

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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DIVINE PATIENCE

David A Brown

Genesis 44: 14

Luke 15: 20

Genesis 6: 3

I would like to say a little today about divine patience. We sang in the first verse of our hymn -

Jesus ready waits to save you,
Full of pity, love and power (Hymn 208)

That is the Lord Jesus. He is full of pity; He is full of love, and He is full of power. He is able and willing and waiting to save every sinner in this world, which means every man and woman and boy and girl. There may be about eight billion persons in this world and the blood of Christ is available and able to save every single soul for God. Again our hymn says, 'Open wide stands mercy's door'. How great is God's patience!

The dispensation in which these glad tidings are preached is not going on forever. It is nearly two thousand years since that wonderful moment when Christ rose from the dead, since Pentecost and the incoming of the Holy Spirit. Christ was given a place in heaven at God's right hand as a blessed Saviour, and from then until now God is appealing in grace to human hearts to believe on His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a day coming soon when there will be no more proclamation of these glad tidings, no more open-air preachings as now, and this opportunity for mankind to come into soul blessing will be no more. This day of grace will finally close one day. I do not know when that day will be but I can tell you this much, it is nearer than when I first believed. God in His grace and goodness is maintaining the door - mercy's door, wide open; and while He waits persons who have not yet believed may come to Him. Maybe you are such a person, my friend?

Have you ever considered that? Someone will be the last person to enter through that door. If you do not know the Lord Jesus in your soul, if you do not know Him in the depth of your heart as your Saviour, I appeal to you simply tonight to believe through faith on the Lord Jesus Christ. Trust *in Him* and in His finished work. What a time we live in! It is a time of grace, a time of pity, love and power. What a world it will be and what a time it will be after every believer in the Lord Jesus has been taken from this earth and the Holy Spirit is here no

more.

I thought of Joseph when I was thinking of this matter of patience and of these five words, "and he was still there". Joseph is a type of the Lord Jesus and we use that expression 'a type' of the Lord Jesus although *no one* is sinless: only Christ. So a man like Joseph, despite his greatness, can only be a type. Joseph is similar to the Lord Jesus in what he underwent inasmuch as he was hated by his own brothers. The Lord Jesus was hated by His own brethren, as it says of Him, "He came to his own, and his own received him not", John 1: 11. Joseph was cast by his brothers into a pit (which speaks of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ), and Joseph was taken out of that pit and sold by the Midianites into Egypt. Through time, Joseph became governor over the whole land of Egypt and responsible for the food supply chain. I have been thinking since our brother gave us that word from Gen 41: 55 as to "Go to Joseph: what he says to you, that do" (see *A Word in its Season* April 2022) of the blessedness of all that there is in the Lord Jesus. Joseph became that wonderful administrator of food in Egypt, and the cry is still, "Go to Joseph": go to Christ for salvation; go to Christ for resource; go to Christ for blessing.

Despite what Joseph's brethren did to him and their hatred of him - and despite what the world and men have done with and to Christ - God still desires the sinner's blessing. Is that not wonderful? The hatred of man is met by the love of God. The distance from God that man has put himself in has been met by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, inasmuch as God has come near to man in Christ. Joseph wanted to come near to his own brethren and to have a living and close relationship with them. God wants that! He wants that with you, friend. He does not want you to be at a distance from Him. So the gospel has in view living and close relationships being established with God's Son through repentance. Do you have that living and close relationship with the Lord Jesus? Joseph knew that his brethren were impoverished and he knew that they had to come to him for food. He used various ways to lead these persons to understand who he was. Maybe God is leading you in a certain way in order that you might come to know His blessed Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, for yourself. It says, "And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house". They came back because the silver cup was found in Benjamin's sack; Joseph wanted his brethren to return to him, his longings were for them.

I spoke of patience and God being a God of patience, but think

of the urgency of Joseph's desire that his brethren might come near to him. In chapter 37 they said, "Behold, there comes that dreamer! And now come and let us kill him", v 19, 20. That is the world: "We will not that this man should reign over us", Luke 19: 14. What a difference between the language of Joseph's brethren in chapter 37 and what Joseph says in chapter 45: 4: "Come near to me, I pray you". What an answer! How wonderful Joseph was in his movements. And as they came back to the house it says, "and he was still there". God is still here, and Christ is still near you. I would just like you to focus on these five words, "and he was still there". Joseph might have been taken up with the governing of Egypt. He might have been taken up with all of his responsibility in the house of Pharaoh, but what he was interested in was the welfare of his brethren.

God's primary interest is in a repenting soul. Be amongst that number this afternoon, those who seek soul salvation. "And he was still there"; God is near to you in Christ, at this gospel preaching, with a view to saving you from your sins and giving you joy and peace by believing in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph was waiting for them patiently and wishing to establish with them that wonderful relationship because he loved them. They hated him and wanted to kill him in chapter 37, and Joseph's answer in chapter 45 was that he wanted them near him. Jesus would say that to every soul in this room: "Come near to me, I pray you". Do not resist the overtures of grace.

I read in Luke 15 a parable as to a young man and his father's patience. The younger son went out from his father's presence with his share of his inheritance, and he would have said to himself, 'I am going to have a good time because I have now got money to spend'. Let me tell you something: Satan and the world are like leeches; they will take everything and give you nothing. God in His grace and goodness takes nothing and gives you everything! I can tell you that from personal experience.

And so this young man went far away from his father and home and it says he dissipated his property, living in debauchery. He just squandered his inheritance, leaving nothing to show for it. No one was there when he began to be in want because he had run out of money; it says, "no one gave to him". You would think that someone would have taken pity on this poor man; remember what we sang at the outset as to Jesus being full of pity. "No one gave to him"; he was absolutely destitute. A man who may have gone from the presence of his father

full of glee, with a spring in his step and out into the world, was now destitute. Quickly he realised that the far country was not what it had looked like at first. The glitter soon faded; underneath was darkness and death and demon. That simply is what the world is.

Interestingly, he began to have a conversation with himself. He began to think of his father's house amidst all this destitution. Was Satan able to help him? Were his friends able to help him? No; he was left completely alone. If you feel alone, God wants to have a conversation with you and He wants to come near to you. It says, "coming to himself". Do you know what that means? It means the first indication of repentance. It means that he began to think how wrong he was. Unlike the sheep and the silver earlier in the chapter, this man had a spirit, a God-given spirit. And we each have a spirit, and through our spirit and our conscience God speaks to us. He began to speak to this younger son, and he began to think of his father's house; so he arose from where he was and went back in rather a different manner from how he left. Was the father occupied with what would have legally been his due, the running of his house and his servants? No, we can think of the father as "still there", and looking out for his son every day, scanning the horizon for one who had left in such a way that you could say the father would have been justifiably angry with him. Was he going to shut the door on him? Where there is true repentance, God does not operate like that. He does not condemn you; He condemns the sin but not the sinner. God loves you and is desirous of blessing you, as the father desired blessing for his son. He was brought right into the house as robed, ringed and shod.

