

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

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GJR I suggest beloved that we occupy ourselves with the Spirit of Christ. The brethren will be free as we range over these scriptures and bring in others. I suggested this passage in John's gospel because of the very instructive nature of it, the profound nature of it. This is the Lord Jesus in resurrection; in Kings there is another suggestion of the Lord Jesus - as ascended - but this is Christ in resurrection, on the very first, 'first day of the week', and it is in resurrection life that He came in amongst His own. The Lord greeted them with this word, "Peace be to you", and He showed them His hands and His side; and the disciples rejoiced - and well they might - having seen the Lord. Then Jesus said therefore again to them, "Peace be to you", and He sends them forth. We sometimes hear the latter part of Matthew's gospel described as 'the great commission'; it is there they were sent into all the world, but here is something that probably pre-dated that. He says, "as the Father sent me forth, I also send you". The present dispensation had not yet begun but I wondered if there is a suggestion as to it. And then, having said this, "he breathed into them". What a profound matter that was; this is the breath of a Man in resurrection, not ascended, but in resurrection and He says to them, "receive the Holy Spirit", or more literally 'receive Holy Spirit'. And then He goes on to this great matter of what they were going to take up administratively.

From Romans chapter 8, I wanted to suggest that the Spirit of Christ, on the basis of this passage, is characteristic of the dispensation. I want us to all be included in this; this should not be something to strive after in later life, but rather, is the normality of Christianity: a person having the Holy Spirit and therefore having the Spirit of Christ. I read the verse, "But ye are not in flesh, but in Spirit", in case there is somebody here that might need to be reminded of that; also perhaps there is somebody here who is feeling that for the first time; somebody here who is feeling the burden of the flesh and what it is, and the problem and nature of it. I trust this will help, "ye are not in flesh but in Spirit". God does not regard the believer on Jesus as in flesh but in Spirit.

I thought the passage in Peter would help us to see that the

Spirit of Christ is traceable in the Old Testament. Long before Jesus came into manhood, the Spirit of Christ was in these prophets; we could enquire into that.

And then the passage in Kings brings in our side. I would like us to be encouraged today. The thought may run through my mind that I have not always shown the Spirit of Christ, that I see it in others, and have certainly had the Spirit of Christ shown towards me. But I do not want us to spend long in thinking of ourselves and our shortcomings, but rather that this passage in Kings would help us to see that the Spirit of Christ can mark every one of us. I do not have anything else to say to start with, and I am thankful this is a meeting for mutual enquiry.

DAB Thank you. I am enjoying your thought that it begins with peace; the Lord brings His peace. It is from that position the Spirit of Christ begins to be manifest; He begins with the peace that He brings.

GJR It is very good that you have emphasised that. Other gospel writers tell us that on at least one of the occasions where the Lord appeared they were troubled: one gospel writer said they did not know what to think and were at a loss what to think; here was the One who had been last seen laid in a tomb and here He is appearing. One thing they wanted was reassurance.

RJF Something that is emphasised is that the Spirit of Christ can be communicated even by one word: peace. I was seeking to build on what was said, that He comes and He stands in the midst; and you might say, 'Well, the Spirit of Christ was there because He was there'. But this is the beginning of the communication of that to them in His condition of resurrection. They had known Him when He was here, but this is the Lord in a different condition, is it not? There was something to be conveyed to them by the word and then through the inbreathing.

GJR They would have embraced the thought that He had communicated to them that everything is settled, that *all is well*. He has met everything for God and for us.

DAB It says elsewhere, "my sheep hear my voice", John 10: 16. I am thinking of what was said; it was conveyed in a word, hearing His voice, receiving peace from Him.

GJR Very good. May we know something of it - even today.

PSB It would be quite a different peace to any peace they had known from anyone else, "I give *my* peace to you: not as the world gives" (John

14: 27), He says elsewhere; would that be right?

GJR Yes, indeed. No one can speak after this One. He comes in and He says, "peace"; no one can disturb that. But your point is "not as the world"; it is on a different level altogether. What a poor world we are in; it cannot find peace and it cannot give like this.

RJF The doors were shut, to shut out the world, but there was no impediment to the Lord through those doors, was there?

GJR The time would come when they would go out through those doors; fifty days later they would go out through those doors, but for the time they were shut. Say more as to that please.

RJF I do not know if I can but this was a very distinctive time in the testimony, was it not? The Lord had been crucified, and that was behind; He had risen from among the dead, He was on an ascending line but He is spending this precious time with His disciples to communicate His Spirit to them.

GJR I do not think this was a fear of cowardice; this was a right fear of sensitivity. They did not want anything of what is Jewish; I suppose that would, for us, point to what is religious; we do not want that to come in and spoil what is within.

QAP How do we understand the Lord breathing into them here in relation to Pentecost where it speaks of a violent impetuous blowing, Acts 2: 2? I notice that in Mr Darby's note that links with the thought of breathing as well.

GJR Well, that is good; I think there is a very strong connection. It may be oversimplifying to say that this is 'anticipative', and it certainly does not include all the disciples; we know one who was not here but he is present among those gathered eight days after, and who would have been among the one hundred and twenty at Pentecost.

QAP Would it be to prepare them for what happened at Pentecost?

GJR I think it would be and it would pervade the conditions during that time of fifty days. Are the brethren happy with this?

NJH Does the Spirit in Christ link with Pentecost? The Spirit coming down; it is a continuation that is in mind, is that right?

GJR Please enlarge on that.

NJH It was a continuation of Christ, morally. John in his first epistle takes up, what began in Christ and continues (chap 1); is that right?

GJR Yes, very good; what you say as to what continues is a very helpful remark. A marvellous thing, is it not, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of that Man, traceable in persons like ourselves?

JRW What you are suggesting seems to be on a very high level. He says here, "as the Father sent me forth"; that is a tremendous matter, is it not? It then says, "I also send you". How can they attain to that?

GJR In the power of the Holy Spirit, and it was true to such an extent that the Lord said, "he that rejects you rejects me; and he that rejects me rejects him that sent me", Luke 10: 16.

JRW Not to take you on to your second scripture, but I was thinking of "the Spirit of Christ which was in them"; I suppose there are typical examples of this in the Old Testament, those who have been sent forth from the Father, from God with the Spirit of Christ; the result is the blessing of God's people and His glory.

GJR We *should* go on to the next scripture and there is another one (which I did not have read but we should be intelligent as to it), in which Peter clearly states that the Spirit of Christ was in Noah. Now I do not know anywhere it is spoken of in Genesis but it would seem that the Spirit of Christ was in Noah preaching to that generation, a most remarkable thing, 1 Pet 3: 19, 20.

PJW It is almost put as though Christ Himself was preaching to them, through Noah. That is another scripture of course; we do not want to skip over the second one! It is so interesting is it not?

GJR We are at liberty! "The Spirit of Christ which was in them".

RJF Just to be clear, what John 20 speaks about is the Spirit breathed into the disciples; and that was of a different character to the Spirit coming at Pentecost. It was something to keep and maintain through these days until Pentecost?

