

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

1 John 1: 5-9; 4: 7-19

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RHB We are told in 1 Timothy 6: 7 that “we have brought nothing into the world: it is manifest that neither can we carry anything out”. Whilst that is said in relation to material things, there is one thing that we can acquire and take with us when we go, and that is the knowledge of God. None of us was born with the knowledge of God but it can be acquired; indeed God desires that we should come to know Him.

Each of these passages has the character, I believe, of a revelation. We could never know anything about God unless He was to reveal it to us. What has struck me about these passages is that in each of them there is the revelation of what God is: in the first passage He is said to be “light”, in the second He is said to be “love”, and in the third, He is said to be “a spirit”. In each of these passages, that revelation is to have a direct effect upon those to whom it is revealed. I thought in this first passage that the statement that “God is light” reveals Him to be a moral Being. The thought of righteousness, and the concept of sin and unrighteousness, have become apparent through the revelation of what God is. And so He is said to be light, “and in him is no darkness at all”. He has come into the light; in other words, He has made that known to us with a desire that we should be acceptable to Him. Such is God's desire to be known and loved that He has made provision whereby we can be acceptable to Him and suited to His presence. It seems to me that the very first thing we learn about God is that He is light, and that reveals Him, but it exposes us for what we are. But then as this chapter shows, there is provision for us, “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness”, it is a deception, but the fact that “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” is intended to affect our walk.

The revelation of God in chapter 4, that He is love, is brought to bear upon our relationship with Him, and also our relationships with one another. We are to be like Him. I think in all these passages, what God is revealed to be is what He desires to form us in; and not only relationships but testimony. He says, “No one has seen God at any time: if we love one another, God abides in us”; God can be seen. The unseen God can be seen in those who through His grace have been brought to love one another.

The woman in chapter 4 of the gospel talks of worship in a somewhat detached way without reference to who, or what, is being worshipped. The vexed question of the time as to whether it should be in this mountain or Jerusalem was occupying her. The Lord says, "Ye worship ye know not what; we worship what we know". He goes on to say, "the true worshippers shall worship the Father", so that the reference to God as a Spirit is directed to our approach to Him, and to our response to the grace that He has shown towards us. It involves what is spiritual. "They who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth": an outward order of itself is not enough; there must be response to God that is acceptable. The apostle says, "let us serve God acceptably with reverence and fear", Heb 12: 28. I hope the brethren will be free to develop those few thoughts.

DAB Thank you very much. I was wondering if it has been at the heart of God's purpose to make Himself known. It is interesting to see how much of what has come in along the way has been used by God to serve that end. Moral questions have arisen which have served to bring out what God is as a moral being, for example. Our need has brought out His love which gives us a distinct understanding of it, would you say?

RHB I do think that. It seems an extraordinary glory of God that He has taken what has risen up in opposition to Him and to His will in order to accomplish His end. It is only God that could do that, but it does not in any way justify the introduction of sin. We may, and sometimes do perhaps, wonder why, if God is omnipotent - which He is, and He hates sin - which He does, why it was not prevented? I do not think we are equal for questions like that; the fact is the coming in of sin has brought out in its lustre what God is in His nature, in His being, and it is intended to form in us what is in Him. We are to walk in the light and be cleansed "from all unrighteousness", as this passage says.

DAB We may wonder, I suppose, that these features are seen in His children, light and love; we walk in love, and we walk in light. That is a very wonderful thing, that there is not simply an abstract manifestation of God, nor is there only what has been seen in perfection in Jesus, but there is what is formed, what is begotten of Him, and must be true to His character. And yet it is the wonderful grace of God that He should proceed on that line that His very nature, whether moral or in love, comes out in those who have received the knowledge of Himself.

RHB Yes, and they are lights, are they not? His children "appear as

lights in the world” (Phil 2: 15), “harmless and simple, irreproachable children of God”. It is the divine nature coming out in those who have been begotten of God.

RMB Why does John present this matter as to God being light as a message that God had conveyed to the apostles?

RHB Well, I would be glad of your thoughts as to that, but it seems to me that that verse is one of cardinal importance, particularly in our own day. I believe what we have read in the gospel and in the epistles is among the last scriptures to be written by the apostle, of whom the Lord said, “If I will that he abide until I come”, John 21: 22. John has in mind the darkness which in our own day is exceptional; the rate of apostasy from the truth, publicly, is unprecedented. And in the presence of that God is revealed. There is a great tendency to adapt ourselves to what is proceeding, and because we are immersed in it, living in it, we may, like Lot, torment our righteous souls (2 Pet 2: 8) over it; it is very easy to be affected by the tide around us. “They think it strange”, Peter says, “that ye run not with them to the same sink of corruption”, 1 Pet 4: 4. I thought this message is put like that as something that is to arrest us. I do not know what you think about this, but this particularly relates to what came in at the fall. The devil not only persuaded man to be disobedient, but he suggested that God had an ulterior motive. Despite abundant evidence to the contrary, that God was a benevolent and faithful Creator, it was suggested that actually He had an underhand and deceitful motive; that thought was instilled at the fall. Therefore, the apostle states here that not only “God is light”, but “in him is no darkness at all”.

DAB The apostle has brought out that the twelve had a special relationship with the Father, and that relationship had enlightened their appreciation of the Lord Jesus. But it had brought an understanding of God Himself too, that could then colour their testimony. Their testimony was not drawn from the dark world in which they lived in any way, but it sprang out from that communion and sanctuary where they learned from the Father Himself what God is.

RHB I think that is very interesting because the apostle gives three reasons why he wrote this section, does he not? First of all in verse 3 he says, “that which we have seen and heard we report to you, that ye also may have fellowship with us”, and then verse 4, “these things write we to you that your joy may be full”, and then in the beginning of chapter 2, “My children, these things I write to you in order that ye may not sin”. I

think those three things bear on what you said; they had had an experience with the Father and they wanted to share that with others. In that they found fulness of joy and satisfaction. The introduction of sin, although it may seem temporarily pleasing, “the temporary pleasure of sin” (Heb 11: 25), has brought nothing but misery and unhappiness, and ultimately death.

PM John in the beginning of his gospel says, “The true light was that which, coming into the world”, John 1: 9. Do you get some sense of what it meant to the heart of God, that “the true light” should come into the world and shed its light on every man?

RHB It is striking because the darkness was all around, and “the darkness apprehended it not”, John 1: 5. We know that that is an unusual reference; we know that if light is introduced the darkness is normally dispelled, but “the light appears in darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not”. That darkness is still around us in the world. In the midst of such conditions, God would have us to shine in the light in which He has been revealed, and to walk in it in order that we might have fellowship with Him. We may speak of fellowship and those that are 'in fellowship', and those that are 'out of fellowship', but in this epistle, John is going to the very essence of things and that is fellowship with God Himself firstly, and then fellowship with one another on the basis of walking in the light together.

AM Can you say why it is a question of our walk and so on, and in verse 7 it is, “the light”, not just walking in light?