Can I appeal to you? If you are in a far country morally (you might be sitting in this room but far away in your mind and soul from God), if you are there in that country of famine, may you be attracted through God's goodness and through repentance into the richness and fulness of the blessing that there is in the Lord Jesus Christ for you! Repent, friend. Repent; that is only what God requires from you:

Repentance only, God requires from man,
And faith in Christ, His well-beloved Son

We are shortly going to sing that well-known hymn, No 123:

God waits in grace with hands outstretched to bless -

That is like the father in this parable.

Now just a touch on the Spirit in Genesis 6. The scripture says, "My Spirit shall not always plead with Man; for he indeed is flesh; but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years". God limits things. This dispensation is limited, and will not go on forever. Think if man had lived forever! It says that in chapter 3, "And now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever....!", (v 22. God forbid! How could man in his sinfulness live forever? It would be a horrendous thought. So God limited life, and in Psalm 90 it speaks of "threescore years and ten; and if, by reason of strength, they be fourscore years", v 10. Some here have gone beyond that through God's goodness.

I was just thinking that Jehovah says in this scripture, "My Spirit shall not always plead with Man". Think of God's pleading with Man. He pleaded with Man through Noah. We know that Noah was a preacher of righteousness and a man who in building the ark was in the secret of what God was going to do on the earth. He wanted to save Noah and his household; so Noah went ahead and through obedience to God he built that ark. I suppose in Noah building the ark he was in effect echoing the words, "My Spirit shall not always plead with Man". The time came when the floods appeared and only eight souls were saved out of the millions that may have existed on the earth at that time. These are sobering matters to think about in the glad tidings because they show that, while I have said that God is a God of grace, patience and mercy, there is a limit. There is a limit to this dispensation of grace.

The Spirit is still pleading with man at the moment. Pleading is a word which gives the idea of energy and action; it means that God is active in relation to the salvation of men but will not always be. This dispensation, the greatest and the longest dispensation we know of, is coming to a close soon. The signs are not exactly given to us in the world around (although we live in very troubled times), but what we can be assured of is that the time is surely coming when the door which is open now through the glad tidings will finally close and the Spirit will no longer plead with man because He will be no longer here; He goes with the church to glory.

So, while God in His patience is pleading, the Spirit will not always plead with man. Therefore I trust that as we go out of this room today everyone will know Christ as their Saviour. There might be no tomorrow for you; there might be no Monday at school for you children; and this day of grace might have finished. So make sure of your soul

salvation today. God is near; He is still here; He is here in Christ. And the Spirit is pleading, and He will plead with your soul. Maybe you are going to be the last one. I trust that every soul this day will give their heart to Christ. And if you know the Lord as your Saviour, it gives great joy to the soul to give thanks to God for Christ, and to know the blessedness of having that relationship livingly established on the sure foundation of the blood of Christ. It is my eternal surety and salvation. And, my friend, God's desire is that your welfare also, your moral and spiritual welfare, might also be assured in that work of Jesus.

May that be your portion today, for His Name's sake.

Bo'ness

3rd April 2022

WEIGHED

Martin Brown

Daniel 5:1, 4-6, 17, 22-28

Luke 4:16-22

John 20:30-31

2 Corinthians 3:2-3

We have read in Daniel about a man called Belshazzar, who was king of the Babylonish empire. His father Nebuchadnezzar became a believer. He had been converted, testifying to the Most High God (chap 4: 34), having been proved to be so by delivering Daniel's friends from the fire.

Belshazzar knew all this; he knew all of it. He was brought up, as we are and know today, perhaps in a believing environment, perhaps where the God of grace and the God of glory is spoken about in many ways. Daniel says that to him in verse 22, "although thou knewest all this". But Belshazzar did not know God. He lifted up his heart in pride. It is what marks the world in which we live today, lifting its heart up in pride against God; but the gospel of grace continues today as it has done over the course of many years so that persons may repent and receive remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The gospel continues to this day so that *you* might be saved. You have been brought up, perhaps, in a Christian household and come to many gospel preachings, and it might be said of you, 'You know all this'. But perhaps, dear friend, you are still turning your heart away from the grace which is being presented to you in the glad tidings.

It is a matter of the utmost urgency that you respond, and not only listen and hear the glad tidings, but that you let it down deep into your heart; and that you repent and believe: believe what God is saying. Belshazzar found no room for repentance. He found no word; he had no room for the testimony of his father. He found no room except for pride, celebration, the tasting of wine and making great pomp and glory of himself. And yet in the same hour, when the fingers of a man's hand came forth, his countenance was changed. He recognised that there was something above himself. He was making himself the number one in his life, and yet when this matter happened he realised that there was something above himself.

And God as the Creator of the universe is speaking to mankind. Indeed it says in the epistle to the Romans that even creation itself will render men inexcusable, chap 1: 20. Our young brother preached in

the open air tonight, and some young men walking past, hearing the name of Jesus, put their fingers in their ears; how sorrowful that is. Even creation itself will render men inexcusable. If not the gospel of glory and the gospel of grace, creation itself will render persons inexcusable. And I cannot overstate how important it is that you have heard the gospel so many times; you know all this. Have you let the gospel in? Have you let the gospel in?

If at the day of judgment you are not found written in the Lamb's book of life you will be rendered *inexcusable*. It tells us in Revelation 20 that books were opened, v 12. God is not condemning anyone now, and I will come on to that, but in that day books will be opened and testimony will be given. And, dear friend, if you have not been convicted of your sins today and repented towards God you will be fully convicted in that day. Your mouth will be stopped, no more excuses will be given, and you will have nothing to say. Why? Because the mass of evidence given against you will be so great and so ordered that no one in that day will have anything to say. God will be declared righteous in all of His judgments and those who have rejected the gospel, even those who knew all of this, will be condemned finally to the lake of fire - a place "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt 25: 41); it does not say it was prepared for man. This is to the end of this man's course.

Daniel was brought in to bring the interpretation of the writing. And he says, "This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE, God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it". God has taken up another Man, who will soon take up the reins of government and govern in excellence and righteousness. He has finished the kingdoms of this world. But Daniel goes on to say, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting". It tells us in the scripture, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God", Rom 3: 23. That does not just apply to this man Belshazzar; it does not just apply to the great sinners of this world; it does not just apply to Paul who had put many men to death, it applies to *me*. I have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; but thanks be to God that my trust is not in myself but in Another. In Another; is yours? Where is your trust, where is your hope, where is your salvation? We have all been weighed in the balances and found wanting.

If you are not someone who has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, dear friend, you are weighed in the balances and found wanting. The gospel goes forth so that you might receive God's free gift of salvation and be blessed in Jesus Christ. These balances of old were

used to weigh things. They had scales on either side with weights on one side and the thing to be measured on the other side. And to apply it morally, all of my sins have been placed on one side and the righteousness of God placed on the other; and I have been found wanting. It is an amazing thing that man in God's great creation has the ability to sin and yet no power to atone for it. I have got no power to balance the scales. What is to be done?