GJR I am sure that is right. Perhaps we could remember that these would appear to have been the apostles; and there was what was distinctive to them. So we read of the apostles' doctrine and the apostles' fellowship. It might be illustrated thus: I have never seen the aurora borealis, but if two strangers who have seen it come together, they can 'compare notes' on what they have seen. They have a bond that someone without that experience will not have. The twelve had a bond (which even the apostle Paul did not have) because they had seen and companied with Christ in flesh and blood. These persons

here had seen Him on the first day of the week. The fact that they had experienced this inbreathing would have been a form of fellowship on its own; certainly it would be included in the apostles' fellowship.

AM While the Lord Jesus was here in flesh and blood conditions the apostles drew on Him for everything. I was thinking of your emphasis that this is the first day of the week, the first opportunity that this could happen, the Lord providing for the apostles that they would not go one day without the help of a divine Person.

GJR That commends itself very much. We might reverently say this was the first opportunity - at any rate, the first evening - and He provided for them from that very moment onwards.

AJMCK Could you say something as to why it is the *Holy Spirit* here? You emphasised that as 'Receive the Holy Spirit'.

GJR I would connect it with the parted tongues as of fire, Acts 2: 3. In relation to ourselves we constantly need to remember it is the *Holy Spirit*. It would maintain reverence with us.

AJMCK That helps. I was thinking about what was said as to the glorious fact that this should be a divine Person; it is what rested complacently on Christ. For myself I need to just remember that more: it is "the *Holy Spirit*".

GJR Objectively we can worship the Spirit of God; we have hymns that express that, and I think that is right, but in relation to ourselves, as to myself, I must always remember that it is "the *Holy Spirit*".

PJW In each case - here and Pentecost, and when the Gentiles were first brought in (Acts 10: 44), and with the Ephesian company (chap 19: 6), - it is "the *Holy Spirit*" that is spoken of.

GJR That confirms it very much. That company at Cæsarea was a cleansed and sanctified company, but they too were still persons in flesh and blood.

RJF The *Holy Spirit* descended upon Christ as a dove. Do you think that it is the dove-like characteristic that is particularly pronounced in this?

GJR I would ask the brethren to allow me to say that the dove in modern western imagery suggests peace; so a politician might be described as a dove (or a hawk). But I think in scripture it is not so much peace as *sensitivity*. I am drawing this from the first reference in the

bible to the dove - which found no resting place, in the scene of death, for the sole of her foot. The raven had plenty of scope to rest, but the dove did not even find a resting place for the sole of her foot, Gen 8: 9. And how small is a dove's foot! So it is sensitivity that is suggested and that blessed divine Person found in the manhood of Christ, nothing at all out of place. Does that agree with your thought?

RJF Yes, it is very helpful because then that characteristic was breathed into the disciples, the apostles, and then by extension we would see that there should be that aspect with each believer, do you think?

GJR Yes, may that grow with us; may that grow with me, sensitivity! Every day the tendency is for that to become eroded by all that is around.

RJF Another feature that comes out in this chapter is that, to be able to breathe something into somebody involves closeness.

GJR Yes; it is profound.

JRW What is in your mind with, on the one hand, the Spirit of Christ which you opened with, and then the Holy Spirit?

GJR In the Old Testament times I do not think anyone had the indwelling Spirit as we do. Would that be true? The indwelling Spirit is unique to this dispensation, and I think that, for us to be marked by the Spirit of Christ, it is essential that we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. That is what the scripture in Romans would indicate. But the Spirit of Christ is traceable in Old Testament persons who did not have the indwelling Spirit as we do.

RWMcC He is "with you, and shall be in you" (John 14: 17); would that link with your thought?

GJR That helps, and would you say that "he abides with you" is objective, and may answer to what He was upon Christ; but "shall be in you" relates to His coming and being in us?

Our second scripture was Romans 8: "but if any one has not the Spirit of Christ *he* is not of him". It is not our business to modify that scripture: it means exactly what it says. But it would be normal for a believer to have the Holy Spirit and this would come into expression. That was my thought on this passage.

DAB I was thinking about what you said about the sensitivity of the

Holy Spirit. We have a scripture elsewhere, “do not grieve the Holy Spirit”, Eph 4: 30. There is sensitivity in relation to that; that is normal that each believer has the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. There is something quite exercising in that; it is sensitivity, do you think?

GJR I remember once visiting a brother and sister, and the sister said to us, 'I feel I have grieved the Holy Spirit'. What a fine thing that was, that here was a person so sensitive to the effect of her conduct, and prepared to admit it. It is right to encourage us to be sensitive as to the Holy Spirit, so as not to grieve Him - and judge ourselves if we do.

HTF In Acts 6, these men were “well reported of, full of the Holy Spirit”, v 3. And then verse 5, “they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit” and others with him. I was thinking about verse 10, “And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke”. He is not one of the apostles; he was one that was full of the Holy Spirit, which is therefore indicative of what should mark us. I am very exercised by what you say about what should mark us in this dispensation.

GJR That is a very helpful reference and brings in the thought of power, irresistible power. Again we must not think overmuch about ourselves, but I feel the lack of power. Then as to Stephen, you go on to trace the Spirit of Christ in the way he entreats, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge”, chap 7: 60. He would be immovable in his assertion of the truth, but what a spirit!

RJF Does that extend to the words that he uttered when he was praying saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit”, chap 7: 59?

GJR How acceptable that spirit was to the Lord!

RJF In a sense there was that that was being committed to the Lord which was of Himself, do you think?

GJR Very fine!

PJW Stephen's address was very severe to the Jews.

GJR In that regard, we are quite rightly taught that Elisha's ministry represents grace; the establishment of the reign of grace is illustrated in Elisha's history, but subsequent to taking up the mantle from Elijah and moving across the Jordan, the very first thing he encounters is mockers, mockers at Bethel, and he deals with them severely. Does that help?

PJW That is very helpful, but it was still the Spirit of Christ that was in him.

PSB Do we also get that in that section, “ye do always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers, ye also”, Acts 7: 51. It was not the rejection of Christ here, but the continual rejection of the Holy Spirit?

GJR Yes; it shows how solemn the rejection of Stephen was. The Lord said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23: 34); Stephen did not say that because they knew full well what they were doing.

QAP Something I noticed as to this section is that the Spirit of Christ immediately leads on to “but if Christ be in you”. Is one of the services of the Spirit of Christ that Christ Himself should have the place in us?

GJR Yes, “if Christ be in you, the body is dead on account of sin”; what a relief that is!

QAP The Lord Jesus said, “He shall glorify me”, John 16: 14.

GJR He has never ceased, unselfishly, to do that,

To go back to the remark as to the faithfulness of Stephen. In Mordecai you can see the Spirit of Christ, and he would protect the life of the king, he would do all he could for Esther; but he would not bow to Haman (Esther 3: 2); he was rigid in that. Faithfulness is necessary, and increasingly so in our day. I feel weakness in it.

JRW Some of us have been looking at Ephesians 6 in the past week; we have read it three times locally! It comes to me that it is the sword that is spoken of in the panoply of God in relation to the Spirit, “the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word”, v 17. Would that support what we are saying?

GJR I am sure it would. It is not putting a scripture forward as an argument in an academic kind of way; I have tried that! It does not work: “the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word” is the truth applied in the Spirit of Christ.