RHB It says, “if we walk in the light, as *he* is in the light”. I am glad of help, but “God is light” seems to be a statement that stands by itself, but He has come into the light; in other words, He has been pleased to make Himself known to men; and it is in that light, the light in which He has been revealed, that we are to walk. There is no other. Men today are surrounded with a vast variety of philosophies, religions, and the like, but it is “the light”; there is no other light except that in which we can walk.

AM That is what I was thinking, there is only one source of light, and it is from God Himself. Anything else is in its nature darkness.

RHB That takes us back to Genesis 1, that “the earth was waste and empty, and darkness was on the face of the deep”, v 2. The first thing God said was, “Let there be light”, v 3. I thought this is how we begin, in acquiring a knowledge of God, we learn what He is relative to what we

are. God is light is a relative expression, but when we come onto chapter 4, "God is love", it seems to me that is an absolute. There is no relativity in that; it is what God is, irrespective of conditions. But this is what God has been shown to be in the presence of darkness, darkness so impenetrable that when the light appeared in it, it did not apprehend it.

RMB God coming into the light is what distinguishes Christianity, because it is not only a question of darkness in the world around, but in the previous dispensation, God Himself was in the darkness. We have reference to Him dwelling "in the thick darkness" (1 Kings 8: 12), but what has characterised Christianity is that God has come into the light, in that there has now been the fullest revelation possible of Himself.

RHB When Jesus died there was the expression of that, that God was free to come out. In the old dispensation man in the flesh was recognised and God was concealed in a way, behind the veil. In the death of Christ man in the flesh has been removed from before Him, and God is free to come out in all the blessedness of His nature. We might get some impression in speaking of the blessedness of these things. Both the apostles Paul and Peter used that expression, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ", Eph 1: 3 and 1 Pet 1: 3. They had an impression, as having to do with God, of the inherent blessedness of His nature. Initially, we might perhaps fear as we think of God being light, as the scripture says, "all things are naked and laid bare" (Heb 4: 13); we might feel uncomfortable about that. I remember hearing that in the preaching as a boy and feeling distinctly uncomfortable about it, that God was looking into my heart and seeing things that I might not have wanted Him, or anyone else, to see. All with a view to the blessedness of His nature coming out and being known and responded to.

JHF We have the reference in 1 John 2 that "the darkness is passing and the true light already shines", v 8. I was also thinking of the glory of the light that the apostle spoke of when he was struck down on the Damascus road, a light above every other, the light of God Himself, Acts 26: 13. I wonder if you could say something as to the darkness passing and the true light already shining.

RHB I wonder if that is a reference to the fact the Spirit has come, the work of Christ having been accomplished; and He has empowered the testimony. Through the energy of the apostles, the darkness was passing. I think it also would involve what John says later on in that

chapter, that “the world is passing, and its lust, but he that does the will of God abides for eternity”, 1 John 2: 17. I think we are very near the end, dear brethren; I think others feel that too; it raises the question whether my interests and energies are directed to what is passing, or what is going to abide for eternity? The knowledge of God in the soul and the doing of God’s will as a result is eternal.

DAB I was thinking of it in that connection with what you said about the veil, because it would be right to say, as you have already quoted, that the true light was already shining in Christ. It was not as if that light appeared at the death of Christ, because it had been there in His life, but I was thinking that the Jewish system preferred the idea that God was in the “thick darkness” to what was to be seen in the Lord Jesus Himself. They did not apprehend that there was light when they were accustomed to the idea of darkness, and the cross laid all that bare, and from then on God was not identified with the system in which He had dwelt in darkness. But God came out in a special way at the cross.

RHB That is right; the darkness is passing and the true light shines, but until the work of Christ was accomplished and the Spirit came, there was not much understanding of that, was there? Everything was there in Christ, but “the darkness apprehended it not”. I think what you say brings out what the heart of man is; there is no appetite for Christ: “there is no beauty that we should desire him”, Isa 53: 2.

DHB In verse 7, “But if we walk in the light ...”, seems to be written in such a way as to raise a challenge as to whether or not we are: is that your exercise? That we should be exercised to walk in the light. It is not an automatic thing; when we become a believer we know the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, but there is to be an exercise to be here true to Him.

RHB We are here speaking over the truth, talking about it, but that verse says, “if we walk”: does what I speak about among the saints, does it govern me in my walk and ways? “The light” is the only light; there is no other. We are either walking in that, according to that verse, or we are walking in darkness.

RMB Do you think the little words in the middle, “as *he* is in the light”, are important? Would it be right to say there is a sense in which every believer is walking in the light, otherwise they would not be a believer, but the test is whether they are walking in it “as *he*” is in it, because that, it seems, is the basis of Christian fellowship, according to this verse.

RHB Yes, what do you see in that, “as *he* is in the light”?

RMB It is according to the way in which He Himself has been made known. For example, in the next chapter it says, “He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in the darkness until now” (v 9) because to hate your brother would be inconsistent with the way that God has made Himself known.

RHB And that is developed more in the passage we read in chapter 4; it is part of walking in the light. All that God is, all that can be known of God, has been made known in a Man, a Man who lived in the everyday circumstances of life in which we are. John records the Baptist looking at Him “as he walked”, John 1: 36. There was something arresting about the way that that heavenly Man walked on the earth. In this epistle in chapter 2, he says, “He that says he abides in him ought, even as *he* walked, himself also so to walk”, v 6. The Lord Jesus walked the earth in conscious sonship, enjoyment of the place that He had in the Father's heart. He was untainted and uncorrupted by the circumstances through which He walked, but always ready to administer the grace of God to the need that He found.

BHC At the beginning of chapter 1 it says, “the life has been manifested” (v 2); how wonderful it is that the greatness of God's Person was manifested in the life of Jesus here. I was thinking of how John speaks, “we have seen with our eyes; that which we contemplated”, v 1. It is wonderful to think that the revelation of God, the fulness of God's heart in light and love is manifested in one blessed Man.

RHB John says that in his gospel, “In him was life, and the life was the light of men”, John 1: 4. The fact that God is in the light and all that God is that can be known of men has been made known in a Man, God has been manifested in flesh. That is an extraordinary thing, that in the condition in which we are, God has been manifested in the Person of Jesus.

CHS It says of the city in the Revelation that “the glory of God has enlightened it” (Rev 21: 23), in relation to the millennial time and I was thinking of the Lamb there being the lamp and what may affect our hearts to walk in the light. We are not exactly walking in it because of what we know, are we?

RHB No, I think it is a heart matter. I think the writer was perhaps the most intimate with the Lord, “there was at table one of his disciples in

the bosom of Jesus, whom Jesus loved” (John 13: 23), and he spoke of himself not as an apostle, but as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (chap 21: 20); he was conscious of it. You get that impression of John, that that was enough for him. He does not say much about his love for the Lord; in one sense he does not need to, because his writings bear out the adoration that he had for Christ. He speaks of himself in relation to the place that he had in the heart of Christ, consciously, and I think that is a very blessed thing and a motivator to “walk in the light, as *he* is in the light”.

PM What do you understand by, “we have fellowship with one another”? That is more than coming to the same meeting room, is it?