We come to Luke's gospel and here we find a Man called Jesus. Here He was, coming into His own creation, coming into Nazareth where He was brought up, "and he entered, according to his custom, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Esaias was given to him; and having unrolled the book he found the place". "He found the place": what grace. He was given the book of Esaias, and He could have selected any portion of scripture, and yet in His grace He found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor". This was the Saviour of the world come into His own creation in order to draw near to man; and in every single gospel preaching He is drawing near to you. You know this! You know this! You have heard it. Has it affected your heart? You have heard of Jesus, the Saviour of the world, how He was laid into a manger. We sang of that -

Once on earth in Bethlehem's manger,
As a holy Babe, He lay.

Who was He?

God come down, a heav'nly Stranger,
Love to sinners to display. (Hymn 112)

And here He was in the synagogue at Nazareth reading from an evangelical Old Testament scripture, pleading with these people to receive the gospel, pleading with them to believe in the glad tidings of grace. And the preacher tonight, dear friend, pleads with you. Why? Because the day is short. Your never-dying soul is of the utmost preciousness to God and the time is short. We are told in the scripture, "now is the well-accepted time; behold, now the day of salvation", 2 Cor 6: 2. That is today. We cannot promise another day, but we can give today. And God pleads with *you* that you might turn to Jesus and ask Him to save you from your sins.

You think of the fingers of a man's hand in the previous scripture in which we read, and you think of the detail; the fingers always speak of

the detail of things, the intricacy. And here we have Jesus; think of the book being given into the hands of the Saviour, the Son of God, and Him finding in that book the place where it was written: "he has anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor; he has sent me to preach to captives deliverance, and to the blind sight, to send forth the crushed delivered". This was One who had come and was approaching those who had been weighed in the balances and found wanting. The only way of salvation - here He was. He says, "To-day this scripture is fulfilled in your ears. And all bore witness to him, and wondered at the words of grace which were coming out of his mouth". Why could He say, "To-day this scripture is fulfilled in your ears"? Because here He was, Jesus, the manifestation of the grace of God, bringing everything into the world that God was: the love of God, the righteousness of God, the holiness of God. We read of Him testified to in the scriptures that He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners", Heb 7: 26. And yet we find Him constantly, *constantly*, coming near to sinners. He healed lepers; He touched the ears of those who were deaf; He touched the tongue of one who was dumb. He was constantly drawing near to those who needed Him, who were in pain, who were in conflict, who were in pressure.

What about you? Because even today He has not changed. His love and his compassion remain the same, and He is pleading with you again tonight. Why? Because you know all this. I know every single person in this room has been to many, many gospel preachings; you know everything that I am saying. Have you accepted it into your heart? Has it made a difference to you? You have heard it in your ears. Paul had heard the gospel, and there was something in his heart that was pricking it, causing him an uncomfortable feeling, and yet there was one time when the Lord had to do with him and his heart was opened. His heart was opened and he accepted the message of grace. What about you?

So, dear friend, we read of Jesus in John's gospel, and it says there that there were many other things which Jesus did. You see this world has developed and grown and many would look at it as improved. For the Christian, it is darkening and worsening, going the other way. But the advances of science would seek to give people many options. But this scripture here in John's gospel simply says, "Many other signs therefore also Jesus did before his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life in his

name”.

Jesus wants you to have life; God wants you to have life. It is a matter of life, not only that we might live here in this world morally and spiritually, but eternally, for we have to do with eternal realities. It says here that there were many other signs that Jesus did, and we have read of Him at the beginning of His testimonial public life; reading and having words of grace coming out of His mouth. But there was another thing that Jesus did. He did not just go about doing good and undoing the works of the devil, but He laid down His life; He died for sinners like me. I was weighed by God and I was found wanting, Jesus bore the judgment that was due to me. When there is a weighing and someone is found wanting, that person deserves judgment. There was a man on the cross beside Jesus and he recognised that he had been weighed. He said, “we receive the just recompense of what we have done”, Luke 23: 41. He realised that he had been found wanting, but he pointed to Jesus and in public testimony to this other malefactor on the other side of Jesus he said, 'Look at this Man'; this Man who is dying on this cross has done nothing amiss. And he said to the Lord, “Remember me, Lord, when thou comest in thy kingdom”, v 42. He was a man who recognised that he was a sinner. He recognised that he needed a Saviour, and he asked the Lord to save him. Repenting in his heart, he testified and confessed that the One who was hanging on the tree was a Just One. And God tonight, my friend, is a Justifier of those who believe in Jesus: believe in Jesus.

Would you like to know that? To be justified, and have all your sins removed because of the death and blood-shedding of Jesus. God is happy to offer salvation and forgiveness of sins. Why? Because Jesus has borne that judgment. God is not now imputing trespasses and sins. As you trust in Jesus God is not now weighing you and finding you wanting and judging you and condemning you. Romans tells us, “There is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus”, 8: 1. How blessed! What freedom and liberty there is for those who believe the glad tidings now. That was one of the things that Jesus did. You might say the most magnificent thing that He did was that He died for us on the tree; He died for us on the tree. He satisfied God in so doing, and the evidence to that is that when He was buried after three days He was raised from the grave, raised “by the glory of the Father”, Rom 6: 4. What a wonderful thing that is. For if Christ has been raised from the dead, God is satisfied with Jesus and my sins are all dealt with. They are gone; they are put away forever; how wonderful!

Later, He ascended and He is now in heaven. The impact of the fact that Jesus is raised from amongst the dead is a glorious one; what it means to the heart of the believer! It says that Jesus is the Christ: “that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life in his name”. Do you know that life? Do you know this life that we are talking about? Do you know it for yourself? Do you know all these things? Do you know the life that would speak to your heart that you have let Christ in? Repent towards God and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, and you will have this life.

I have read in 2 Corinthians 3 because it speaks there of “the Spirit of the living God”. The Spirit of the living God has come that we might have life in Christ's name. You might ask how that is possible. Well, you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and your sins are forgiven, washed away. You have an eternal redemption; God will never have to raise your sins with you at all. You are not now weighed in the balances and found wanting, because Jesus has borne that judgment on your behalf. But how is this life to be known? It is through the Spirit of the living God. You see, your heart has been affected; I spoke to you about that. The gospel is received through the ears, through the report, and it goes down into the heart in faith, and your heart becomes impressionable. And the Spirit of the living God can write upon it. He can write upon it things of Jesus and bring joy and life into your soul, into your heart. And then you find others whose hearts are the same: those who love Jesus, those who are impressionable. And it says, “Ye are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read of all men”. It says, “written, not with ink, but the Spirit of the living God”. “The Spirit of the living God” is here, and He indwells believers, and He indwells believers that He might bring them together in a body way that they might enjoy things of Christ together.

And that is simply the impression that I had, that we are taken from a position of being weighed in the balances and found wanting, and we are brought into the most magnificent position of having the Spirit of the living God in our hearts and being able to enjoy the things that God has prepared before for those that love Him. How wonderful, all that God has done. We can do nothing, but God has done everything if you will answer to it in faith.