PHM What we are speaking of is to have an impression on us; I was thinking particularly of the Spirit of Christ. In those we have been speaking of we can all see the effect of the Spirit of Christ. In John we can see how they were affected and then we can see the writings in the epistles of how they were able to speak; they were impressed by the Spirit of Christ. We have young ones here, and what is it for us to have

and to appropriate these impressions? The Spirit of Christ is something that is real; it is in the believer's life. It says here, "the Spirit life on account of righteousness". Is it something that is to be with us in our pathways, to be experienced, and to be experienced together?

GJR That is certainly my exercise. The ability to apprehend and express divine thoughts, but then to be able to descend in love to every need. It is humbling, but I trust we are encouraged. This Spirit is to come into expression. I am not saying it is not; it is in expression among the people of God. It is a very fine thing, a very precious thing, and I trust that it might be promoted.

RJF Would you draw a distinction between the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and being "in Spirit" as we have in verse 9 in this chapter of Romans?

GJR Let us read it: "But ye are not in flesh but in Spirit, if indeed God's Spirit dwell in you". A person who has not the Holy Spirit is in flesh. They may be converted and not yet have received the Holy Spirit, but I think this divine view of a person no longer in flesh is dependent on them receiving the Holy Spirit. Now I say that, I trust, encouragingly, and if there is anyone here who feels that they have not the Holy Spirit, they can ask: ask the Father, ask the Lord Jesus if you are more comfortable doing that! But we must distinguish between initially receiving the Holy Spirit and being marked by the Spirit of Christ. Does that commend itself to you?

RJF Yes, very much so. The gift of the Holy Spirit is irrevocable, is it not? It is not subject to repentance as an aspect of the gifts and calling of God, Rom 11: 29. But I may be very far away from that, the Spirit of Christ may even disappear from me as a concept, my appreciation of Christ may go, but there is always the ability through divine grace to return to that. It should be an exercise with me, with all of us, how much we are in Spirit, to apprehend the Spirit of Christ and see that reflected.

GJR To address your question fully we need to bring in the thought from Revelation, "I became in the Spirit on the Lord's day", chap 1: 10. That is 'a *state* into which he entered' (footnote) and is something very special.

AM Paul says, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor 1: 30); so they must have received the Holy Spirit, but then it goes on to speak about the way in which Paul was among them, and it says in chapter 2: 4 "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power". He was giving an

example.

GJR “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus”; it means you are of God. But as to the “demonstration” of which you speak, we get the impression that when Paul went to Corinth he went out of his way to hide his natural powers. He was a forceful personality - he must have been - but seemed to hide that in Corinth. That is an example.

NJH Does “in Spirit” involve state? And the Holy Spirit is linked with that.

GJR Yes, in Revelation 1:10, very much so.

RHB I was going to ask if you had any more in mind as to this expression being “of him”.

GJR I think it is a view that the saints are of God. But you are speaking of this verse “*he* is not of him”; is that right? I think it simply means that a person not of Christ is not a Christian. What would you say?

RHB On the positive side do you think would being “of him” involve going on to being members of His body? We are not a member of His body until we have received the Holy Spirit, are we?

GJR That is true; “in the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body”, 1 Cor 12: 13. That helps.

BHC I was thinking of that expression that Paul uses in Ephesians “submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ”, chap 5: 21. It says earlier, “be filled with the Spirit”, v 18. I wondered if that thought of submitting is a place where recognition of the Spirit's power is known and given place to.

GJR That is a very helpful scripture and puts to rest the question, Are we answerable to the Lord or to the brethren? Well, “submitting yourselves to one another” shows our respect for the brethren, but it is in the “fear of Christ”.

We should go on. We have touched on Peter and Romans, and that takes us on to Kings which brings in our side. Now this is one of the scriptures where a person is invited to make a request. These two men - Elijah and Elisha were moving around, and the places they had been to were Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho and the Jordan. Elisha is invited to make a request because Elijah is going to go up. This is a type of Christ, not in resurrection but as ascending. It brings in teaching that we can only

have the Spirit of Christ, indeed we can only have the Holy Spirit, because Christ has gone up and been glorified; that is teaching from John 7: 39. The offer is made, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I am taken away from thee". And Elisha says, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me"; that is to say, he wanted to be found here marked by the spirit of Elijah. And Elijah says, "Thou hast asked a hard thing". Do we not know that? It says, 'If you see me when I am going up it will be true, if you do not it will not'. Anyway he did see him go up, and then we know what follows: he had done with his own garments and took up the mantle of Elijah.

DAB Could you say a bit more as to Elijah's response saying, "Thou hast asked a hard thing"?

GJR What it means really is that what characterises me as a natural man will have to go, and that is a hard thing: it is displacement! But there is love for Christ among us, the believer loves the Lord Jesus, and I trust His greatness is coming before us in these occasions. That is what ministry should do in bringing the greatness of Christ before us, and then what we are saying will lead to features of Himself coming into expression.

PJW Do you think there is a link in the double portion in what the Lord Jesus said, "he shall do greater than these", John 14: 12?

GJR That is very suggestive; "because I go to the Father", that is fine!

RJF Is there another aspect of this being "a hard thing", in what it cost the Father that the Holy Spirit should be given: everything that Christ suffered and endured?

GJR Well, that rightly raises the level of our consideration; "He who, yea, has not spared his own Son ... how shall he not also with him grant us all things?" (Rom 8: 32); that includes the gift of the Holy Spirit.

RJF I was thinking of the scripture in Peter that you referred to; it speaks of two things there, the sufferings of the Christ, "the sufferings which belonged to Christ, and the glories after these".

GJR Yes; that was the subject of their searching out, the subject of their prophecy: how extensive that is! The Messiah being cut off and having nothing (Dan 9: 26), being cut off from the land of the living (Isa 53: 8), His life being taken from the earth (Acts 8: 33): the sufferings that belonged to the Christ. But He is glorified and it is from His glorified position that the Holy Spirit has come.

QAP In John 6 they say, “This word is hard” v 60. And the Lord Jesus says to them, “If then ye see the Son of man ascending up where he was before? It is the Spirit that quickens, the flesh profits nothing”, v 62-63. I am linking that with what Elijah said as to seeing him.

GJR Well, that does help in two ways; the Son of man was ascending up where He was before and He has done that; He “has been received up in glory”, 1 Tim 3: 16. It is not just into glory but “in glory” and, of course, it would mean the shifting of hopes from earth to where He is. These are not easy things! These are not experiences that I drift into. But then He says, “It is the Spirit that quickens, the flesh profits nothing”; that is indicated by the visit to Gilgal which these two men have made.

RIW There is blessing in having right desires.

GJR How delightful this must have been to Elijah to have found this young man saying, 'I want to be like you now', to have a *double portion* of it: right desires, indeed!. I trust we are encouraging one another in right desires. No matter how far off we may feel from it, I trust these desires are being stimulated and answered to.

RIW It is actually encouraging; the flesh is hard, it is going to be there, but the right desires, that is where grace meets us.

DAB In this section, Elisha has gone the right way, gone to Gilgal, even gone through the Jordan here; you might say he is in the land, but it is still a hard thing. I would like to get help what seeing Him means for us; we have touched on seeing Him there. Help us as to how these desires are fulfilled, how a double portion is proved.

