

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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BELONGING TO HEAVEN

1 Corinthians 15: 45-49

Ephesians 1: 3-7; 2: 4-10

DS As gathered together this morning for the Supper, we got a touch in our spirits as to that which is heavenly, and of the Christ, the heavenly Man, who carries the saints in by quickening power, and sustains us where everything is for God's pleasure. It is wonderful to think that we are suitable, therefore, to the environment that Christ takes us into; that He takes us there not as of dust, as it speaks of here, "the first man out of the earth made of dust", but as of "the second man as out of heaven", another order of man altogether, as the Lord Jesus was as the second Man, as out of heaven. We are conformed to Him, we are of Him, we are those who are of His brethren, akin to Him. So we are suitable, and we have feelings like He does, so that as He comes in amongst us in the Lord's supper, He takes a company that is suitable, akin to Himself, and carries them with Himself into the environment where we belong. This is where the saints belong. I got this impression this morning of the heavenly One as it speaks of Him here, "as the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones". It is the character of the Person that carries the personnel who are Christ-like into the area where He Himself is, in liberty and in joy

It says in Ephesians that we are "blessed ... with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies". Where is it? It is in Christ Jesus. I think that is the scope of the place into which He takes us; there is a great scope to think of what is heavenly and what the heavenlies speak of. "Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ"; this is what the Father has done. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ". We can get some help as to what that would speak of. And then there is this matter as to quickening in chapter 2: "has raised us up together, and has made us sit down together". This shows the liberty in the environment where there is no fear, where everything is settled. We touch something of the rest of God where every divine Person is at rest in this environment. And this scripture came to my mind: "has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, that he might display in the coming ages the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus". Grace runs right through these scriptures, and it is wonderful to see it.

It is just a simple impression I had of this matter as to the One who is heavenly and taking such a company with Himself who are suitable to Himself.

DCB We are told to have our mind on “the things which are above, where the Christ is”, Col 3: 1. It is quite a testing thing as to what we know about what is heavenly, but we know it centres in Him: “as the heavenly one”. It is wonderful to see that there is Someone who is “the heavenly **one**”, and carries that character wherever He goes.

DS That is good. He is distinct, is He not? Wherever the Lord is, and whatever office He fills, wherever He takes the saints, whether He takes us up as working something out here in the wilderness, or whether He is taking us into the area of purpose, He is always distinct. But it is a wonderful thing to think that He carries with Him those that are heavenly ones. They are suitable as they are kindred to Himself. They are not viewed as of flesh here; they are not of mere nature; they are not of man's will. So, we are abstracted from natural links as the Lord comes in. He carries a heavenly company to the Father, and I just wondered if that would be helpful and an attractive thing for us.

DCB So is it on that basis of attraction, as attracted to Him, that we are brought in? And is it a matter of formation, that there should be persons who are heavenly persons? And that really can only be through accompanying with Him.

DS That is why I wondered if that must be because He is the heavenly One. So that the character of what is heavenly is seen perfectly and beautifully in the Lord Jesus Himself. But we are those who love the Lord and who have the Spirit. Every saint is heavenly in that character, but if we are going to enjoy the heavenly sphere, we need the Spirit and we need to be formed after this Man and be attracted to the area where He takes us.

JTB In the first existence Adam was created last, was he not? But “the second man out of heaven” is first. He is Firstborn; so you can see how He gives character to the whole of new creation. He is Firstborn of a heavenly race, is He not? He gives character to it all. Whereas Adam was last in the creation, but, in new creation, the “the last Adam” is first, therefore influencing the whole sphere of new creation, do you think? And whereas Adam misrepresented God, Christ never does, does He? So, the whole thing flows out from that, do you think, as Christ is the

firstborn One?

DS The distinction from Adam and the way you bring that out is very attractive. So that really everything in the heavenlies is characterised by this Man, the whole of that sphere. He was raised up and beyond all the heavens and the whole of that place where He has gone, you may say, is Christ-like. So, if we are taken there, we must be Christ-like persons. I sometimes wonder how much I touch in my spirit of the Lord's supper, and the way He takes a people to the Father. It is only characteristically heavenly personnel who are attracted to this heavenly Man who will be carried into the area of heaven. There are no other personnel that are there, are there? Help us further.