I commend the word to us all here for His Name's sake.

Bo'ness
17th April 2022

JESUS MADE BOTH LORD AND CHRIST

Richard M Brown

Acts 2: 32-36, 22: 1-10

John 4: 25-30

I want to call attention to these words of Peter in Acts 2: 36, where he says that “God has made him, this Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ”. I would like to speak about the greatness and the glory of the present position of Christ. Jesus has suffered on the cross and He has been buried; but I particularly want to call attention to the greatness of His present position. In this verse Peter brings out what God has made Him: “God has made him ... both Lord and Christ”. The gospel involves the setting forth of what Jesus has done, but it also involves the presentation of what God has done with Jesus. It is wonderful to contemplate that God has raised Him from among the dead, and - let this lay hold of our hearts - there is even at this moment a living Man in the presence of God! How great that is! I trust that might sink into our souls with fresh power this afternoon.

God is having this great matter set forth in the gospel, what He has done with Jesus, having made Him both Lord and Christ. God has in mind that all should come to acknowledge the rightness of it; and also that all should come into the great blessing that flows as a consequence from it. In order to convey just how important it is to God that we come to an acknowledgement of it, I would refer to that well-known passage in Philippians 2 which speaks of God giving Jesus a name which is above every name, and it says, “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father's glory”, v 10,11. I venture to suggest that that is the only instance when every being in the entire universe will have done the same thing. It speaks of “heavenly” beings, that would be the angels and glorified saints; and “earthly” beings, that would be those blessed on the earth; and it speaks of “infernal” beings too, literally, those under the earth, which, I take it, includes the devil and his angels. But all of them will be called on to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that He is so “to God the Father's glory”. One thing that involves is that, in the end, everyone will have to acknowledge that God was right about Jesus. Everyone will have to acknowledge that God was right to give Him, and Him alone, the highest place of all. It will be too late then for many to come into the blessing of it; but that is why God is setting it forth in the gospel today. God is having Christ heralded forth in the glad

tidings, that we might take account of what God has made Him. So now it comes down to you and me.

You will notice that in verse 36 Peter adds four words. He could quite easily have said 'that God has made him, this Jesus, both Lord and Christ', but he adds, "whom ye have crucified". Think of what that would have meant to those Jews in Jerusalem who were listening. We speak of the fact that God has raised Jesus from *among* the dead: that was a selective resurrection. In other words, there was a moment when Jesus was lying in His grave, and everyone else was lying in their graves, and it pleased God to raise Jesus and to leave everyone else in their graves. There have been some great men in the course of history: great leaders, great warriors, great thinkers, great administrators; but God did not raise any of them. The one Man it pleased God to raise was Jesus. God made a choice, and He raised Jesus. And Peter says that was the Man "whom ye have crucified". What an awful moment of realisation for these Jews, that out of the millions who were lying in their graves, the Man it pleased God to raise was the one they had crucified. They had crucified Him; God had raised Him! What a terrible realisation! On the one hand, men regarded Him as worthless. Peter brings that out in another preaching, that He was the stone which they had set at nought, Acts 4: 11. Men did their worst to Jesus. They went as far as they could to hurt Him and to humiliate Him, whereas God, on the other hand, has heaped glory on Him! The psalmist says, "majesty and splendour hast thou laid upon him", Ps 21: 5. God could not have given Him a higher place than the one He has.

So what does this all tell us? It tells us that naturally what men think of Jesus, and what God thinks of Him, are as far apart as it is possible to be. If I were to go out into the street and announce that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ, I can say, from some little experience, that some would mock, some might get angry, but I expect the most would just ignore me. They would be completely indifferent; it is not of interest to them at all. And so, in the gospel, God is setting forth His thoughts about Jesus because He wants to persuade you, dear friend. God wants to persuade you to come over to His side, to come round to His thoughts about Him. God wants you to see what it is in Jesus that is not only such a delight to His heart, but involves present and eternal blessing for you.

We shall speak in a moment of two persons. Firstly, of Saul of Tarsus and how quickly he came to the acknowledgement of Jesus as

Lord; "What shall I do, Lord?", he says. Then of that woman in John 4 who had personal intercourse with Him, and she goes to the men of the city and says, "is not he the Christ?". She says, 'It is what I have found Him to be.' In both cases it is not only a question now of the place that God has given Him, but what these persons found Him to be. It is one thing for God to make Him Lord, but the question I put before you this afternoon is, 'Is Jesus Lord to you?'. It is one thing for God to make Him Christ, but have you proved Him to be that? He is available to be proved by you. And as coming to Him you will begin to understand why it is that God loves Him, and why God has given Him the glory that He has.

It is a matter of great moment that it pleased God to raise Jesus. Peter says, "this Jesus". The reason that is so important for sinners like you and me is that Jesus is the One who once took the sinner's place. Blessed truth that! Jesus is the One who came down from heaven and went to the cross in order to suffer and die for lost and guilty sinners. On the cross He answered to God for the sins of all those who have put their trust in Him. In the shedding of His precious blood Jesus has put God in the glorious position of being able to show mercy to whomsoever He will. How blessed that is! Jesus, through His precious sufferings and death, has given God a righteous basis to come out in mercy even to the vilest of sinners. Jesus, as I say, is the One who died for sinners. Now, it is *that Man* that God has raised from the dead; God showing thereby the value that He places on the work of Jesus. God has borne testimony in the most unmistakable terms to His satisfaction with Jesus by giving Him the highest place of all, by making Him "both Lord and Christ". There is no reason why anyone should have any doubts at all as to the value of that work. It is important to understand that the gospel begins with the finished work of Christ. The work has all been done. That is where the gospel begins. We sung those words together -

All His toil on earth completed,

All His work for sinners done;

In the glory

See Him, God's beloved Son.

(Hymn 404)

What blessed news it is that all that needed to be done, if sinners such as you and I were to be saved, has been done. It has been done already, and it has been done by Jesus. Where is Jesus? He is in the glory now!

From that position Jesus is now available to all who would call upon Him. The scripture says, “the same Lord of all is rich towards all that call upon him”, Rom 10: 12. That reminds me of Joseph. You remember how Pharaoh brought Joseph out of the dungeon and set him over the land of Egypt, and then he says to the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph”, Gen 41: 55. That is what God is saying today in the gospel. Is there anyone here who wants the forgiveness of sins? God would invite you to come to Jesus. Does anyone here want to receive the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit? God is pointing to Jesus as the Giver of living water. Anyone here who wants to come into the enjoyment of the blessings that God has in His heart for us? As “the Christ”, He is the great administrator of all the wealth of God, for precious souls such as you and me. God is calling attention to Him in that way.

I read about the conversion of Saul of Tarsus because I wanted to draw attention to the question that he asks in Acts 22: 10. On the Damascus road, Saul of Tarsus met Jesus for the first time, and it led him to ask a question which, I suppose, he had never asked before, “What shall I do, Lord?”. I think Saul of Tarsus was travelling fast in his soul. I want to suggest that not only has God made Jesus Lord, but in this scripture we see the point when He became Lord to Paul. We could look at this scripture in that light, how Paul reached that point so quickly.