RHB Yes, I think it is fellowship in its essence here. Other scriptures give us other aspects of the fellowship, practical aspects of it, but this is the very essence of fellowship, that persons that walk in the light, “as *he* is in the light”, have a very deep and profound bond with each other: “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin”, and then he says in verse 9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness”. So that everything that would hinder our acceptability before God has been dealt with and we can have fellowship with Him, and fellowship with those that are walking in the light. I think it helps us to understand what fellowship is; in the day we are in we have had to part company with many that we know and love, who, for one reason and another, have gone off on a tangent. We do not cease to love them or in any way un-Christianise them, but if we value the presence and fellowship of Christ, we must ourselves keep in the light.

DAB Attention was drawn that this goes far beyond a profession, what we say. I am just picking up some of the things that have been said just now - John had that place of intimacy that you referred to. I think if you spoke to John, he would have said, 'Well I have been so near to Christ that it makes me feel I must walk in a certain way. The knowledge I have acquired and the experiences I have had have constrained everything else'. Say he found another believer who was moved by the experiences of Christ in the same way, he would feel he had fellowship with him in the light. So, there is nothing technical or merely formal about this, but these things have a deep spiritual and moral foundation in our experience with Christ.

RHB They do, and it is the principle of attraction. If we look up at the sky and consider the stars and the planets, the vast number of them,

they all seem to be held in place on apparently nothing. What holds them is the principle of attraction; the whole celestial system is founded on that. Everything is moving in its allotted place and orbit, and we see a system of order set out there. It seems to me that is what the apostle is speaking about here, that if we walk in the light, we are getting into our proper place in the divine system by walking in the light and we are not only attracted to Christ, for what He has done and for what He is, but we are drawn in deep and profound bonds to those that are in the same orbit.

DAB Yes, if we can just keep to the astronomy, it is not that all this was just set in motion and left to run itself; it is upheld by the word of His power, His active management. If we bring that down to this setting, John would say, 'I do not speak of my love, let alone my power; I learnt to rest on the love and power of Christ', and that is what sustains this fellowship, and keeps it in moral order.

RHB I think that is very touching; not only was he in the bosom of Jesus, but when Peter signalled to him, "he, leaning on the breast of Jesus, says to him, Lord, who is it?", John 13: 25. He leant there; he leant on the breast of Jesus. That is what we can all lean on, dear brethren: the love of Christ is something we can rely upon.

PM When John wrote this he was probably in a cave on a rocky island, alone, but he was still having fellowship with others, because he was drawing from the same source with the same objective, enjoying the same love, and regulated by the same authority. Is that really what we mean when we speak of fellowship? It is not just positional, but it is what effects our inwards: we are linked on together with others that are under the same power, authority and affection.

RHB So in that verse you quote, he says, "I John, your brother and fellow-partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and patience"; he says he was there "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus. I became in the Spirit on the Lord's day", Rev 1: 9, 10. It is very affecting that, to think that he was practically in isolation but the Lord's day was recognised by him. That is part of walking in the light, that the Lord's day is recognised and on that day he was exercised, even though there were no brethren there, to be "in the Spirit". It seems to be that is the secret, that while he was there positionally on that rocky island by becoming "in the Spirit" on the Lord's day, he became part of what is immense. The book that unfolds shows that; he had communications from the Head of the assembly to communicate to the assemblies. It is

a very blessed thing in simplicity to touch that, many gathering in great fewness and weakness, and conscious of it, but experiencing what it is to be part of what is immense, “in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises” (Heb 2: 12); what could be greater than that? That is worked out and experienced in localities, often in great smallness and isolation.

I thought in this second passage you get a further thought; we have come to learn what God is as a moral being, but 'man is not all conscience', as Mr Darby has said, and we learn that He is love towards us and that He Himself is love. Love is of God and as John says, “We love because *he* has first loved us”. So these things have come into expression because they have been revealed in God. God has been revealed as light in order that we might walk in the light and be lights in the darkness. But then He has been revealed as love, and that has in mind that we should love. We should love the family of God particularly; it seems to me that it not only bears on our relationships together but it touches on the question of public testimony to God. In verse 12, “No one has seen God at any time: if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us”. It is almost as though John speaks of that as a great end to be reached, that through loving one another God is expressed, the unseen God is expressed in testimony.

DAB Yes. I wonder if the discord that has come in among God's people that you mentioned is because Satan sees in that a way of frustrating the testimony. I was thinking of the Lord's prayer in John 17 that focuses on the unity of the believers which is arrived at by the Spirit, but whether it is seen practically in testimony is made a challenge in practical questions.

RHB Yes, you mean we cannot overlook the public breakdown that has come in because of man's responsibility? But nevertheless, it says in verse 13, “Hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, that he has given to us of his Spirit”; so just as there is provision in chapter 1 for us to be cleansed “from all unrighteousness”, so there is provision here for us to abide in Christ. I think the dislocation that you speak of has come in when we cease to do that.

DAB If someone leaves because they do not like the way something was dealt with, you wonder how God is manifested in that. How is the assertion of the divine nature of the children of God not been great enough to meet a waywardness of that kind?

RHB Well, I think it is helpful to see that, because it may not have occurred to us. It would help us to review our place and conduct among the people of God, would it not? We are exhorted to use “diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit” (Eph 4: 3), and we are told here that “we know”. It is remarkable how John brings in the question of knowledge of things in this chapter, things that can only be known in love through the heart, “we know that we abide in him and he in us, that he has given to us of his Spirit”. That is the power, even if others are not answering to it, to walk in love.

ILB These things are moral are they not? It is not a question of what is outward, but what is really formed in the hearts of the saints.

RHB John says, “let us love one another; because love is of God”; that is the hearts being won for God, and love is of Him. I think it has been said that is a very wide expression. Even the natural love of a mother for her child comes from God, “love is of God”. The thing itself and the power to express it comes from God, “and every one that loves has been begotten of God and knows God”. Do we know God, dear brethren? We may know a lot about Him, and we speak about Him, but the knowledge of God is what is stressed in this section, “we have **known** and have believed”. It is a matter of faith, but it is to be a matter of consciousness, that we know God and He is near to us.

HTF I am very tested by what you are bringing in, it is very practical; every phrase of John's epistle is about walking in the truth and how we do it. As to darkness, I was wondering about the reference in Luke because “there came darkness”, and even the sun was darkened, chap 23: 44-45. We referred to the veil as well and I wondered if there might be something in that for us which helps us to see what came to light in the cross.

RHB Those three hours were shut out from human view because of the immensity of what was taking place between God and Christ on the cross. “Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us” (2 Cor 5: 21); what words those are and they express what is unfathomable and beyond us. But we come into the blessing of it, and here the love of God is manifested. God has sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him, that we might know God and we might live in the life of Christ. God's love has been manifested in that because it is the path of greatest happiness for man. He has not left us to our own devices but sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him, and be brought into the knowledge of God. Paul had to

say to Corinth that some were “ignorant of God” (1 Cor 15: 34); he had to say that in a Christian company, and I find that a challenge. Am I sitting among believers, claiming to be a believer, yet ignorant of God, when God desires to be known, and as this passage brings out, not only to be known but to be loved?