JTB It has been said that when Christ died, He closed up the first existence morally but He presented to God a new man acceptable to God, did He not, in virtue of His going through death? So, His death underpins everything. So that is the start, do you think?

DS Yes.

TWL I was just wondering in relation to the beginning of Hebrews 3, although I know the setting of it is a little bit different: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling", v 1. There it is what we are in our common lot, as the note says. I am just thinking about what you said about the persons that go there. We are all to have the character; whether we understand it or not; we all have the character of heavenly persons: "partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus" (Heb. 3:1), The reality is of the Man that is there in a place where sin has never come.

DS That is something that every One of us from the youngest needs to contemplate more, that if I am going to enjoy the divine presence, I need to go with this Man. I cannot enter heaven, I cannot be in the Father's presence, I cannot know the joy of sonship, I cannot know anything of the liberty of that place where God wants me, unless I go with the One who is the heavenly One. And this is the One who gives character and colour to everything for God's pleasure, because the only Man who is in heaven is a heavenly Man. That is a strengthening for your spirit because when we do enjoy it, we know that our souls are right and our spirits are right to be carried by the Spirit into what is not of nature, not of death, not broken, can never fail; and it is all of the Father's purpose. It is a wonderful thing really.

TWL It is the truth of new creation, is it not? “So if any one be in Christ, there is a new creation”, 2 Cor 5: 17. That is an absolute statement of God. It is what He has made us. As associated with Christ, as in that Man, we are that. God never views us again as in the old man. Christ in going into death sealed off that man; to the eyes of God He does not exist anymore, and now it is just men in new creation.

DS New creation is of another character: “such as the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones”. They are now with Him but they are taking character from Him. Again it was what came into the meeting this morning, that God not only finds pleasure in the Man who carries the saints there, but He finds pleasure in the saints. He finds pleasure in the sons, and this is why: because they are heavenly. It is not because of what I am naturally or of what I bring, but because I am in Christ Jesus as a heavenly Man.

DHM It is wonderful to contemplate that the distinctiveness of the Lord Jesus forever remains, but we are there associated with Him. We cannot be there without Him. We are there; the hymn says,

He bringeth us to this blest place
Where we with Him can sing. (Hymn 374)

We are with Him but yet He stands in His greatness and glory as the One in whom the Father found His delight. But equally so

On us shines favour ne'er to dim
The love wherewith Thou lovest Him!

We could not be in a finer situation.

DS I think that is attractive. In every office the Lord fills, and in every way He takes, whether it is in relation to the assembly, or it is in relation to the Father, He is always distinct. He always has that distinction, as it says here, “such as the heavenly one”. He is the Man who has inaugurated all this wonderful matter and brought it to pass for the glory of God. He has closed up one order in His death. That work has brought glory to God, but He was a heavenly One here; it says that, again I think it is in John's gospel. It is an interesting thing that the character of the Man who was here was heavenly.

JTB He was “the Son of man who is in heaven” John 3: 13. He said that here. Even as a blessed Man here in flesh and blood He never lost the heavenly character of His manhood. As taking up a condition of

flesh and blood, He never ceased to be identified with what was heavenly. The characteristics of heaven remained with Him.

DS “The Son of man who is in heaven”. So, although He was here, in a condition of flesh and blood, the character and the life of the Man was heavenly. He found His life in doing the will of Another; He drew nothing from the earth, “a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground”, Isa 53: 2. So, they “wondered at the words of grace”, Luke 4: 22. Everything that marked the Lord Jesus here was of a heavenly character. So, we can learn from that, and that character too, do you think? And it comes out in the walk of the believer likewise.

SCL Is one of the features of a heavenly environment an emotional attunement to the heart of God? I was thinking of the Lord when He walked through this scene. That is how He guided Himself, as being emotionally attuned to the desires of His God and Father. And for us, in the morning meeting occasion, we are to come there and to be emotionally intelligent as to the desires of the heart of the Lord Jesus, because His desires are the same as God's desires. Is it the characteristic feature of heavenly persons to think of the divine heart?