Paul speaks about the way that he had been brought up, and you notice he refers himself as “being zealous for God”. Now that is an interesting thing. Here is a man who describes himself in his unconverted days as zealous for God. I might say that when we speak of being saved, or being converted, let us not think that that is only for the people outside, the people walking up and down the street. We all need to be saved; if we are not saved, we are lost. Each one of us needs to be converted. Yet if you had told Saul of Tarsus before his experience on the Damascus road that he needed to be converted, I think he would have felt insulted. He would say, 'Why? I am zealous for God, I keep the law, I read the scriptures, I say my prayers'; he was quite satisfied with himself. In that respect, dear friends, he is an example to us. Saul of Tarsus was a religious man. Perhaps if he had been alive today he would be the kind of man that would be a regular attender of the meetings. He would come to the gospel preaching week by week, sing the hymns, and so on. And yet he would probably have been the last person to think that he needed to be saved. He would recognise that the murderers, the thieves, the drunkards,

needed to be saved, but not Saul of Tarsus; that is, until his experience on the Damascus road.

The first effect of that experience on the Damascus road was to show him himself. He came to see Christ - we shall come to that in a moment. But the first effect was to show him himself. In the hymn, 'Amazing Grace', the first thing the writer says is,

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear.

He goes on to say,

And grace my fears relieved.

But the first effect of divine grace was that it taught his heart to *fear*. It was on the Damascus road that Saul of Tarsus learned to fear! He got such a view of himself! When he thought he was doing his best, he discovered he was doing his worst. When he thought that he was pleasing God, he discovered that he was fighting against God. He says later on, "I am ... not fit to be called apostle, because I have persecuted the assembly of God", 1 Cor 15: 9. A man who said he was zealous for God came to see that. He speaks of a light from heaven; that is what the gospel is. I trust that light is shining in this room today. And I trust that, if never before, we might be brought to see ourselves as God sees us. How important that is! Saul got such a view of himself that he says, 'Away with Saul of Tarsus!'. He was finished with that man and all his self-righteousness. He learnt to fear on the Damascus road. He was conscious, I believe, that he could have been crushed. He says later, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men", 2 Cor 5: 11.

Instead of being crushed he says later, "The grace of our Lord surpassingly over-abounded", 1 Tim 1: 14. I love that: "surpassingly over-abounded". What an expression it is! You get the impression that language was not enough to convey the sense that Paul had of the over-abounding of grace towards him. You think of Paul fighting against God, doing his worst, as we have said, and then this great tidal wave of divine grace brought him down on the Damascus road, and the voice of grace says, "I am Jesus the Nazaræan".

The first thing Saul of Tarsus says to the Lord after his eyes had been opened to see Him is, "What shall I do, Lord?". Now, how did Paul come to that so quickly? Paul was conscious that he had been pursuing his own wilful course, hell-bent and hell-deserving! And had

the Lord simply left him to pursue his own course it would have been to his utter ruin. Paul says, 'I cannot trust myself any longer. When I thought I was pleasing God, I was fighting against Him. When I thought I was doing my very best, I was doing my worst. I cannot be trusted to determine my own course.' "What shall I do, Lord?", he says, 'from henceforth I must submit my life to Him.' This was no flash in the pan, as men might speak; this was no knee-jerk reaction to his experience of being brought down on the road. We know that because he speaks later of counting "all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus **my Lord**", Phil 3: 8. A new principle had entered his life. A new principle was now going to govern him: from henceforth the Lord would be the one to determine his course for him, and, I think, he never regretted it. That is borne out by the fact that at the end of his life he should refer to "Christ Jesus my Lord". You notice those words, "my Lord"; not simply, you see, that God has made Him Lord, but *He was Lord to Paul*.

The question I raise with each one of us here is, 'Is Jesus Lord to you?'. The first question is, 'Is He your Saviour?'. Have you claimed Him as your Saviour; have you exercised personal faith in Him and in His precious blood? If you have, the next question is, 'Has He become Lord to you?'. Have you committed yourself to Him without reserve? Have you entrusted your life to Him? "What shall I do, Lord?" Paul is saying, 'Lord Thou knowest best, Thou canst determine my course better than I can'. That is true, is it not? If we have come to trust Him as our Saviour, if we believe that Jesus is the One who has taken our sins away from before God, have we not already proved that He can do better for us than we can do for ourselves? What we could not do, Jesus has done! If He was great enough to work out our eternal salvation with God, if He was great enough to resolve that great question once and for all, to the glory of God, what can He not do for us now? And if He was prepared to come down from heaven in such wonderful love, to suffer and die for you, has He not already proved that He has your best interests at heart? Has He not put that question beyond doubt, that in love for you He was prepared to take up your cause? Who would you rather have as your Lord? I trust you might hear His tender appeal as it comes to you in the gospel today. He would appeal to each one of us here and, especially, to our dear young people; who naturally think that they have their lives before them, with their plans and suchlike, wanting to do this, wanting to go there, wanting to have this, and so on. Have you ever asked this question,

“What shall I do, Lord?”. We can tell you, from experience, that it involves the greatest blessing to crown Him in your affections and come under His blessed sway.

I read of the woman in John 4 because she came to it that He was “the Christ”. That was a remarkable thing, was it not? She says, “Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?”. In other words, she was saying, 'Through personal intercourse with Him it is what I have found Him to be, and I would like you to come and prove it for yourself.' This woman knew a few things, she knew about Jacob and the history of the well, she knew about the great point of dispute between the Jews and the Samaritans as to the place where one must worship. She had an important secret too: she knew that Messiah was coming, and that He would settle all these questions. But this weary Stranger by the well told her of something she had never heard of before, something called “living water”. Have you heard of the gift of living water? The Christ is the dispenser of this wonderful gift of God. It is the Holy Spirit.

I would like to interest you in the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit. If your sins have been forgiven, if you are sheltering under the blood of Jesus, I can assure you that it is God's mind you should receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. You might wonder why Jesus speaks of “living water”. I think it is because He particularly wanted to emphasise what the Holy Spirit can be to us in the way of *satisfaction*. I have met plenty of persons who have peace in their conscience, but I have not met so many who have a satisfied heart. I say that, if you will bear with me, as moving among the brethren. There are many who have peace with God as to their sins, but not as many who have a perfectly satisfied heart. That is the proposal. The Lord says, “whosoever drinks of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst for ever”. As I read those words, I have to ask to myself if I believe them. Do I really believe that Jesus can give me something which can perfectly satisfy my heart? This woman may have led a sinful life, she certainly was not right in her current relationship, but one thing was clear, that she had an unsatisfied heart. So she says to Him, “Sir, give me this water”. Oh, that such a desire might be awakened in the heart of each one of us today!