GJR In Galatians we read that “the flesh lusts against the Spirit” (chap 5: 17); now, I knew that before I read it in the Bible. These things are in opposition towards one another. The drift is towards what is of man: man's will and man's reasoning, but what we are seeking to encourage one another about is that the Spirit of Christ is not on that level at all.

RWMcC What would promote this kind of desire? It would be delightful to Elijah, delightful to God, here expressed.

GJR Well, to start, I would say an appreciation of the Man of the gospels. The grace He brought to every situation: would you not like to be like that? I would: I know you would! And these features are coming out amongst the Lord's people. We love to witness it. But He has gone up and it is from where He is now, having to do with Him where He is

now, receiving the Spirit, being occupied with Him. It will not be by being occupied with ourselves. So think of this man being taken up and this younger person following him in his affections, wanting to be like him here below.

TJH Your previous scripture spoke about the law of the Spirit. I wondered if you could help us understand that a little bit more because we have the idea of the Spirit of peace, and then the Spirit of life, but here in this scripture you have the idea of power, the Spirit as power. It seems to do with law, and the rejection of the law of the flesh which I think you have just been mentioning. So the law of the flesh is in opposition to the law of the Spirit. I wondered if you could help us more about the law of the Spirit.

GJR I think in Romans 8 “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” is a fixed principle - not Moses's law - the fixed principle of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. That never varies, and it is in that that there is deliverance from the law of sin and death (that too is a fixed principle: that of sin and death). I suggested this scripture so that we might identify the appreciation of Christ that is in each of our hearts. That Man has been taken up, has been received up in glory, and the divine mind is that we should be like Him here below.

Sunbury

1st October 2022

List of initials:-

D A Barlow, Sunbury; P S Barlow, Sunbury; R H Brown, Strood;
B H Clark, Maidstone; R J Flowerdew, Sunbury; H T Franklin,
Grimsby; N J Henry, Glasgow; T J Harvey, East Finchley;
R W McClean, Grimsby; A J McKay, Witney; A Martin, Buckhurst Hill;
P H Morris, Sunbury; Q A Poore, Swanage; G J Richards, Malvern;
J R Walkinshaw, Maidstone; P J Walkinshaw, Strood; R I Webster,
Buckhurst Hill

THE SPIRIT OF GRACE AND OF SUPPLICATIONS

G John Richards

Zechariah 12: 10; 13: 6

Judges 21: 2-4

Revelation 22: 16-17

My desire, beloved, is to speak of a spirit of grace and supplication; but I would like to make two asides. The first would be to acknowledge that supplication is a form of prayer and that there are other ways in which prayer is described, and one of those is *intercession*. I will touch on that briefly by way of sharing some appreciation of it. I think it is true to say that the Lord Jesus is described at the present time as making intercession. In Romans 8 He is presented as at the right hand of God, and He also intercedes for us (v 34); also the Holy Spirit here below makes intercession for the saints according to God, v 26. I have not studied languages, but the word intercession begins with two syllables, 'int-er', and that seems to suggest what is in between. I hope that stands up to scrutiny.

Where I live, on a Monday evening you will generally find two sisters and one brother gathering in a house, and the brother might pray for ten minutes, and after a hymn the meeting ends and one sister goes home; the other sister lives in the house. The brother is quite limited in what he is able to express, so generally there is quite a short prayer - and in it he does not in any way cover all the interests of the Lord's people - but one thing that we become very conscious of is being part of a *system of intercession*. At its simplest level, in other places - sometimes in meeting rooms, sometimes also in houses - there are others gathered with a similar motive; that is, they have the Lord's interests in their hearts and they too engage in this service of intercession; and it is a very great comfort in such smallness. You will appreciate it is a very great comfort to know that what heaven sees and hears is not the feeble prayer of one man but part of a system of intercession. Before I close on that, I am interested in what is said as to the house of God. We had the reference to Bethel in the earlier meeting today, 2 Kings 2: 2. Bethel means, 'the house of God', first named by Jacob all those years ago, Gen 28: 19. Paul wrote to Timothy (1 Tim 1: 1) and set out certain things that should be found in the house of God. A leading feature is that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men", chap 2: 1.

Now I submit the thought that supplication is an upward view; I am situated here, and I am looking up: I am supplicating. I think intercession is broader than that because what we read about in 1 Timothy is that prayers and intercessions should be made for *all men*. So we think of the prayer meeting; I am not limiting the house of God to when we are together of course, but that scripture does refer primarily to when we are together because it is the men that pray only. Sisters have full liberty to pray, and that audibly if they wish, alone; but when it is a question of what is public it is men that pray. It is a plural word - not the man - but the *men* who pray. He says that prayer is to be for kings, those in authority, those in dignity. The thought of intercession relates especially to the prayer meeting, but not only then, for there are persons who are looking out on humanity and they are aware of kings and nations and all these things and they are looking out and are looking up: interceding, beseeching God on that account.

Now my main thought was to speak about supplication, but my second aside is in relation to this passage in Zechariah. I say to all of us, but especially to younger persons, that you will have noticed that generally, when the brethren read Old Testament scriptures, we make an application: we look for the Lord and the Spirit's present voice in them, and that is right. First of all, in these Old Testament scriptures, we look for Christ and for His glories. But I want to commend this thought for our judgment, that when we have these prophetic scriptures of which I have read here - and today I do want to make an application - it is good to have an appreciation of the literality that is described; that is to say its primary interpretation. There are plenty of written helps available for us. It would be unusual for a reading meeting today to be wholly taken up with the literality of prophecy, but it is good - and I commend it to us all, especially younger persons - to have an understanding of the literality of these scriptures. And this is where I want to begin.

What we have read about will actually take place in persons of the Jewish tribes. I do not say Israel, I say Jewish, meaning Judah and Benjamin, because predominantly they were the tribes that were in the land when Christ was here. I know there are others, like Anna who we are told, came from the tribe of Asher (Luke 2: 36), and I recognise dear Barnabas was a Levite (Acts 4: 36), so that he was not a Jew in the sense I am using the word; that is, a Jew is, strictly speaking, of Judah and Benjamin. It was the Jews that rejected Christ, "This is Jesus, the

King of the Jews”, Matt 27: 37. Those other ten tribes who were taken into captivity first are hard to find in the world. I am not an expert in these things and I know personally only one Jew. When we speak of the Jews, and there are lots of them in cities where some of you live and they are probably Judah and Benjamin, it is such who are addressed in this scripture here. You will notice the reference to David in verse 10, “And I will pour upon the house of David”, that is Judah, the house of David, and Jerusalem. And then it widens out because it speaks of the house of Levi, but primarily these two tribes are the Jews, and all these features that mark them at the present time of unbelief, hardness, pride, arrogance - all these things which are in my heart - these features, are going to melt away, for God is going to work in their hearts. A marvellous thing! And do you know what He is going to do? It says in this scripture, “I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications”: a “spirit of grace and of supplications”.

My main interest in reading this is to show how precious it is when this spirit marks the Lord's people at the present time, “a spirit of grace and of supplications”: that is what I like to trace through these scriptures. But apart from that, let us freshly appreciate that this is actually going to happen, and it may well be that there are young Jews today who are not actively rejectors of the gospel, not actively rejectors of Christ, who will actually experience this! What is the effect going to be when God so acts within them? They are going to mourn for Him.