AAC I find it testing. In exhortation, Mr Coates says, 'Make it the supreme business of your life to get better acquainted with God' (CAC vol 19 p24), and that is what you are speaking about. But it is not simple knowledge like we learn things naturally; this is a relationship, as you have drawn out. I was thinking of the Lord Jesus speaking to Mary, “my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God”, John 20: 17. This is not simply knowledge of a Being; I am His and He is mine, and it is to change everything about my life here. Yes, that life is going to be left to one side but the relationship and the knowledge that I have of Him in these things is what will change me, and what will go forward. These things in a sense belong to us and we have to make them our own.

RHB What an immense thing it is, just taking it by itself, that God should abide in us. We have been speaking about the knowledge of God, but that is how near God has come to us; He abides in His children. That is the way John speaks of the assembly; He does not speak formally of the assembly as other apostles do, but He speaks of the family of God. We know from a natural family that people say, 'Oh he looks like so-and-so', or, 'I can see so-and-so in him'. Well, is there evidence that God abides in me? What testimony is that? I remember Mr Eric Burr saying that we need to remember that our testimony begins amongst those who know us best, in the home. One who is answering to this, God abiding in him, should be a very good father to his children, and excellent husband to his wife. There will be evidence starting there right in the most intimate setting, amongst those who know us best, that God abides in us. If I am known, for example, as a husband who is forever complaining, or short-tempered, what testimony is there in that that God abides in me? Or if I am impatient - that is one of the things I found very searching when I came across a remark of Mr Raven's that 'impatience is a sure sign of moral weakness', vol 9 p306. I felt quite pulled up by that; he said God is never impatient because there is never any doubt that He will accomplish His will. We get impatient because we get frustrated that we cannot accomplish our own will or in the time we want to accomplish it. How searching these things are! In the circumstances in which we

are known best, it should be seen that God abides in us, and then there will be something that can spread out wider testimonially.

DAB God has been pleased in His creational ways, as well as in our calling, to give us others to whom we can give and receive these things. He sets the “solitary into families” (Ps 68: 6), and I was thinking of the woman in John 4, her relationships were all dislocated, and at the heart of that lay a God unknown. I wondered if the two are linked: the five husbands might have been very religious Samaritans, and no doubt could justify the law as a reason for leaving her. They brought no knowledge of God. Her encounter with the Lord Jesus set all her relationships in their place.

RHB She learnt really first of all that God is light, “I see that thou art a prophet”, “thou hast had five husbands, and he whom now thou hast is not thy husband”. That was not to be covered up by saying, “I have not a husband”, which was not the whole truth. He who was “the light of the world” brought out that there was darkness there, yet she was not repelled by it. She may have tried in what she said to divert the conversation, but she was held by it. I think she was coming to realise that God was not only light, but He was love. She was amazed that Jesus should speak to her, “How dost thou, being a Jew, ask to drink of me who am a Samaritan woman?”. And then the Lord opens up to her the greatest truth. You might ask why was it not opened up to the man in the previous chapter; he was an intelligent man; it was opened up to this woman. The satisfaction of her heart was coming to know God as a Spirit and worshipping Him “in spirit and truth”. There were no longer to be disputes as to where or how, but who? The Father: God revealed to her by that name must have been startling to this woman, to hear about worshipping the Father, and she was going to be drawn into the divine family.

DM So is it encouraging to see that in both light and love there is a wonderful opportunity that God gives; both light and love create opportunity, do they not? As a result of light it was possible there could be day, and with day that there could be a morning. And with the woman at the well or the malefactor on the cross, it was their occupation with Christ that allowed God to bring in love and light, and that had its effect. What we have spoken over is exercising, and rightly so, but resting in the presence of Christ creates opportunity and allows God to take effect through love and light.

RHB Yes, it is a very blessed thing that God could be known and we

can enter into a relationship with Him. It struck me afresh on Lord's day what an immense thing it is that we have been divinely capacitated to minister to God's heart. We might say that is the very root of everything that God has done, He has sought an answer to His own great love, an answer in intelligence and affection. That is secured by those who worship Him, not from a prayer book or an order of service, but who "worship him in spirit and truth". God's heart is gratified by that.

PM Will not the fulness of that be seen in the city that has been referred to, "having the glory of God", Rev 21: 11. It is really formed in the divine nature, God Himself delighting to dwell there.

RHB Yes, it is a remarkable culmination of God's ways. It will be said, "What hath God wrought!" (Num 23: 23), when that comes on to view publicly: "the lamp thereof is the Lamb" (v 23), and "the Lord God Almighty is its temple", v 22. What a glorious answer to God's ways in time and in grace that it should be so.

Norwood

16th September 2023

List of initials:

D H Bailey, Maidstone; I L Barlow, Sidcup; R H Brown, Maidstone;
R M Brown, Strood; D A Burr, Norwood; B H Clark, Maidstone; A A
Croot, Sidcup; H T Franklin, Grimsby; J H Farrow, Strood; A Martin,
Buckhurst Hill; D Martin, Colchester; P Martin, Colchester; C H Smith,
Chelmsford

THE BELIEVER'S PORTION

Mark R Buchan

Luke 14: 21-23; 15: 14-22 (to "in it")

1 Corinthians 15: 51-54

At the burial occasion on Friday we sang hymn 375, and I was struck by the first and last verses of it. The first verse says:

Lord, though Thy saints be laid to rest,
In Thee they have a portion blest.

'A portion': if you have a portion of something you could consider it a set amount; it is your own; you have it: you have 'a portion blest'. That is a wonderful thing, dear friend. Are you in the good of the knowledge that you have a portion with God, something that is your own, something that has been given to you, something, which has been purchased with a price, but it is for you, distinctly your own? You are not trying to share your brother's portion next to you, or something like that, but are you in the distinct realisation of having your own portion? I thought we got a real impression on Friday of one who was in the good of that, the knowledge of having a portion that was her own. That is what the gospel is seeking to impart to you, the importance of having your own portion, as it were, something that you can call your own, a link with God in Christ Jesus. What a portion! You might think of a portion as being a small thing, but there is nothing small about what God has on offer in the gospel, nothing small about it at all. It is as great as you are willing to go in for it. It might seem, if your estimation of your need was very small, to be a small thing but get yourself right as to the estimation of your need and you will realise that what you need is a great thing. God has a great thing on offer in Christ, the greatest thing.

