and is freely available to all who have need of cleansing. The Lord Jesus has borne the sins of all those that believe and because of the work of the cross, all that is required of you is to believe, and you will know the forgiveness of your sins because the Lord Jesus has borne them all there. The Scripture makes it plain to us, that the Lord Jesus bore the sins of many, and has exhausted the righteous judgment of God that would have otherwise been their portion. The gospel is preached today so that *your* sin and sins can be dealt with.

Now, what does the cross of Jesus mean to you? Some people perhaps think of the cross as just a Christian symbol. I know Christians who wear symbols of the cross on their clothing to signify their faith, and you would respect their readiness to accept the reproach. But, friends, the cross of Jesus means so much to the believer because no greater event has ever taken place in the history of this world than the cross of Christ: it is there that God settled every moral question once and for all. But for you to come into the blessing of it, and to know the forgiveness of your sins, requires you to believe, and to believe that the Lord of glory, the Lord Jesus Christ who came in from Godhead glory, humbled Himself to go that way. He submitted Himself in obedience to these dreadful things that took place, accepting from God the awfulness of the judgment due to our sins. I remember the time when I first realised that the judgment that was rightly mine because of what I had done had been borne by Another, blessed be His Name! What a wonderful Saviour we have!

We sang in our hymn that for the Lord, the cross was 'shame'; but then to us it is 'life and health' (Hymn 397). May we be encouraged to consider what was carried out there at the cross of Christ!

I would like to call attention to the glory of the Person of the Lord Jesus, the One who has done such a wondrous work and done it to the complete satisfaction of a just and holy God. We need have

no doubts. There is nothing now to hinder, or to cause us to stay away from this offer of mercy; God would welcome you to come into the good of the glorious provision that He has made. Is God really willing that anyone should simply believe and be brought into salvation? Of course, He is; that is why the gospel is being preached in many, many places. Thanks be to God we can take account of the word going out, and we know it is being preached today in so many places by faithful persons. Perhaps we only know a very few, but nevertheless God's glad tidings are preached in many places throughout the world. "Whether in pretext or in truth" (Phil 1: 18), the gospel is being preached; may the Lord use such occasions to bring about salvation to His glory.

Then, is the Lord's work sufficient? We know that God is completely satisfied with the work the Lord Jesus has done. His delight was in that One: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight", Matt 3: 17. Then we know the Lord was "raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father", Rom 6: 4. I believe that would convey to us the Father's perfect acceptance of the value of Christ's atoning work.

Perhaps you might think, 'My faith is not quite strong enough; I feel confused about these things'. There is no need to doubt, because the matter of faith is a gift from God, and He will give sufficient faith to you freely if you simply wish to believe. I do not think that anybody who, in true repentance and desire, seeks salvation, is going to be turned away. I would like to give you the strongest assurance that if you call on the Lord Jesus in all your need, then He will save. "He is able to save completely those who approach by him to God", Heb 7: 25.

We could hardly speak about the cross without speaking about the shed blood. I would like to speak about the blood because that is what, in the eye of God, has made the cleansing from sin. We have the account in John's gospel of the Lord's blood being shed, and the scripture there makes it plain that that blood was shed after His death. I think one point of that is that the Lord laid His life down of Himself; He could say, "I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it again", John 10:18. Nobody took His life from

Him, and it was after He had laid His life down, it says, “one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water”, John 19: 34. How many references to the blood there are in Scripture. We read that “we have redemption through his blood” (Eph 1: 7), and justification is “in the power of his blood” too, Rom 5: 9. And there is reconciliation in the blood. The holy God I know has dealt with anything that could possibly prevent my being before Him. Every hindrance has been thoroughly dealt with and now we have total freedom. God can now have men like Christ as worshippers.

The power of God is shown in the glad tidings. We read these words in Corinthians which speaks of “the foolishness of the preaching” and the “weakness” that is involved in it, and the ignominy and the shame. Men generally look on the history of the cross as foolishness: “and to nations foolishness”, “the foolishness of the preaching”. I can remember one of my colleagues saying to me that he considered religion to be just a matter of folly. Friends, do not be deceived by man’s reasoning! The word is faithful. God Himself has declared His love to us in the giving of His Son. But then, although the Lord Jesus was crucified in weakness, God’s power was there. Think of what was overcome at the cross - the fulness of the victory was there! All the powers of evil were gathered: the Lord Jesus dealt with Satan’s power there. We read of the Lord Jesus being tempted of Satan, and it says the devil “departed from him for a time”, Luke 4: 13. He came back to renew his attack at Gethsemane, I would suggest. There he brought the awfulness of the matter of being made sin to bear on the Lord, seeking to make it appear too great for Him to undertake. Yet the Lord Jesus was sustained through all, and His conquest over sin and the devil’s power was complete. Morally the enemy’s power was broken at the cross. In a coming day the enemy will be done away with in actuality; death will be done away with too. Morally all things have been dealt with now and, if you have that faith in Christ, you will find no accusation can stand against you. It says in Romans 8, “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who against us? He who, yea, has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him grant us all things?”,

v 31, 32. We contemplated that in the reading, that all the resources of heaven are now freely available to those that believe. Dear friend, I beseech you to come into the blessing and the fulness of it.