Then we have this remarkable passage across the page, “And one shall say unto him, What are those wounds in thy hands?”. Now I am not expecting to see the Lord Jesus with wounds in His hands; I am expecting to see Him - we are all expecting to see Him - as the scripture indicates, in His body of glory; “we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is”, 1 John 3: 2. It is not as He was; I am not expecting to see Him like this, but I fully believe that He will appear to these repenting people and they will see Him in this way. “And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thy hands?”; they will ask, 'What does it mean?'. Think of the genuineness of the enquiry! 'What do these mean?' “And he will say, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends”. 'Surely not your friends!', they may say, 'It must have been enemies!' No! the “house of my friends”; “they shall look on me whom they pierced”. What a beautiful thing it is, the spirit of grace and supplication! Where are the excuses, where is the self-justification?

They and it have melted away.

The next passage is in Judges, in one of the darkest sections of scripture, but it is part of the inspired word. The background is that there was a very low state in Israel: they were in the right place, (they were in the promised land), but there was a very, very, low state and the root of that low state was that there was idolatry - Jehovah their God was displaced in their hearts. It is not without reason that the apostle John closes one of His epistles with these words, "Children, keep yourselves from idols", 1 John 5: 21. The Lord has had to show me certain things, very sober things as to that. What *you* would nurture as something very important to you I would not want, it would not interest me, but what might be overwhelmingly important to *me* would not interest you, but the root problem in Israel was that: idolatry. I am only sharing with you what the Lord has shown me as to myself. My father told me that an idol is 'anything which comes between you and God'. I think another way of putting that is that it is 'whatever, apart from Christ, commands the heart', JBS vol 9, p312. What a blessed thing it is to have the Lord Jesus commanding the heart! You have no regrets on that road.

Idolatry, these things that can overwhelm us and pre-occupy us, they lead to poverty of soul and worse, and in Judges it was worse. There was one tribe who shielded someone who should not have been shielded, but that was the *fruit* of this root that I have spoken of, and a war took place; for what they had to address could not be overlooked. The result was that the Benjaminites were largely destroyed! And I repeat, it was not over nothing; it was over something important.

Now I would like to share this with us, "And the people came to Bethel, and abode there till even before God". What a sobering matter that is, to come to a place and abide there, in the presence of God - in the light of His house. It is not only at the prayer meeting we are conscious of this - the thought of the house of God, and what is due to Him, what is due to His dwelling, is to be with us constantly. I emphasise this thought that they came there and *spent time there*. I have felt personally rebuked in the history of things, how I have lacked in this taking time. You might make a phone call to someone when you have got nothing else to do: well, the Lord's things require something more deliberate than that. Here they are and they "came to Bethel, and abode there till even before God". Everything is clear in *His* presence.

I was thinking of the Lord Jesus and His regard for the temple

when He was here. It was Herod's temple; yet having recognised it He said in one place, "make not my Father's house a house of merchandise", (John 2: 16): He cleared it! Another time He sat down opposite the treasury and He watched the people, how they cast in. This illustrates the truth of the house of God to me: everything shows up in its true colour, and it says, "many rich cast in much", and then the Lord identifies the poor widow, and He says, "This poor widow has cast in more than all", Mark 12: 41-43.

Everything is clear in the house of God - in the presence of God. It was not just the place to which they came, but more than that, they abode there before God. Now what is their reaction? They "lifted up their voices and wept bitterly, and said, Jehovah, God of Israel, why is it come to pass in Israel, that there should be this day one tribe lacking in Israel?". Was that weakness? It was not: that was power! We know something of this in our own day, 'what is lacking'. Does time heal? In this, it does not. Do we get over it? Do we get up and move on? Not so! It is the spirit of grace and supplication in its essential character, poured out upon us even now at the present time. What do they do? The question is not answered, but it shows how they feel it; and we feel it. Well, I commend this to us; "it came to pass on the morrow, that the people rose early": how deliberate this is! I love this thought of what is deliberate, time and deliberate measures taken. They "rose early, and built there an altar"; their thoughts are turning towards God.

I have often reflected in the simple truth that there are two ways of looking at everything: there is man's view and there is God's view. I first realised this when, in Malvern, we were occupied with Mark 8, where we read that Jesus "began to teach them that" He would "be killed, and after three days rise again"; then Peter "began to rebuke him". The Lord replied, "thy mind is not on the things that are of God, but on the things that are of men", v 31-33. At that moment Peter's mind was not on his fishing: Peter had listened to what Jesus had said and applied a human view to it. Here we have the divine view. It says, "the people rose early, and built there an altar", a deliberate matter involving approach to God. We can call upon God at any time, but there is such a thing as a deliberate approach, a recognition of what we are, (maybe it was an altar of earth, we are not told), but it is a recognition of what we are and then it goes on and says, "and offered up burnt-offerings and peace-offerings". We might say this is a serious time they are in, so where is the sin-offering? Why not the sin-offering? Well, beloved, the

eternal validity of the blood of Jesus remains! It never needs to be repeated, never will be repeated, never can be repeated. But they offer up burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. There is a certain substance, a certain fulness in this; it is not simply one offering, but it is plural.

Now I will commend to you what I read in Mr Coates: 'If we are going on with God, it is on the value of the burnt offering' (Outline of Joshua, Judges and Ruth p189); that is to say, the excellency of Christ ever before God in His devotion to His will; then, 'We are with the brethren on the ground of the peace-offering'. I am limited in what I can say about this, but one thing I have come to appreciate as to what the peace-offering refers to (and remember it is nothing to do with making peace, surprisingly): it is the fellowship-offering or the thanksgiving-offering, it involves fellowship, and the outstanding thing about the peace-offering is the emphasis on the fat. The blood and the fat in the offerings were always for God, Lev 3. Sometimes the blood was carried in to the holy of holies, but it was always for God. Then the fat of the peace-offering: that really refers to the excellency of Christ in His intimate communion with the Father here. I will share something else; remember when the Lord was by the well of Sychar, it says the disciples had gone away into the city that they might buy provisions (John 4: 8), and I used to marvel that *twelve* men would go away to buy provisions! There is a higher level, for when they came back they "wondered that He spoke with the woman" and then it says "no one said, What seekest thou? or, Why speakest thou with her?", v 27. They were not afraid of Jesus, but no one asked Him. I will tell you what I think of that: what had just happened while they were away was a transaction between the Father and the Son, the Father had given a soul to Christ and that moment on which they came back, they came back into a holy space, the place of that great transaction and they were aware of something holy: that was the peace-offering. That remained between the Father and the Son; I think that is the fat, and I commend these thoughts to us.