In Luke 14, there is a man who had a great thing on offer: he is opening his house. God is desirous of opening His house to you. He is wanting to fill His house and He is sending out. I did not read of those who were sent an invitation. An invitation is a sort of formal thing, a communication you can take it or you can leave it. The gospel is not going out on the grounds that you can take it or you can leave it. No! The gospel is going out on the grounds of compulsion: "Go out into the ways and fences and compel to come in". You must realise your need. You must realise you cannot just say, 'Well, I have a list of excuses. It does not really suit me this week'. No, you must realise the dire circumstances you are in. So I did read of these persons who would

have been well aware of their need. The first he speaks of are those in “the streets and lanes of the city”. These are persons who did not have their own house even. He says, “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring here the poor and crippled and lame and blind”. These are persons who would have known their need, known that there was something wrong with them, known that they were in a position where they could not do that much for themselves. You read about beggars that the disciples had to do with in the Acts and elsewhere, and the Lord had to do with in the gospels, and you also find that there are these kinds of persons, “the poor and crippled and lame and blind”, those who did not need to be told they had a need; they knew it well enough themselves. Are you labouring under the misapprehension that you have no need? Clear yourself of that immediately: you have a need; you have a need of a Saviour.

Well, the desire of the householder here is that the house should be filled. We sang that hymn at the start:

God's house is filling fast (Hymn 70).

How that must please God! We often speak in the gospel of that scripture that says, “there shall be joy in heaven for one repenting sinner”, Luke 15: 7. What joy God must have in His house being filled! What joy He must find in a person freshly coming to Christ. He is desirous of filling His house with such persons. There is a place for you if you are such a person. The householder here, having been informed that his bondman had cleared the streets, as it were, sent them out again. He says, “Go out into the ways and fences and compel to come in”. I suppose “the streets and lanes” might speak of that sort of city, that area in which things are formalised in a way, but then there are “the ways and fences”: there is no-one who is outwith His gaze; He sees all. You might think you are at the very fringes of society; you might think you have done things in your past which cannot be forgiven which will keep you eternally from God. Not so, dear friend! “Go out into the ways and fences”. That is, ‘Do not leave one corner untouched!’ The gospel is going out in this way, searching the earth for those who *will* believe. Be amongst those who *will* believe! I have said it is not a choice, and it is not a choice in one way in that you *must* believe. You must; it is imperative that you do. But on the other hand, I suppose, you could take the steepest risk of all and choose to delay. What a risk to choose to delay! It is not said that any of these ones refused such an invitation as this. No, they are compelled to come in. They know that where they

are being taken is somewhere better and, the gospel seeks to put you onto better ground than you will ever get yourself onto, into God's house, into that area. There is safety there, supply there, love there. God would have His house filled tonight. He would have your name upon a space, as it were. That hymn that we sang says:

Some guest will be the last,

and that is a literal thing, I think: take the opportunity! It is available to you now.

Well, if we turn the page, this is a well-known scripture. I really had in mind the best robe in regard to this because, if you are going to find a place there, you need to be clothed. It said in the previous passage, "A certain man made a great supper and invited many", Luke 14: 16. This was a great occasion, and it became those who came to dress accordingly, but if you are going to find yourself in God's house, how are you going to be dressed? What are you going to be clothed in there? It is the best robe that is in view for that. We have to be clothed in the best robe.

So, this younger son had gone off to this country and dispensed with everything he had. "But when he had spent all there arose a violent famine"; I think the younger son here was like one who was out in "the ways and fences". He did not have a roof over his head; he did not have anything to his name; he had nothing to rely upon. Even the food that was available to him was food for the swine; it was not given to him to feed himself. That is like one who has nothing to claim. He had nothing on which he could lay his hands and call his own but what he did have was more precious than those round about him had. It was the knowledge of his father's house and the abundance that was there. The gospel seeks to give you that kind of wealth. It seeks to give you that kind of wealth that you can say, 'I *know* where a better place can be found'. This younger son was "coming to himself". I am often struck by that in reading this: "And coming to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's ...". He thinks of those who are lowest in his father's house, and they have "abundance of bread". God is not taking you into His house to give you a lowly place. He is taking you into His household, not just His house, as sons. It is *available* to you through the work of Christ.

This younger son returns to his father. We have all been "a long way off"; and he had gone about as far as he could go, I would think. He

had taken what he had got from the father's house and he had headed off but he was not so far away that he could not come back. However far you are from God in your sins, you are never so far that you cannot come back. The father was looking out for him. It has often been said that the son takes one step, and the father runs to greet him. Have in your heart tonight, if nothing else, that the Father has His eye upon you. The Father has His eye upon you tonight: He is looking for that first step. You might have thought the younger son in starvation conditions might have thought, 'I am not strong enough for that journey. I have come all this way away. Where will I get provisions for this journey?'. But there is no thought of that in his mind. The only thought in his mind was going back to his father. Immediately there is strength and there is provision for him. So, however far your sins have taken you from God, wherever you find yourself, when you come to yourself and realise your need, recognise that you are never so far from God that you cannot get back. You can get back by taking that one step, taking that one step in the direction of God, the direction of the Father's home. He was not so far away that he had forgotten which direction that was. Why? Because he was coming to recognise the extent of his needs; he recognised which direction to go to get back to where he could have that need met.

Well, he goes back to the father: "But while he was yet a long way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion". God has compassion for you tonight; the Father has compassion for you. Have you thought about that? If you drive down the street and perhaps you see someone begging at the side of the road, have you compassion for them? It touches your feelings as you go past. Do you have compassion for them or do you walk on by? I just pose that as a question because God looks upon you in your sin as one who has *nothing* to offer, *nothing* at all. What have you got to offer God? Nothing! But He looks upon you with compassion. Does that not just show what a heart of love God has that He can look with compassion upon persons who have nothing to offer themselves? I was just thinking of "one of the citizens of that country"; he sends him into the fields to feed swine. It is a relationship of give and take. The younger son was sent into the field to do work so he could link himself on to the household of that man. I think that is how it worked. Presumably his needs were met in a very limited way there, but that is the relationship of the world again, give and take. You have nothing to give God. I think we had a touch of that in the reading: you have nothing. The faster you

come to that, the safer you will be because if you labour under the misapprehension that you have something to offer God, then that is what is keeping you from God. But when you come to yourself as the younger son did, realise you have *nothing* to offer, it is at that point that you can make that step back towards God.

So here he gets back to the father and he has his speech prepared. You might think it would be a hard thing to confess all your sins to God, to tell Him things you are embarrassed about, but not really because God knows them all, knows everything already about you. Even if you tried to confess everything you had ever done, there would doubtless be things you had forgotten about, but God knows them all, and He is not holding them against you. Having made that step back, the younger son has that speech prepared and I do not think he even got halfway through it. The father saw him, and he said, "I am no longer worthy to be called thy son". Then it says, "But the father said to his bondmen, Bring out the best robe and clothe him in it". Oh, dear friend, if we are going to have a part in that house, we require to be clothed; you require clothing fit for the place, and that clothing is Christ. You have to be clothed in the worth of Another. Your own worth is not worth anything there. In fact, you require a covering, and there is no greater covering than Christ, as He covers entirely all that you actually are. His work at the cross, He has gone into death, paid the penalty of sin there, but it is to be as a covering for you and for me in our sinful estate. He could not return us to innocence. You would not wish such a thing; rather you are covered in the worth of Another.

Beloved, this is not just any other; it is the Son of God, that One wholly perfect Himself. I said I was impressed by the last verse of hymn 375 too:

When those asleep shall wakened be
To put on immortality.