Jesus says to her, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that says to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him”, and He adds, “and he would have given thee living water”. None of us

needs to be in any doubt about His readiness to give. “He would have given thee living water”, Jesus says. I think this woman was spellbound as she listened to Him; she was entranced by Him. So she goes to the men of the city. Maybe these men of the city would have regarded her as a disreputable woman; maybe she was the kind of woman that normally they would not have passed the time of day with, but there was something different about her this time. There was something compelling about her this time, and that is because she had met the Christ, God's anointed Man! It was not only a matter of what God had made Him, but what she had found Him to be. “Come,” she says, “see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?”.

We began with the way God is setting Jesus forth. God wants men and women, boys and girls, to know what He has done with Jesus, having made Him “both Lord and Christ”. God is appealing to men through the gospel. And like this woman we too would add our own appeal. We have had to do with Him ourselves and would say to you, “Is not he the Christ?”. She says, He “told me all things I had ever done”. 'He knows all my history, He knows everything I have done and knows it better than you do,' she would say to the men of the city, 'and yet still He loves me!' And we would say that too, dear friends; it is what we have proved Him to be. We would appeal to you to come. Why would you not come? If you knew He was in the street outside, would you not come? It says of the men of the city that they went out and came to Him. If you knew that the Man who had been made both Lord and Christ was outside on the street corner, you would come, would you not? And yet you can come to Him right where you are! That is the appeal in the gospel, that you might come to Him, that you might have personal dealings with Him. I can assure you that you will have a time never to be regretted. It will stand you in good stead both for time and eternity.

God has made Him both Lord and Christ, but the question today is whether you will crown Him in your heart, whether you will surrender yourself to Him; whether you will commit yourself to Him without any reserves, no regrets, no holding back. See the place that God has given Him! He is in that place at this very moment, available to you, rich towards all that call upon Him!

West Norwood
28th August 2022

“THE COMING ONE”

Paul Martin

Matthew 11: 2, 3

John 14: 18-21

1 Thessalonians 4: 15-18

Revelation 22: 16, 17

I desire, with the Spirit's help, beloved, to say a word as to “the coming one”. Our Lord Jesus has always been “the coming one” and He continues to be “the coming one”. Right from the beginning of God's ways He looked on to Jesus. He said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen 1: 26): that looked on to Christ. He made Adam in His image, but the full thought looked on to Christ. Adam was “the figure of him to come”, Rom 5: 14. What a glorious Person Jesus must be! You can trace all through the Old Testament inklings of where God was speaking of the One who was to come. He said to Abraham, His friend, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing?”, Gen 18: 17. He showed Abraham, who was a friend of God's and who was prepared to sacrifice his own son, the One who was coming. He took Moses up the mountain and He showed him the pattern. It was not a blueprint, as the builders use or used to use; He showed him Christ as the Centre of everything for His pleasure, and Moses, from that view, built the tabernacle system and within the centre he placed the ark.

God was speaking of this glorious Person right down through the dispensations. Think of the psalms, looking on, and the prophets. Isaiah was speaking of Him when he wrote: “I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple”, Isa 6: 1. Think of the view that Isaiah had of what Christ is in the purpose of God, and then Isaiah goes on in his writing to chapter 53 to show the One who would be here in lowly humiliation, despised and rejected, but never detracting from the glory of the One who was always there in the purpose of God. What a glorious Person! Oh to get a fresh sense in the soul of the greatness of what God has done, centring everything in Christ, right from before time was. “He purposed in himself ... to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth; in him”, Eph 1: 9-10.

When the Lord Jesus came, what acclamation from heaven there was, angels beholding Him. What a view they had of One they had never seen in that way before, but One so great had stooped into

lowly manhood. What a Person! The woman in John 4 says, "I know that Messiah is coming", v 25. As a Samaritan, she had no right to the blessing, but she had some inkling in her soul that there was One who was going to be the answer to every problem that Israel faced, and she says, "I know that Messiah is coming, who is called Christ; when *he* comes he will tell us all things". In what wonderful grace the Lord says to her, "I who speak to thee am he", v 26. She "left her waterpot", v 28. She had finished with herself and her circumstances. Immediately she had a view of the coming One and she finished with everything that had occupied her, and she goes and renders testimony to One who was greater than any she had ever met before. What a glorious Person!

Here in Matthew we have John in prison. I do not speak critically of John. He was somewhat like Gideon; Gideon said, "Ah my Lord, if Jehovah be with us, why then is all this befallen us?", Judg 6:13. Here John raises the question. He says, "Art *thou* the coming one?". That is the name, I think, by which the Lord Jesus was known by the godly remnant, the Coming One. I understand that early in this dispensation godly believers used to greet one another, 'The Lord is coming'; that was their greeting. It was not 'How are you?', though we are rightly interested in how the saints are, but they greeted one another by saying, 'Brother, the Lord is coming'. The Spirit of God, early in the dispensation, put that firmly and strongly in the hearts of the lovers of Christ, and it was burning in the hearts of such that the Lord is coming. John says, "Art *thou* the coming one?". What a glorious Person He is, moving here amongst men in lowly humiliation, as we had in the reading:

God manifest in flesh, O wonder of His universe! (Hymn 400)

Outwardly "there is no beauty that we should desire him", Isa 53:2. That includes me; I saw no beauty in Christ according to what I am by nature. I am dependent on the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit having drawn my soul to appreciate something of the glory of that blessed One. Yet in that lowly pathway there *were* those that came to love Him: Mary, who could stand by the tomb was one, and the only thing she was interested in was "they have taken away my Lord", John 20: 13. I wonder, dear brother and sister, you will excuse me asking a direct question, but if the Lord Jesus was not alive today, would it make any difference to your life? I have to ask myself that. Would my life be different? Dear brethren, we have to face realities as to what the Person means to us, and for John he had waited for this moment, and

he addresses Him thus as the Coming One.

That blessed One, beloved, is “living to the ages of ages”; He will never die; He has “the keys of death and of hades”, Rev 1: 18. “All power has been given” to Him “in heaven and upon earth”, Matt 28: 18. He came into manhood's condition and in a coming day will exercise that power as a blessed Man. In wondrous love He stooped into lowly manhood. Every movement of the Lord Jesus was governed by His love for His God and Father. What a wonderful contemplation for our souls! We shall come on, if we are helped, to the day to come, but even in that time “when he shall have annulled all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign”, (1 Cor 15: 24, 25) He will do so in love for His God. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15: “Then the end, when he gives up the kingdom to him who is God and Father ... that God may be all in all”, v 24, 28. What love in the heart of our Lord Jesus, whether it is in lowly conditions, moving here amongst men, whether it is coming in and out amongst His own, whether it is, beloved, in coming for them as He will do at the rapture or whether it is in completing all God's ways in time, and folding all up, when He will present the kingdom to God because He loves Him. Oh what a Person!