Now in Revelation, we certainly find a spirit of grace and supplication. Whilst what I have said is I believe broadly true, that intercession includes an outward look as well as an upward look; you look around and you see the need to pray for governments, and that has its outlet upwards. I think supplication is *essentially upward*, the spirit of grace is in our hearts, and what a lovely thing it is to see among the Lord's people. I commend this thought to you that this is perhaps the highest thought in regard to supplication. It says of the Lord in

Hebrews, “in the days of his flesh, having offered up both supplications and entreaties to him who was able to save him out of death” (chap 5: 7); I suppose that is especially what took place in Gethsemane. As far as we are concerned, this is perhaps the highest thought of supplication. Let us consider it freshly; we have often been occupied with it. First of all Jesus presents Himself by His personal name, “*I Jesus*”. Another aside: John's gospel was probably written after the Revelation, but I think we can take the whole of John's ministry as having special force now, written for the last days; I think that is sound teaching. It is perfectly true to say that the address to each of the seven assemblies probably addresses epochs in the church's history that can be identified. All the history of failure is acknowledged in those addresses - so nothing, in that sense, has come as a surprise, certainly not to divine Persons, and all that being so, how precious to think that here at the end, this blessed Person is presenting Himself in this way, “*I Jesus*”.

Then He says, “*I am the root and offspring of David*”: David, a man after God's own heart. All that David was morally in His greatness was derived from Christ, the root of David. The spirit of Christ of which we have been speaking was richly seen in David. Fine ministry has been given on that. But just think of this example: the present tendency with modern governments is to legislate, legislate, legislate. Remember David's statute; he said, “For as his share is that goes down to the battle, so shall his share be that abides by the baggage: they shall share alike”; so “he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel (1 Sam 30: 24, 25); I am not aware that he made any more. But what a spirit that man had; that is the spirit of Christ in David.

Jesus says, “*I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star*”; that is how we know Him at the present time. “And the spirit and the bride say, Come”: that is upward. Is that the spirit of intercession? I think it is! Possibly at its highest, “the Spirit and the bride say, Come”. I shared this with a brother, who we have never broken bread with as we say, and that was over the phone, just last week; and he replied as to the Spirit saying, “Come”, 'It has been happening a long time'. That is true. We have often noticed it does not say the Spirit and the Bride will say come; no, it is, “the Spirit and the bride say, Come”. That is intercession; we are saying, 'Please, Lord Jesus, come'.

I commend this to us also. “The Spirit and the bride say Come”;

that has often been taught, and rightly, embraces a unique concept, unison, a divine Person and a creature vessel speaking with one voice and they are saying, “Come” to Jesus. “And let him that hears say, Come”; who is that? That is an outward look. There is somebody out there: they perhaps did not even know that there is such a thing as the coming of the Lord, they perhaps did not even know that there was such a thing as the bride of Christ, and the spirit of grace and supplication is reaching them and they say, “Come”! And they join in this great cry, that is upward, the spirit of grace and supplication poured out.

And then the whole tone changes, the word “Come” then becomes an evangelical cry, so we shift from this sublime cry to Jesus, “Come”, and the invitation to any who will hear this, to join in that great cry to Jesus to come; and then it says, “let him that is athirst come”; that is the gospel. If someone ever says to you, 'You have got to choose between gospel life and assembly life', do not. They cannot be separated; the most sublime assembly truth is presented tight against, immediately followed by, “let him that is athirst come”. We can say that today; “him that is athirst”. Do you have a thirst in your soul, thirst after Christ? We can say, “Come”. More than that, if there is someone who does not even have a thirst after Christ, if you will, “come”; “he that will”! May the spirit of grace and supplication deepen with us.

For the Lord's Name's sake.

SUNBURY

1st October 2022

GOD FOR US NOW

Paul Martin

1 Corinthians 1: 27 - 31

John 14: 25 - 27

Romans 16: 1, 2

I have been thinking a little today of the way the saints of this dispensation have been provided for. We sometimes sing -

He leaves us not alone to trace
Our path across the waste; (Hymn 244)

and how true that is. We have One who has gone before. Peter says that "ye should follow in his steps" (1 Pet 2: 21): what footsteps they were, the footsteps of the Lord Jesus, one step after another, steady, measured, perfect. Peter says He has left those steps for us to follow in: what a provision. One might sometimes say, where do I go from here? That is often a question raised; but just look at the footsteps of the Lord Jesus. We are to follow in His steps: "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, who, when reviled, reviled not again" (v 22); what footsteps they were.

I have read these passages because they speak of what divine Persons are to us now. What a comfort, if I might speak reverently: we have a glorious living object in the Person of Jesus. We are more than thankful for what we learn of His pathway here. The manna was treasured by God and is provided for us to feed upon, but also our Lord is living for us, and that is what led me to this passage in Corinthians. We are moving through a world which is corrupt and vile; and things which in the eyes of men seem so important in the eye of God are so insignificant. How thankful we are that "God has chosen the weak things of the world", and we are to feel our own weakness. What led me to this passage is what Paul said to the Corinthians, who were in need of much help and guidance, as we always are. He says, "But of him are ye"; you think of the wonder of that. He says to those Corinthian saints that they were of God. I wonder if I grasp that. You look round a little company like this and Paul would say, 'Ye are of God'; not of the world but of God. We do not gather according to fleshly principles. He says, 'Ye are of God'. There is something there that is substantial; it is born of God and belongs to God. Oh, to lay hold of that!

Nothing can overthrow what is of God. We may not always be up to what God's thought is for us, but nothing can overthrow what is of

God; that remains, because it is of God. He says, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus". If we are of God, our standing before God is in another Man altogether, in Christ Jesus. He does not look at us in what we were: He looks at us as standing in all the worth of that blessed One. Everything in that blessed Man, in the Lord Jesus, was perfectly for the delight of God. God has taken us up and we are of God in Christ Jesus. He has taken us up in all the worth of that blessed Man, so that we should be here fully provided for in the scene of the testimony. He says our Lord Jesus "has been made to us". Not just that He has been made, but He "has been made to us". These features that Paul speaks of are available to us. How great that is. He has "been made to us wisdom from God". How I feel the need of that, "wisdom from God". Where do we find it? - we find it in Jesus. He "has been made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness". We cannot stand before God in our righteousnesses. As we know they are as filthy rags (Isa 64: 6), but if we want to learn righteousness, we find it in the Man who is called "Jesus Christ the righteous", 1 John 2: 1. How wonderful to learn that that is available to us. That standard of righteousness that God found in Jesus is the standard in which God takes us up. As occupied with that blessed Man the features of righteousness are to come into expression, increasingly, in our pathway here; "and holiness"; where was that found? It was found in Jesus. He says He is "the holy, the true", Rev 3: 7. Who else could say that? He is made that for us, that blessed feature that is so evident in Jesus, that we might feed upon it as occupied with Him and that it might mark our walk increasingly. He then says, "and redemption", the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. How great to be conscious that we have been redeemed: "ye have been redeemed, not by corruptible things", Peter says, "as silver or gold, from your vain conversation handed down from your fathers, but by precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish", 1 Pet 1: 18, 19. Oh, to walk in that light, not only that I have been saved from judgment, but to walk in the light of the fact that I have been redeemed. God has purchased me for Himself. That makes a great difference in the believers walk as knowing that God has purchased me to be here for Himself and to be with Him eternally for His pleasure. That redemption is in another Man. Paul says we cannot boast because it is all in Christ; it is not to make anything of us, but to make everything of Jesus.

That led me to this verse in John, because of the reference to the service of the Holy Spirit; and how wonderful the Holy Spirit is. I long to know Him better. We are to know Him. When the Lord Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit in John's gospel, He speaks of Him as a

Person, a living Person, not just an influence or a power. He *is* influential and He *is* powerful, but He is a living Person. The Lord Jesus speaks of Him in that way. He speaks of Him as "*he*": "When *he* is come", John 16: 13. How wonderful to know such a divine Person.