So, where we have read here in Corinthians, it is just what came into my mind in regard to this. It speaks of the "corruptible" and the "incorruptible" and the "mortal" and "immortality". I feel I have touched upon what is corruptible already because man in his sin is corruption. Man in his sin has corrupted the ways God had for him. God had His thoughts for man as set out at the beginning, and man in sin has corrupted these things, but God would seek to set out a path; man in his corruption has deviated from that path, but in Christ there is incorruptibility. Why? Because you are clothed in the worth of Another.

Then it comes to putting on immortality. That scripture in 1 Timothy came to my mind as well speaking of One “who only has immortality”, 1 Tim 6: 16. We have to “put on immortality”, but He “has immortality”. We are clothed in the worth of Another. We do not become that Other; but we are clothed in His worth. And what a worth that is. God is looking upon you as clothed with Christ, the worth of Christ. He does not see any worth of mine, which is nothing and could never be in His presence. He sees the worth of Another; He sees the worth of Christ, and how pleasing that is to Him. Think of the scripture that says, “there shall be joy in heaven for one repenting sinner”. Why is there joy? It is because God looks upon one who is clothed in the worth of Christ, and how pleasing that is to His heart, how pleasing to His heart that there is one who can come into His presence now, not in a state of corruption, but in the state of incorruptibility, of being clothed in the worth of Christ! That is available to you tonight. Do you recognise your need for it because you need to? You need to recognise your need of it, but then you have to recognise that you have *nothing* to give to secure this and anything you could offer would actually be an offence to God because God has freely given His only-begotten Son, and Christ has freely given His life at the cross, man there in wickedness piercing His side.

Thy blood love's answer gave (Hymn 230),

one could say. What an answer! What do you have to offer that compares to this? Nothing compares to this. God has done it all. Christ has moved in perfection in this scene in every step pleasing the Father. He could say, “I do always the things that are pleasing to him”, John 8: 29. What a perfect sacrifice! I have been thinking recently of the tabernacle system and the sacrifices there, and it says they were to be without spot, without blemish. You can just imagine the shepherd going through his herd looking for one that fitted these criteria. It would probably be relatively rare to find a perfect animal, but you had to find one that was the best of your flock. Sometimes it speaks of the firstborn from amongst the flock, but they had to be without blemish, and then they had to be taken to the priest to be checked that they were without blemish. It must have been quite a thing to find one like that, but in Christ God has found One who meets His exacting standard. What a standard! The holy righteousness of God has been met in Christ. Well, what a covering!. Adam and Eve at the beginning were given coats of skin as a covering, as it were, but in Christ you find your eternal covering. You put it on, but it is not with ever a view to taking it off. It is not like a garment exactly; it is a moral covering. It covers what you are,

sets you up before God. Well, dear friend, that is what is available to you tonight, but it is in view, as we read here, of putting on immortality.

The Lord is coming for His own, coming very soon no doubt. If I could impress another thing upon your heart on this occasion, it is that as you come to God, you must realise your time here is short, and the Lord is coming back for His own, and it is very soon. I think, Paul was very much in the gain of having the view that the Lord was coming very soon. He speaks to the Thessalonians as to “we, the living who remain”, 1 Thess 4: 15. He does not say, 'You, the living' thinking that he himself would be dead, but “we, the living, who remain”. Once you come to know Christ, live your life on that line that “we, the living”, that you expect the Lord to come, not just in your own lifetime, perhaps when you are very old. Dear friend, live your life as one who expects the Lord to come this week, that expects Him to come today. Keep near to the reality of His soon return, and that will keep you in the living reality of what God has offered you because the gospel does not just offer you *eventual* salvation; it offers you *eternal* salvation and *present* salvation; so, as accepting Christ as your Saviour, it is not that you would just put off the day of judgment or in some way skip that judgment. No, it is *present* salvation, and He is an all-the-way-home Saviour. He will be with you until the end of this road whenever that may be, until the rapture, when He comes to take His own to be with Himself, but then too with Him for eternity.

If we continue the thought of putting on, we are to know what it is to have the Spirit currently, who will keep us in the good of these things. If you are going to have a relationship it is imperative it is a personal relationship, not an academic one. You cannot really have an academic relationship with God. You might know all about some historical figure academically but you do not exactly have a relationship with them, do you, even though you can no doubt answer many questions about them? But the believer has a *personal* relationship with Christ. Through the power of the Spirit currently it is a relationship we know; it is as near a relationship as one might have with any other; it is real. The Spirit is available. The Father delights to give the Spirit, and the Spirit delights to tell you of Christ. I have told you so very little, but I think what I have told you is what is required for you to come to know Him. It would be the Spirit's delight to tell you all about that One. What does the Spirit impart? What did the servant impart to Rebecca on that ride back to Isaac? No doubt He told her all about Isaac. No doubt he told her all about the father's house too.

Dear friend, the Spirit would tell you all about the eternal position, tell you all about the Father's house. It is the Father's delight to impart impressions of His Son. I remember being at a reading and a brother said we have the Scriptures and can read of all the things in the gospels that Jesus did, but speak to the Father about the Son. He would delight to tell you about the Son. He might tell you something He had never specifically told anyone before. That is not to say you are looking for novelties, but, you have a real relationship where you can say something for yourself about the Person you are in relationship with, not something someone else has told you, but what your own appreciation of that relationship is. This is what is available to you tonight, *freely* available. Accept it for His Name's sake!

Aberdeen

25th June 2023

MARRIAGE IN THE LORD

Robert Bain

Exodus 2: 1

1 Samuel 1: 11

Mark 14: 3

I wish to say a word, beloved, as to marriage in the Lord; the responsibility that goes with it, and the blessing that comes with it. Marriage in the Lord is a marriage between a man and a woman who are both lovers of the Lord Jesus who are walking in the same path together. That is something that is of great value to heaven and heaven is interested in what has been proceeding today - interested with delight. What a start it is for a brother and sister that they are setting off in their married life together knowing that they have the approval of heaven. And heaven would have them enter into that joy.

I read of this couple in Exodus; it is like a marriage in the Lord. The first thing that is brought before us is the matter of baptism, the teaching and the truth of baptism. It certainly meant that this couple had their back to the world of Egypt and their outlook was towards the heavenly land, the land of divine promise.

I refer to Hannah. It was a very difficult time for her; things were not very easy in the history of Israel at that time, but here was one who displayed the spirit of subjection. One of the greatest features by which we can express our love for Christ is the spirit of subjection, and that is seen in Hannah. And not only is her love for God evident but she is in sympathy with divine Persons in relation to what was proceeding at that time. She knew the divine feeling, and she is in prayer before God in relation to it. What came to light was wifely instinct: she knew what to pray for. No one told her to pray for a man-child; instinctively she knew to pray for a man-child and God answered her. God gave what she desired and we see the result in chapter 2: 11. There is the reference that Elkanah went to Ramah to his house and the boy ministered to Jehovah in the presence of Eli the priest; there is now youthful energy in priestly service. There was something there for God's heart. Hannah was thinking about God; she was not selfish in her outlook. Thinking about God is a feature that should mark persons who are joined together in a marriage in the Lord.