I come on to John because the Lord Jesus is not here now. He is glorified but He is coming. This is the character of the love of Jesus now; not 'I will come to you'; He does not say that; He says, “I am coming”. Such is the character of His love. We desire to prove it as we gather together, especially on the first day of the week. He comes by the Spirit. How wonderful that is! At the breaking of bread, when we “announce the death of the Lord, until he come” (1 Cor 11: 26), He desires to come Himself by the Spirit. Would you want to miss that? I would not want for a week to miss that experience. Dear young people, I say to you from my heart, do not think the gathering together to remember the Lord is just a ritual; it is not. It is the response of lovers to His love and because there is love for Him and faithfulness to Him, He says, “I am coming”; how wonderful to prove that! We were local with an old sister many years ago and someone asked her why she always went to the Supper. She said, 'I sit with my eyes shut and nearly every week I have the sense that He is right next to me and if I opened my eyes, I feel I could touch Him'. That was how real it was to her. I trust, beloved that the Lord's coming in is real to each one of us. I would desire it may be more real to me, but from the longings of His heart He says: “I will not leave you orphans”.

Think of the awfulness of being here in this present scene where everything, as men say, is falling apart. It is not, you know! Everything is under control, but the awfulness of being here as an orphan without having a link with that glorious Man, who is exalted on high, and without enjoying the consciousness that in His faithful love He comes! He would come into readings by His word. His word has a quickening touch in the soul: "Send out thy light and thy truth: *they* shall lead me, *they* shall bring me to thy holy mount, and unto thy habitations", Ps 43: 3. What is it speaking of? It is speaking of Him, the One who is the Centre of that scene. It says, 'Send it out; they shall guide me'. What a glorious Person Jesus is! How much He loves us! Not only how much He *has* loved us, but He loves us still, and He loves us so much that He is not going to leave His own here in the scene from which He has been cast out without the consciousness, freshly, week by week and day by day, of His love to sustain us in the midst of such a scene. How wonderful our blessed Lord Jesus is!

But that One, beloved, is coming again, and this verse in Thessalonians has affected me greatly recently, and I trust I can speak of it rightly. Paul says, "For this we say to you in the word of the Lord, that we, the living, who remain to the coming of the Lord, are in no way to anticipate those who have fallen asleep". The Thessalonians may have been so enjoying their Christianity that they thought that those who had departed were missing something. Well, they are not missing anything. They are not thinking of us; we think of them because we miss them; but they are not thinking of us. Those who have departed have one Object and that is Jesus. They have gone to be "with Christ", which is "very much better", Phil 1: 23. He says we are not to "anticipate" them "for the Lord himself, with an assembling shout, with archangel's voice and with trump of God, shall descend from heaven". Beloved, how wonderful that He should do that! In His power the One who is sitting on the Father's throne could say, 'Come', and no one could stay; every one would answer, but in His love He comes out of heaven. He "shall descend from heaven" into the created sphere to claim His own, to claim His assembly for Himself. Think of the love that lies behind that! He will not leave us to find our own way. No, He is coming to embrace us in the very scene into which He is descending, and He is going to guide us right the way in, and, if I might say reverently, settle us in the scene in which He is as those that belong there. How glorious, these bodies in which we are will be changed: "as we have borne the image of the one made of dust, we shall bear also

the image of the heavenly one”, 1 Cor 15: 49.! How glorious that is, heavenly bodies, bodies of glory like unto His own. He will “transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory”, Phil 3: 21. How great these movements of the Lord Jesus! And God will “quicken your mortal bodies also on account of his Spirit which dwells in you”, Rom 8: 11. How one divine Persons are in all that they do, in unison with one Another, with one object in view, and that is that God should be glorified.

And the Lord Jesus will have His assembly complete and perfect and glorious for Himself throughout that short period of time. He will have her all to Himself, like Isaac took Rebecca into his mother Sarah's tent “and he loved her”, Gen 24: 67. She was to be entirely for Christ. She had taken the veil and covered herself, v 65. It is as if she had said, 'All that I am is for Him; it is for no one else to see'. The saints are not here on public display: Our “life is hid with the Christ in God”, Col 3: 3. The One who is coming to take us will take the whole assembly in its entirety, but not only the assembly but every one of the redeemed, going right back to Abel. Think of the joy that the Lord Jesus will have when the fruit of His work will be seen complete, those who have died in faith being raised. We may not be able to find their bodies, but He knows them. And He will have them with Himself glorious in that scene. As He says in chapter 14 of John, “In my Father's house there are many abodes ... for I go to prepare you a place”, v 2. There are many abodes but the assembly's place is distinct, in the heart of Christ in the presence of the Father; and, dear brethren, He is coming out of heaven. He is almost on the way.

We make arrangements - and we have to make arrangements - but always have in mind that He is on the way: “I am coming to thee”, He says to Ephesus (Rev 2: 5). Ephesus lost the sense of the imminence of His coming when they left their first love. Oh, let us not do that, beloved. He says to Philadelphia, “I come quickly; hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown”, Rev 3: 11. He is coming; not, 'I will come quickly'. He does not say that to Philadelphia. He says, “I come”. Oh divine love that would not delay! “He that comes will come, and will not delay”, Heb 10: 37. He is almost on the way.

Oh may there be that longing as we have at the end of Revelation where “the Spirit and the bride say, Come”! How great that moment is. When will they say this? They are saying it now. It does not say, 'the Spirit and the bride *will* say, Come'. It says, “the Spirit and

the bride say, Come". Do I have my part in that? It is not only in the words that we use but it is in our manner of life. I understand this word "come" means 'come now'. If I was told that within an hour the Lord was coming, what difference would it make? The believer is looking for His coming. He is longing for it, that the One who died for us and lives for us, the One who has asked that the Spirit should come, the One who has quickened our affections, that blessed, divine Person, is going to come. It says, "the Spirit and the bride say, Come". That call is going up now. It is not waiting for next year; it is going up now; it is going up from loving persons whose hearts have been won by the excellence of this blessed Person. He says, "I am the root and offspring of David": everything derived from Him; everything owes its being to Him. How wonderful He is, "the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star". Peter says that star has already arisen in our hearts, 2 Pet 1: 19. We do not have to wait, beloved; it has already arisen. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come".

Well, we may break bread together tomorrow, but we do so in the light of His coming again. We testify to the world that the One who we remember in the breaking of bread has been rejected wrongfully. He is worthy to reign, and He is going to reign. "For he must reign", Paul says, "until he put all enemies under his feet", 1 Cor 15: 25. "He must reign", and in that reign there will be order where there has been disorder; there will be peace where there has been chaos; there will be healing where there has been sickness. What a Person! He will bring it all in in Himself, and all shall bow before Him, from the least to the greatest, acknowledging that He is rightly crowned with glory.

He is the One who is worthy to reign! Indeed! May He reign within our hearts 'without a rival', as the hymn-writer says (hymn 368), and may He fill our hearts with the greatness of His love. He is longing to come. He is not delaying, Peter says, "as some account of delay", 2 Pet 3: 9. He is not delaying. He is longing to come and take His own.

May we be with the Spirit in saying, "Come"! May it be so for His Name's sake!