DS Yes, I think so, because the desire of the heavenly One is to take us into heavenly places. He has gone to prepare the place. The place is now there, settled; there is no turmoil there. Everything is joyous and restful and Christ is at the centre, and the Father has pleasure in that. That is because of the heavenly Man who has accomplished everything. But if I am not in the state, and I am not in the Spirit, I will never touch this area which is wholly spiritual and wholly heavenly.

SCL It would bring out the distinctiveness of each occasion, because the Lord has so many features and glories to take account of that in each occasion the divine mind has a particular aspect that we are to take account of and respond to; and particular desires in the heart of the Lord that are to be responded to. When it speaks about a quickening spirit that is really the vitality of the Spirit's involvement in the morning meeting occasion. We cannot just stand up and say right things because, whilst they might be right, they might not fit. But the Spirit helps us to know what exactly is the desire of the heart of the Lord in that particular occasion.

DS The quickening power of the Spirit and of the Lord Himself are a testimony to the matter that it is heavenly. It is outside of human

knowledge and human nature and human understanding. God has taken you up and made you fit for heaven; and He has taken the saints up for divine pleasure. And He has resource and the ability to carry a people into those heavenly places, and for us to enjoy the things that the divine Persons enjoy. That is grace. That is the most wonderful grace that you and I could ever know.

JMN In the Father's presence, Christ is the Son but we are the many sons of God through grace.

DS That is just another distinct feature of what He is, is it not? He is the Son. Again, it is the Son who is in heaven. It is the One who is indigenous to that place. Again, it brings out what has been mentioned earlier, that scripture in John's gospel: "the Son of man who is in heaven". Although He came to fulfil a work, His mind was always in relation to the purposes of God.

DHM In John's gospel in particular the Lord Jesus tried to prepare His own for what would take place after He had laid down His life and suffered and ascended, although He does not mention that side in John 13 and 14, He goes on to explain the divine provision. The place was prepared, the Holy Spirit given, all with a view to showing that the believer's prospect is not down on earth; it is up to heaven, is it not? And I suppose we have to understand that really it is all what is heavenly, and what is spiritual as opposed to what is natural now or even earthly.

DS It is helpful what you say. "I go to prepare you a place" (John 14: 2), but what does He say? "That where I am, ye also may be", v 3. That is the Lord; it is not only the preparing of the place, but He desires that where He is, His saints may be with Him. Again, it is only through soul exercise that I will be with Christ where He is now. And we touch it, maybe just momentarily, but it is good for the young and for all of us to touch it, where Christ is. He is in the Father's presence. He is in the heavenlies where every matter is in rest and peace and joy and glory, and everything has been secured. But He wants us to be there because we are characteristically like that Man. Every believer who has come to Christ and has the Spirit is heavenly. That again is a good thing for young ones to understand.

TWL I know the setting of it is a little bit different because it has to do with what was on the earth, but do you get the idea of it in Exodus 28 in

the clothing of Aaron and his sons? Aaron had what was distinctive in the turban and the vest and the girdle and so on; but it goes on to say, "And for Aaron's sons thou shalt make vests; and thou shalt make for them girdles; and high caps", v 40. And then in chapter 29, "And thou shalt bring his sons near, and clothe them with the vests" (v 8), and so on. There is a suggestion of everything being in accord with the manhood of Jesus for God. That is what heavenly persons are. It is what they are for God. It is not just that we are there, so we get to take part there, but we are for God there.

DS "He came out from God" - Christ is there for God "and was going to God", John 13: 3. He came out to fulfill something for our pleasure and joy, but everything that God does, speaking reverently, He does for His own self. And He takes heavenly persons back with the heavenly Man for His own pleasure. In the assembly Christ sings, does He not? He sings there with personnel who are heavenly.

TWL He sings in the presence of those who have had glory put on them. In John 17 the Lord says, "the glory which thou hast given me I have given them", v 22. That is manhood for God, and we are covering that. He has what is distinctive, but we also have what covers all of us. "The glory which thou hast given me I have given them" is manhood for God. Is that how you understand it?