We are reading at home in our morning read the early chapters of the book of Acts. We have read in chapter 2 as to the Spirit descending at Pentecost. Then the word went out, they spoke in tongues or in dialects so that those who were there in Jerusalem heard them speaking in their own tongue. What a wonderful moment, a witness to Jerusalem, where Jesus had just been crucified, that a divine Person had come. Immediately there are operations of power in the healing of the man who had been born lame, chap 3. Immediately there is the operation of divine power. There is a testimony again that a divine Person was here. Do I believe that He is still here? I ask that question of myself. Do I really believe that the power that came at that time is the same, or do I feel that it has diminished? What an insult that would be to a divine Person if I felt that the power that was there had diminished. The power is the same, even though we are not in Pentecostal times and there may not be the public witness to His presence. The vessels through which He operates may not be the same. We have to be humbled by that. I remember Mr Lyon said once, 'The reservoir is always full of water, but the tap is inside the house. If you open the tap full, you could never contain all the reservoir, but the house can be filled with what flows from the reservoir'. That is where I find I am tested, whether I am maintained in self-judgment in order that the Holy Spirit might have His way and that He might fill the vessel.

The Lord Jesus says here when He comes, "the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, *he* shall teach you all things", all things. If I am exercised to grasp the truth, if I am exercised to receive the word of God livingly in my soul, the Holy Spirit is ready to do that; "*he* shall teach you all things". And He says, "and will bring to your remembrance all the things which I have said to you". How wonderful that that is so. You think of the apostle Paul writing, not having seen Jesus when He was here, but the Holy Spirit putting into Paul's heart the things that the Lord Jesus said, "remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive", Acts 20: 35. How wonderful that the Holy Spirit was conveying that. It may have been conveyed to Paul through a vessel, but it was of the Holy Spirit. He is able to receive it, "all the things which I have said to you".

I come to Romans. I was thinking of the advantage that we have of having one another. It has been remarked in the past that this epistle to the Romans was actually a letter of commendation. We have letters of commendation at times, if someone changes locality, perhaps. What a letter of commendation this is. Here was a sister Phœbe: “our sister, who is minister of the assembly which is in Cenchrea”. She was to be received at Rome. It does not say that she was a minister *to* the assembly; she was a minister *of* the assembly. Sisters do not minister publicly, because, as Paul says, “it is a shame for a woman to speak in assembly”, 1 Cor 14: 35. That is an important matter that the enemy is seeking to overthrow in the church publicly, saying it is only what Paul said. Phœbe was not a minister in that way; she served as having the assembly in view. This is part of the resource, divine provision for the continuance of the testimony here, that there is the place of a sister as being a minister, serving the saints with the assembly in view. That is a wonderful service, a service that is particularly precious as carried out by a sister. “I commend to you Phœbe, our sister, who is minister of the assembly which is in Cenchrea”. We might ask ourselves, as to everything that we do and say, does it have in view the support of the assembly and the continuance of the testimony in the assembly? Phœbe had that; it says “ye may receive her in the Lord worthily of saints, and that ye may assist her in whatever matter *she* has need of you; for *she* also has been a helper of many, and of myself”. “A helper of many”, Paul says, “and of myself”. You might ask, 'How would she have helped Paul?'. We are not told. She would have no doubt ministered to him in a practical way as well as in her spirit, in order that there might be the increase in the assembly that would be for the pleasure of God. It is a portion that is open to us all; it was carried out by Phœbe, and she was to be commended.

I leave these words with us, beloved; what resource there is. We are in a broken day; we feel that, we feel broken hearted as we think of the conditions which prevail in the church publicly, and our part in it; and the smallness of the companies in which we meet, and yet the provision from the divine side is unchanged and it is available to us, as in lowliness and humility we seek to draw upon it.

May it be proved by us increasingly, for the Lord's sake.

Word in a meeting for ministry, Malvern

17th September 2019

ONE

Garth McKay

1 Tim 2: 5-6 (to “all”)

Luke 15: 3-7

John 10: 10-16

Acts 4: 10-12

I want to say a word about 'one'. I want you to think about 'one', to think how special it is, the number one. I think it is true mathematically; it is a special number; but we know, do we not, that if there are things in this world where there are only a few of them, they become very special? Imagine if you had something - maybe you do have something, where there is only one. I want you to think about that and we will see what the scripture says. That one thing, there was only one: how special. I am interested in cars, and I can think of an example where there are only eight of them; how special they are, how rare. Think if there were only one. Only a poor example but think about that one. How rare, how precious, how valuable, how sought after one thing is.

I want to refer briefly to these scriptures and talk to you about 'one'. In my first scripture, it says, “God is one”. There is one God. We will begin there: one supreme, all-seeing, all-knowing God. Do you know that? The deceiver in the beginning says, “ye will be as God”, note *b* says, 'as gods', Gen 3: 5. It was a wicked thing to say, to suggest that there might be gods. There is one God; one only, one who is all supreme over everything. How rare, how special, how precious the God that we know, and the One that we declare in the gospel. It is not a God who is declaring Himself to us in judgment, but in love. He is a loving God. There is one God; how precious that is, and how special He is. Think of the God who brought everything into being, the creator God. One who brought things into being by His own power, and by His own word, “Let there be light”, Gen 1: 3. What power there is in the things that God has done. I was looking at the beginning of Genesis, and to take just one example, it says He took a rib out of the man and built it into a woman, Gen 2: 22. What a Person God is. What power, and majesty and greatness He has, the One God. One God: how precious; how sought after.

I hope you are seeking after God. He is seeking after you; what a wonderful thing that is. I would desire to encourage you to seek after

Him: find out about God. Paul preached that, did he not? He saw that altar "To the unknown God" and said, "him I announce to you", Acts 17: 23. He is the God who is speaking in the gospel tonight; the one supreme God. Paul speaks about Him, "one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in us all", Eph 4: 6. He is everywhere; God is everywhere, even if you do not know it, even if some do not accept it; He is "over all, and through all, and in us all" one God. He is the One who James speaks of: "with whom is no variation nor shadow of turning", Jas 1: 17. He is the God we have to do with; we may have to do with Him, thank God, in His love, but the God we have to do with is the One "with whom is no variation nor shadow of turning".

God is absolute and His standards, His righteousness, His holiness, are an absolute thing. I will say one thing now: in the picture of the gospel that we have in the passover, it says they were to take the lamb without blemish and put the blood on the doorpost and the lintel, and God says, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you", Exod 12: 13. It is a wonderful picture of the available, beloved Christ, who is there to guarantee safety from God's judgment for those who put their faith and their trust in the blood of Jesus. On that night when the destroyer came; if the blood was on the doorpost and the lintel, you could be absolutely sure that judgment would not fall on that house. I just say one other thing, that if the blood was not there, you could be absolutely sure that judgment would fall upon that house. It is the truth. The one God is the One "with whom is no variation nor shadow of turning". There are no shadows with God; He is absolute and His ways are absolute. His righteousness is absolute and one thing is absolutely sure, He will judge sin. He hates it; He cannot have it in His presence.