When you come to Mark, another feature comes to light. There is an atmosphere created that is appreciative of the glad tidings in

Simon the leper's house. How wonderful it is that there was an atmosphere that the Lord could identify with, someone that was supporting the glad tidings. Now what went into that? We have this woman with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly. The Spirit of God would have us dwell on the value of what was in her flask. Where did she get it? How did she come about it? Well, let me put it quite simply, beloved: in her daily pathway this woman would call on the Lord in every problem that arose in her life, and in every need that came up. The Lord would be brought into every circumstance. How beautiful that is.

And when He came into every circumstance, beloved, He would leave her with an impression of His moral glories. Every one would be distinct, and she gathered them all together; she had them all in that flask and when the moment came she poured it out. She was thinking about Jesus. What a wonderful thing, beloved, to have in our localities households that are supporting of the glad tidings, where Christ is in their lives, Christ is everything and in all.

This woman was really seeking the things of Jesus Christ. May that, beloved, be instinctive for every one of us, to be seeking, not our own things, but the things of Jesus Christ. If you were to visit such a house, how would you leave? Would you leave depressed? No, beloved, you would leave with a wonderful sense of divine mercy. I think this house was marked by mercy, and of God it says, "being rich in mercy", Eph 2: 4. The wealth of mercy would fill your soul as you visited this household.

So let our couple take encouragement today to see that we are in a wonderful wealthy area, an area that is expansive. You may think of the waters to swim in; that is what is available to us in marriage in the Lord. As we commit ourselves wholeheartedly and take on responsibility and enjoy the blessing there is fruit for God.

May the Lord bless the word.

Word at Marriage Meeting

Peterhead

19th July 2023

“COME, SEE A MAN”

Peter S Barlow

John 4: 29

This verse came to me, beloved hearers, as I awoke this morning, “Come, see a man”. The gospel presents a wondrous living Man; it is an invitation, an invitation to each and every one of us; and the wonder of this invitation is that there is no limitation. We know what the world's invitations are; they are often very limited. The invitations for the recent coronation were very limited due to the king's desire for economy. But the invitation in the gospel has no limitations and it is available to all. I remember a dear preacher, known by all here, who stood up to preach where I was at the time, and he just said “Come”: that means children, older persons, middle-aged, everyone'. And that is what the gospel offers tonight; it is an invitation to everyone to come and know this Man that this woman in John 4 found.

I did not read the whole passage as it was this particular verse that struck me, and I believe that is what has been given. But we know the story of this woman, and that the Man she was referring to was the One found sitting “wearied with the way he had come” (v 6), sitting “just as he was” at the well which she frequented. There He was, sitting there, and after a transaction with that glorious One what does she do? She goes back into the city and says, “Come, see a man ... is not he the Christ?”. That is what the gospel presents to you; One who came in “a bondman's form ... in figure as a man”, Phil 2: 7-8.

Jesus came into this scene, the very One who was God Himself, drawing near to His creature man, as He is drawing near to you tonight in the gospel preaching. This is the Man which we preach; He was not one that came with great majesty, pomp and glory, but One who came into this scene as a lowly babe, who came into a condition of restriction; He who is the almighty creator God, the One who spoke and creation came about. That One who so spoke here as Man that it was said, “even the wind and sea obey him”, Mark 4: 41. That is the might and glory of this One.

But did He come in worldly majesty, pomp and glory? Oh, how we love that sort of thing naturally; we love much ceremony. I suppose we take a certain amount of pride in this country in the ceremony it is able to set on. That was not the way the Lord Jesus came. No, He came in a lowly way; He came near to men. It has often been said that,

if you want an audience with the king of this country, you would be very fortunate to get it, and if you did he probably would not know you. But the King of glory who came into this scene as a lowly Man, who knows the very inmost thoughts of your heart, who knows where you are in your soul, is drawing near to you tonight, and His appeal is, "Come". I suppose you could say this woman was in her measure a preacher, what she had found she could not contain in herself, she had to leave everything at the well to which she had come and go back into the city to say, "Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?"

He knows all the things you have ever done. Is it in rebuke that He looks upon you? Is it with a sorrowful face? Is He shaking His head in concern? No! What beams forth from that glorious One is divine love as He draws near to you. He wants to touch your heart; He knows the ins and outs of your life. Is He condemning you? No beloved, He is saying, 'I can answer that; I have met all that for you'. Another has said of this woman, and it stuck with me - because we are often a bit negative about this woman's history, for she had had five husbands and might not really be the type of company you would keep - that what she sought was affection. That is what she was seeking, affection. Ah beloved, there is a Saviour who is full of love towards you and me tonight and He is available to satisfy your every need. He is reaching out to you tonight; He has drawn near with a heart filled with love.

You might ask, if He is drawing near to *you* with a heart full of love, what is left for me? But it is so great; it is God's love. It is what God is; God is love. That love is towards each one of us tonight and it is more than sufficient to fill and satisfy the heart of every man, woman and child in this world. God in love is proclaiming this in the glad tidings tonight and proclaiming a lowly Saviour, One that came in such a lowly way, reaching out to men everywhere. He was in what is now called Palestine then, here on earth; but He is as near to you tonight as He was to those souls in Palestine then. In fact, if you had been in England then and the Lord in Palestine, there was a greater distance in a way when He came here in manhood on the earth. He came into a constraint, available to those in the land of Palestine. But everyone He had to do with, He met their need, those who would receive Him.

Are you one of those that would receive Him, one of those who would take hold of His invitation? It is not an invitation on a gilt embossed card. It is a personal invitation from the Lord Jesus Himself

tonight as He stands by you. "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11: 28), He says. It is the same tonight as when He pronounced those words two thousand years ago. Your every need that glorious One will meet and satisfy, and He has secured a basis in which the heart of God can be made fully known, God's love. It is not something He has become: He *is* love. You look through the Old Testament scriptures and wonder if you can see it there, but look deeper! What you find speaks of Christ and He is the One who has fully made known the heart of God. He would make it known tonight, make it available to you.

We have to do with a holy and righteous God. Man at the beginning was put in the most propitious of circumstances, and he fell. Why? Because the enemy of your soul subtly came in and tempted man. This same one tempted this glorious Man of whom we are speaking when He was here, but he found nothing in that glorious One: "In him sin is not" (1 John 3: 5); He "knew not sin" (2 Cor 5: 21); "who did no sin", 1 Peter 2: 22. He could not sin, because He was God Himself come down to draw near to man; that glorious holy righteous One. The holiness and righteousness of God means that on account of what I am as a sinner, as from the race of Adam, I could have no place in His presence. That was not good enough for God; His heart of love was so great that He desires to have me and He desires to have you. He wants you for Himself. In order to do that He has provided the answer in this glorious, beloved One, His Son. "Come, see a man". We behold that Man by faith now and if we believe, we are going to behold Him face to face. We are going to see Him soon.