Edinburgh

24th September 2022

WHAT WE TAKE WITH US

Phil B Klassen

Proverbs 30: 4, 5

Psalms 84: 8-10 (to “thousand”)

1 Samuel 17: 19-24, 33-36, 39, 40

I have in mind what we take with us when we go into the world. What I mean by that is not going into the world to be part of it, but we have to go into the world because this is where we live. Our daily life is here; it is on this earth.

I read first in Proverbs and it asks who has “ascended up into the heavens, and descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists?”. I think that is the first thing we have to lay hold of; that is, the One we have to deal with. And then in verse 5, the writer comes to the point where he says, “Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him”. Then I read of that also in the Psalms: it says, “Behold, O God our shield”.

And then I read of David preparing to go and meet Goliath, and we know the story well. We know how he went and conquered Goliath. Goliath would speak of the strength of this world, and he would speak of the things that are mighty in the world. Here Saul is giving David some of the things of the world to go to fight this thing of the world; and he could say he had not yet tried them. That touched me quite deeply, to think that David could say he had *not* tried the things of the world; and yet he did have what we have in the other two passages, God being our shield.

Beloved, we do not have to try the things of the world to know that they will not work in Christianity. Christianity stands on its own, and is above and beyond anything that the world can offer. We may try to do things, and we say we are trying to figure things out. Perhaps we say we are not going to do this or that, because we are trying to figure things out spiritually, or whatever we want to say. That is using the things of the world to try to figure out the things of Christianity. We should stand on the ground and know that the Lord has given us everything. David went and took those five smooth stones out of the brook: what do those five smooth stones speak of? It is something that the water has washed over for years and years; it has made them smooth. It is something that the work of God has been to David: he could see the work of God in those stones, and that is what he picked up to take. And

then he went and met Goliath: he slew Goliath, and it was actually quite simple for him.

Beloved, I really fear that we are trying to take up the things of the world with tools that the world would try to give us. And the only tool we need is the word of God. The water washing over those stones was the Spirit's work, and I would just ask that each one of you might allow the Spirit to work. It is the greatest thing that can happen in your life, besides knowing the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour. It will bring you into the things that are eternal; it will bring you into things that are beautiful and of God - beautiful to your own soul. A saved man would find such things absolutely amazing, and a man of this world would think they are nothing.

Well, I just ask that each one of us would take up the things of the Lord Jesus in the power of the Lord Jesus. May it be so, for His Name's sake.

Word in a meeting for ministry in Aberdeen ID

29th September 2022

PRIVILEGE AND TESTIMONY

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Mark 14: 67

John 18: 25-27

It was not my thought to speak about Peter's terrible failure in this incident; it might be enough to say that he illustrates the exercise that has just been expressed. He had a sword, we know, but when he met Goliath David took his staff and went (1 Sam 17: 40); that is, he went into the matter before him in dependence; and Peter makes a terrible calamity out of self-confidence. I was just reflecting on the things that Peter's accusers say. I do not want to speak now about his language - they comment on that, his accent and dialect. But there are two things they touch upon that I want to speak about: one is that he had been with Jesus, and the other is that he was of the disciples. Because the story is so sad, we might miss the truth that these people refer to some of Peter's greatest privileges. The point that struck me is that the privileges we put our hands to, and identify ourselves with, are part of our testimony, for which each of us is individually responsible.

The first thing that I wanted to draw attention to is that they comment that he had been "with the Nazarene, Jesus". It is commonly said that that is a name of reproach; it identified Jesus with a town that had a bad reputation, and a place that was despised. They identify Peter with Jesus in that way. What has struck me about that is that Jesus does the same: you will remember that, when He intercepts Saul of Tarsus, He identifies Himself as "Jesus the Nazaræan", Acts 22: 8. What I think that means simply is that, if Jesus is not pleased to avoid the reproach, I cannot either. The only way in which I could possibly avoid the reproach He Himself has accepted is to deny Him altogether. Nobody wants to do that. So, as Hebrews says, we "go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach", chap 13: 13. It is not *our* reproach - we have plenty of that: our sad histories bring us reproach, and we have to be humble about that; but we bear *His* reproach. "And *thou* wast with the Nazarene, Jesus"; it is a privilege, a wonderful privilege. The world would like to forget Him; they would like to consign Him to the obscurity that this town suggested to them. His disciples cling to the privilege of being identified with One thus named, and it becomes a focus of their testimony for which they are responsible. There might be all kinds of reasons why we might want to take an easier course, but I do not think the Lord would allow us to if He has not taken

that easier course Himself.

The next thing I wanted to refer to is in the end of where I read in John's gospel: "Did I not see thee in the garden with him?". This man is recalling the time that the other gospels call Gethsemane, when Peter was privileged not just to be one of eleven witnesses, but one of three. It was a very high privilege that Peter had been granted; he was not equal to it but that does not diminish the privilege: he had that opportunity to "watch one hour" with Jesus. You might say what an honour it was to be given to any of His disciples! Now, that opportunity in those circumstances has passed, as we sometimes sing - 'That night for ever past' (Hymn 246). But there are similar privileges still, one of which is to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread, and to enter into the privilege of having part in the service of God. Perhaps you would allow me to say that that is like a garden. Everything there has been ordered by God, like Eden was, Christ is at the centre of it, and it becomes a place for spiritual experience and fellowship with Him. I tremble at the idea that I might devalue such an experience, or think of it as routine, or diminished by the numbers available - something of that sort. What an immense privilege it is! You might say that Peter was not true to it but that does not alter the immensity of the privilege. Those of us who have put our hands to the breaking of bread have shared that privilege. John says, "Jesus was often there, in company with his disciples", John 18: 2. There are some who have not broken bread for very long, but I suppose it is true that we would all have to say that we have been "often there". And it has become part of our testimony, a testimony that we share, the privileges into which the Lord has called us.

And then we see how they talk to Peter about being with the disciples. In a sense, that might be an easier challenge, because you could be with a company that you were not fully identified with - you could be a hanger-on or a follower, not fully committed. But as far as the testimony is concerned, you are identified with it; and that is a privilege. It comes home to me more and more in the simple circumstances in which we are, and especially those in which I find myself locally, what a privilege it is to have *any* with whom fellowship as we understand it can be worked out. The Lord is teaching me to value increasingly those with whom I share that privilege week by week.

But what they say to Peter is, "art thou also **of** his disciples?"; and that is challenging: to be identified among those who are identified

with Jesus the Nazarene. It is taken account of that we belong to their company, and their fellowship. It is part of the testimony that we have that privilege, and we might say that the only way in which we could avoid the responsibility would be to surrender the privilege. As long as we maintain the desire at any level to be true to the privileges we have, then we have the responsibility.

Of course, Peter lacked the power: see what a transformation the Spirit's power made to Peter. He did not fail like this in the Acts; what power he had! What power he lacked on these earlier occasions; but we do not lack the power. We are not talking about things we have to do in our own strength, or as we have just heard with worldly tools or tools that others might lend us. We have the Spirit's power to be true to the things to which God has called us.

May He bless the word.

Word in a meeting for ministry in Aberdeen ID

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