But He has a remedy for it, in the Mediator that we read about in 1 Timothy. Not only is there one God, but it says, "the mediator of God and men one, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all". There is one Man who stands between men and God, stands there on your behalf, stands there on my behalf, between God and men; between the sin-hating God with whom there is no "shadow of turning". God declares Himself in love because there is a Man who has given Himself a ransom for all. The Lord Jesus has given Himself as a ransom for all. That avails for all who trust in Him, and I trust you are one of them. All who put their faith and their trust in one Man, that one Mediator, know their sins forgiven. God looks on the sacrifice of Christ and accepts it fully. That precious shed blood is there, standing before

God in all its power and efficacy to guarantee your freedom and liberty for ever and ever, because the Lord Jesus gave Himself a ransom for all. It says here in the note *k*, 'a ransom in place of'. That is a very helpful note, is it not? - He gave Himself a ransom in the place of. Do you know that that was your place? Look at the cross of Jesus, where He died there, where He suffered. The judgment of sin fell upon Him: that was your place. That was the place that you deserve, that I deserve, but He gave Himself a ransom, in the place of all. He took your place there; in His love for you, He died.

And so, He is the "mediator of God and men one". How precious, how precious He is. There is only one Mediator, only One who can stand between you and God. There is only one life that can effect your salvation and that is the life of Jesus, and He laid it down for you. One Mediator; how precious. How rare, how special He is; the Saviour for mankind. I looked up the dictionary definition of 'mediator' and it says, 'one who attempts to make an agreement between two parties in conflict'. The Lord Jesus does not fit that definition. He has not attempted to make an agreement; through the Lord Jesus, God has "made peace by the blood of his cross", Col 1: 20. It was the only way it could be done, and He was the only One who could do it. He is presented to you tonight as the one Mediator, the One who has made peace by the blood of His cross. Having done it, having laid down His life, having paid the price Himself - that price that was yours and mine - having taken our place, "having made", as Hebrews says, "by himself the purification of sins, set himself down on the right hand of the greatness on high, taking a place by so much better than the angels, as he inherits a name more excellent than they", chap 1: 3-4. More excellent than angels! Who is It? It is the Man Christ Jesus, and He is a Saviour for you tonight, the one Mediator, only One; how precious. There is no one more precious that I could present to you today; there is nothing more precious that I could speak about than the Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all.

In Luke 15 there is one again: one sheep. And that sheep is lost, and this is you, and me. What happens to the lost sheep is that the shepherd goes after it, and that is the Lord Jesus presented to us in John 10 as "the good shepherd". One sheep that has gone astray; the gospel comes to us like that; the Lord Jesus serves us in this way. It is very personal. The Lord Jesus has gone after you, as the one lost sinner. If you were the only one, He would have gone after you like this.

If there was only one, this “one” is you; He is speaking about you. The way to get the good of this scripture is to think about this as you. You can put your name here, lost to sin, as we all are. The Lord Jesus in His love has gone after you, and He is going after you tonight, to seek you. He says, “the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which is lost”, Luke 19: 10. There is one sheep here, and it is very beautiful to think that He goes after that which is lost, “until he find it”; “and having found it, he lays it upon his own shoulders, rejoicing”. The Lord Jesus is thinking about you as the one sheep, and how precious we are to Him, how precious, how sought after. Think of the seeking of Jesus, what it cost Him, the lengths to which He was prepared to go so that He might find you and put you on His shoulders and bring you home. That is His desire in the gospel, that one lost sheep. Do you know that you are precious to Him, and He is seeking after you tonight? He is seeking you because you are precious to Him. That is a wonderful truth is it not? His love is like that because you are precious to Him. His desire is that you might be found tonight and brought home on His shoulders.

John 10 gives us more details about “the good shepherd”, and my thought here was there were lots of things said here about the bad shepherds and what they are like, having no concern for the sheep here, there is not a lot said about good shepherds, but about “**the** good shepherd”. There is One who has your well-being at heart, there is One who is seeking you; there is One who is able to save you. There is only One. How precious the good Shepherd is, the One who has care for the sheep so deeply that He lays down His life for them. “I am the good shepherd”. Have you found the good Shepherd? Have you found the one who is able to save you, as in Luke 15, to bring you home on His shoulders? Have you answered to His voice? The sheep here know His voice, “I know those that are mine, and am known of those that are mine, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep”.

It says, “I have other sheep which are not of this fold: those also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, one shepherd”. That is the desire of the Lord Jesus. His work is done; His work is finished; His precious blood has been shed. Everything is settled between man and God and His desire is to bring you into this “one flock”. The great Christian company is being formed now and the Lord Jesus is going to be the Centre of it, the Leader of it, the Object of it. His desire is that you might be gathered into it tonight, to find there is “one flock, one shepherd”.

We had a sense in the service of praise this morning, I think, of being caught up into something very wonderful, something very precious; and I had a sense of a united response of the Christian company to God, and to Christ. In amongst that united response the Spirit is working to bring everything together; and we had a sense of being there, being in heaven itself, and being in the presence of the Father. These precious things are hard to describe in words. I was struck by one of the hymns in that great throng of response, that was all united; the hymn had a reference to every voice and every heart.

God sees them; He sees them all together and the great concerted answer to God that there is in it, but it is made up of every one. And every one has been brought like that lost sheep home on the shoulders of the Lord Jesus, every single one of them. I think it is very beautiful that God does not see the company and forget the 'ones'; He knows each 'one'; He knows about you. He knows the cost that was expended that you might be brought in. How precious every one of those lost sheep, precious to God.

I just finish with Acts 4 and Peter's preaching, and he is speaking about the Lord Jesus as "the stone ... which is become the cornerstone". Jesus is not here any longer; He is risen above, and He has become the Cornerstone. He is the building block for God on which an eternity will be built. Peter says here, "neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved". I will finish on that, the one Name. There is one way of salvation, one way only. Only one Name and it is a Name which is given among men. How precious, how privileged we are that we can come to a gospel preaching and the name of Jesus is being given among men. It is being given out; it is being declared again tonight, maybe weakly, maybe not as strongly as it could be, but there is no lack of strength in that Name. It is the Name "by which we must be saved". I finish with that: one Name, one only.

Have you found Jesus for yourself? Have you found Him and trusted in Him as your Saviour? He will lead you to the one God, and He will make Himself known to you as "**the** good shepherd", and lead you in to the "one flock"; so you might be able to say this for yourself, as that man who says, "One thing I know", John 9: 25. Do we know? I know there is "one flock, one shepherd". I know who He is; He is the One who gave Himself for me, the One who gave Himself a ransom, the One who laid down His life for the sheep.

There is one other thing about 'one'. There is one opportunity to believe and to know your sins forgiven and to come to know the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, and to know God as a loving God and not a God of judgment. There is one opportunity and that is now. Now is the day of salvation; that is today. You might say there could be tomorrow; there could be, and there could be next week, but these things are not guaranteed. So I say again, one opportunity. How precious, how special, how sought after. What an opportunity you have! If you have not already, put your faith and your trust in Jesus. What an opportunity you have. And that opportunity is now, and I can only offer you one, and that is today is "the day of salvation", 2 Cor 6: 2.

May He bless the word.

Sunbury

18th December 2022