Then there is the matter of sonship. That is not part of the gospel exactly but God has in mind such wonderful blessings for those that are His. He has also brought us into sonship which gives us the power to respond to Him suitably. Should I not respond to One who is so loving that He has given His own Son for me? What a wondrous God He is!

I wanted to refer to this scripture in Hebrews because it goes on to speak about the recompense; perhaps we do not often consider it. We know that in the pathway - and it is suggested here - we may have to meet affliction. It says, "By faith Moses ... choosing rather to suffer affliction along with the people of God than to have the temporary pleasure of sin; esteeming the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt". I feel very measured when speaking about "the reproach of the Christ"; each believer would know something of the reproach because if you accept the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, you will find that the world is against you. I read these words in Galatians really for the same reason. The cross of Christ is again brought before us there, and we find that "the world is crucified to me, and I to the world". That means the world is no longer of any use to me. Perhaps I might take up things in this world and find that they are objectionable to me because they are contrary to the name of Christ; I'm sure that we often find things of the world distasteful to us. We have been reading John's epistles in Aberdeen recently, and we find there that, "all that is in the world ... is not of the Father, but is of the world", 1 John 2: 16. I find that I cannot happily take my place in such things because they are contrary to Him. Then I am crucified to the world; the world has no use for me, if I am Christian. I will not partake in its pursuits and pleasures, and things in which man can glory. If I am faithful to Christ, then I will certainly come under reproach.

But then there is the recompense. I wanted to call attention to the fact that this is a way of great blessing. Perhaps I have to lay certain things down which are not suited, but then I find that God has

far richer things in mind for me than anything that this scene has to offer. For example, we know we have the priestly support of Christ on high. The Lord Jesus is available to intercede for us, and His intercessory service goes on. What a wonderful thing that is! He could say to Peter, “I have besought for thee that thy faith fail not”, Luke 22: 32. When I come into difficulty, perhaps I will find that the Lord has already prayed for me that my faith should be sustained through it all.

Then there is the gift of the Holy Spirit. That is a further example of God’s disposition to give, and He has given the Holy Spirit that we should be sustained and helped in the testimony, that our affections for the Lord Jesus should be kept fresh. I feel the need for that keenly, and have been thinking about it recently. How quickly I turn aside and get occupied with worldly things, but how great my affection for Christ should be! May it be that, as we consider these things today, our affections for the Lord Jesus should be increased. He has shown His unbounded love in coming in and carrying out the will of His God and Father in such perfection! Should I not answer to Him who has been prepared to go to such lengths to bring about my redemption?

But then I think that the idea of the reward goes further; it speaks of that earlier in this chapter: “For he that draws near to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who seek him out”, v 6. A brother in Aberdeen reminded me of God saying to Abraham, “I am thy shield, thy exceeding great reward”, Gen 15: 1. I suggest that the knowledge of divine Persons is our greatest reward. Do you know the Lord Jesus personally, in addition to knowing Him as a Saviour? He becomes a confidante, and you can speak to Him about any matter that may trouble you. Is your faith in Christ, is your knowledge of the Lord Jesus real enough to let you speak to Him as a friend? The Lord could say to one, “thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me”, Matt 19: 21. Perhaps we could think of the Lord Jesus being that treasure that is in heaven.

Then what about the knowledge of the Father? Dear friend, I believe the Lord Jesus would lead us on to the knowledge and the

understanding of the Father and bring us into freedom before Him. We enjoyed something of that this morning, I believe; He would lead us into the presence of the Father. But then, if I am in communion with the Lord Jesus, I think that He would bring my heart into some understanding of the Father's presence, and what a wonderful reward is involved in that! You wonder at the divine grace and the depth of divine love that lies behind it!

I just commend to you, that God has entirely dealt with anything that stood out against us that would prevent our access to Him, through the work of Christ on the cross.

May the Lord bless the word to us for His Name's sake.

Dundee

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