Have you got that hope, that joy, in your heart? If not, why not? You have heard the gospel many times before; why not? He is available to you; He is reaching out to you tonight, beloved. Can I promise tomorrow? No! Do not put it off. One of the kings to whom the apostle Paul spoke, king Agrippa, said in answer to Paul, "In a little thou persuadest me to become a Christian", Acts 26: 28. Almost is not good enough! You must place your faith and trust in this Man, the Man that this woman had come to know. It was a very short transaction with Him, "told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?". He would have that transaction with you, tell you all the things you had ever done and He would say, 'I have taken it all, I have borne God's just and righteous judgment on that. I have borne that for you, and I have borne that for everyone that places their faith and trust in me'. Beloved, that is

how far God went, that which is most precious to Him, His own glorious Son, this Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, He spared Him not. Why? Because of His “great love wherewith he loved us” (Eph 2: 4), and He desires to have us for Himself. His love is towards all men, not just a select few, not just specific persons who think they are good and have not got much to judge, but, no, even to the vilest and most wretched sinner, God's love is towards them.

The apostle Paul writes of being the first of sinners, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom / am the first”, 1 Tim.1: 15. He knew what he was, one who had persecuted the assembly of God, persecuted that which was precious to the Lord Jesus Christ, “an insolent overbearing man”, 1 Tim 1: 13. Had he put himself too far away from salvation? No, the Lord Jesus drew nigh to him on that Damascus road, beloved; all that Christ has done met his every need. He has met my every need, and He has met your every need if you place your faith and trust in Him. How did He do that? He did it by perfect obedience to the will of His God and Father. We touched that this morning, the way He went, the sorrowful pathway that that glorious One took in this scene - in it but never of it - and feeling every condition of man on every hand. We know that He felt the weight and power of death that came in upon that family that He loved in John 11. He loves you and He feels everything that is weighing upon your spirit and heart now. He would say, 'I am enough; I can more than meet that'. Listen to what this woman said, “Come, see a man”, and this is the Man God is presenting in the glad tidings tonight, a Man who moved here in lowliness amongst men. He met contradiction on every hand, rebuke, hatred; at one moment they are seeking to make Him a king; at another minute they are seeking to throw Him off a cliff. They sought to stone Him, everything was set against Him, and in His lowly pathway of love here, He moved here in the way that wended to the cross.

The penalty of sin is death, the judgment upon me the sinner. But Christ has taken away that penalty for me; He has met it on my behalf. He went to the cross, He allowed the hands of wicked men to take Him. You think of that in the garden, when they came to Him whom they sought, and as He said, “I am he, they went away backward and fell to the ground”, John 18: 6. There before them was this Man; One who is God Himself stood before them. What did He do? Did he call upon twelve legions of angels? No, He said as to those who were with Him there in the garden, “let these go away”, v 8. They took Him, the

Lord of glory; they had come out with swords and sticks to take Him as a common criminal. That was man's impression of that One, the lowly, meek and gentle Jesus. They took Him before the Romans; Pilate who could only say, "I find no fault whatever in Him" (John 18: 38), in this glorious Man. The greatest travesty and injustice took place because Pilate hearkened to the crowd. We know what crowds mean today, seeking to persuade others to their own will. Even Pilate's wife said, "Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man" (Matt 27: 19), but Pilate was swayed by what surrounded him. The Lord of glory was given over into the hands of those who should have been pleading His cause, the ones He came to, but they would not receive Him. They said, "crucify him", the only One in whom there was no fault, no sin; there was nothing contrary to God at all; He was perfect in all His ways.

That glorious One was taken and nailed to a cross of wood. He was nailed there for me! It is often said it was not those nails that kept Him on that cross, it was His love for His God and Father and His love for me that kept that glorious One on that cross, to bear my sins; and He bore every one of them. There were three awful hours of darkness when the whole land was dark. What passed between a holy and righteous God and the Lord Jesus there, is forever hidden from the eyes of men. No one can pry into that, but what I do know is that in those three hours of darkness, every one of my sins was borne by Christ, and He fully satisfied the righteous judgment of God as to them. Not only that, but the whole question of sin was met. The whole world is held in provisional reconciliation because Christ has met the whole question of sin, and God's judgment of it.

So now the invitation is to "Come, see a man"; have you found that Man? Have you seen by faith your own glorious Saviour? That is what the invitation is; are you going to accept it? When the day comes when Christ comes to gather His own together and take us to be with Himself, He is not going to send an angel to us, no, beloved; "with archangel's voice and with trump of God" (1 Thess 4: 16), the Lord Himself shall descend; that is His heart of love. His love is so great that He awaits the Father's word, He will come with no delay, He will come and take His own. At that point, there is something set that can never be changed; those that have not received God's invitation in the gospel will no more ever have a chance. Why? You say we are talking of a God of love? Yes, but if you do not accept this free invitation available to all now, what can God do? He is holy and righteous. If you reject this glorious invitation, your portion will be in eternal judgment. The Lord

Jesus is available and ready for you tonight; He wants you for Himself. Do not put it off; do not delay: receive God's invitation.

This woman found it. She says, "Come, see a man". This is what is presented in the gospel tonight; "Come, see a man". Come and see my glorious Saviour, come and find Him as your own. Come and find that everything is there for the full satisfaction of the heart and soul. You may have seen me sad and downcast; sadly I am like that, but what I do know is that the Holy Spirit, the precious gift that God gives to indwell the believer, works in me that it should be otherwise. Have you received that gift of the Spirit? Is He yours? Do you know the indwelling Spirit of God within you? What does He do? The hymn says:

Come! for the Spirit speaks of Christ in glory; (Hymn 409).

The Lord Jesus is no longer on the cross. He is no longer in the grave, where He was put by gentle hands that took Him off the cross. It was cruel hands that nailed Him to the cross, it was cruel hands that took that spear and pierced His side, so that His blood flowed forth. But what did the blood show? It gave witness to God that a life had been given up, and God now has a basis to come out in blessing towards you and towards me. But Christ is risen; how could the grave hold the Creator? Gentle hands took Him from the cross, gentle hands laid Him in the tomb, and that glorious One came forth triumphant from that tomb and is crowned with glory. The Jews cannot deny the tomb was empty; they may have spread dreadful stories after He had risen, but I know truly that resurrection has taken place and Christ is up in glory. The Spirit speaks to the believer of Him there, in glory.

The Spirit speaks to the believer all the time of that One. We do need to move through this world, but He speaks to us in our hearts of Christ in glory. That is what this woman had found; think of what her life was now! Do you think she needed more husbands? Do you think she needed to go to that well for water? Do you think she needed to find other things? She says, "Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?". She needed none other. There is a poem by Mary Jane Walker that speaks of a woman who was sick and dying on a garret floor, her words were, 'I have Christ, what want I more?'

This is what is offered, that glorious Name; Christ is more than enough. The One whose name it is, the Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, is

He yours? Beloved, do not miss out on this glorious invitation but receive it for yourself; “Come, see a man” make Him your own.

May it be so for His Name's sake.

Colchester

13th August 2023