DS I think so, and the more that we understand the glory that has been given us, and the position that we have been given, and the status that has been given the saints, the greater the answer in the saints will be. If you are brought from an undignified position into the most glorious, and you recognise the Person who has done it, there will be a greater answer in the assembly and in the service of God to God Himself, do you not feel?

DCB I am just wondering if you would say something about the two references earlier to the Lord as the last Adam and as the second Man. I wondered if these would be part of the exercise to see Him as the heavenly Man. As the last Adam, the fact that He is a quickening spirit would mean that there is a life that is according to Him. For the last Adam, there is no One who will supersede that One. It is wonderful to see that we have come to a position where there is Someone who is the Last and matters are established for God in Him. But the second Man is a contrast to what we are and what we have been.

DS I think both the titles that you have brought in are very helpful. Do both of these instances involve His death?

DCB I think they must, because if we are to be quickened that would require His death and His resurrection so that there is life. So, it is as a Man in resurrection, which is the general theme of this chapter, that He is the last Adam. He has established something there that is never going to be superseded.

DS The second Man as out of heaven was seen here on earth before He went into death. So, it is another order of man in that character. But for us to appreciate the second Man He had to die to remove one order of man in its totality, to bring us into the fact that we are heavenly ones. It shows the greatness of who this Person is that He can not only end an order, but He could quicken life, and He brings it forward for God, and that we are characteristically like Him for God's pleasure and for His pleasure in that sense.

NRC I am enjoying what is being said. It is very helpful, and it is a real challenge, is it not, to consider this subject in relation to being heavenly persons in particular? I certainly feel the difficulty in that myself, but I was just considering the occasion that we enjoyed this morning, the Lord's supper, and really felt that that is the central aspect of becoming - or having a knowledge - of what it is to be, a heavenly person. When the Lord's supper was set forth there is reference to the upper chamber or the upper room. And there is an elevated thought there. And I was thinking too in relation to some of the wonderful times with the Lord on the Mount of Olives, and then the mount of transfiguration. They are all elevated thoughts, and I was wondering whether really we have a foretaste, do we not? We are yet to receive our heavenly bodies, but we have a foretaste of something which is elevated in the Lord's supper of what it is to be a heavenly person, do you think?

DS Yes, surely. We touch something in our spirits of what will yet to be in actuality. That is a wonderful thing to think of. Because of the weak mortal beings that we are, that might only be a fleeting moment. It might only be as you are on your feet or if somebody gives out a hymn and you have an impression by the Spirit that you get into your soul. But there is something in that fleeting moment that gives you an impression of worship, of thanksgiving, that you will enter into in actuality in a day to come. This body will be put on as the scripture

says, "And as we have borne the image of the one made of dust, we shall bear also the image of the heavenly one". It is a wonderful thing to think of that, that in a day soon coming, we will actually bear the image of this heavenly One. Because the only man that is suitable to God is Christ Himself. So we will bear that image. We will bear the image of the heavenly One, do you think?

NRC But it all involved Him going into death, and we remembered that this morning; I am sure we all did, Christ dying and going into death. But out of that there is a worship and a praise which is given to Him which we can come into the enjoyment of as well, and I think really that is us just having a foretaste of the things to come. We are enjoying an aspect of what it will be like. But the scripture that you have read is that we are heavenly partakers now as well. So that is a test; so how do we get help to be more heavenly?

DS Well, again, I do not know. I could not actually answer your question in its fullness, but the more you enjoy something the more you want, even naturally speaking. And the more you enjoy spiritual things, as outside everything that is of the earth, and everything that breaks down, and everything that fails, the more you desire it. And that is the only way I can see what God has done for me in Christ, and placed me in Christ Jesus, and made me a heavenly person outside of my desires, or whatever it may be. He has placed me as in Christ Jesus. And the more I understand it by the Spirit and see the place that He has put me in His purpose the more I desire it. And the more you touch these things in your spirit the more you enjoy. And the more you enjoy the more the Spirit opens up to you. It is like opening the page of a book and the more you read it the more you understand it. But what would you say yourself?

NRC Well, I think you have touched really on what my thought was. There is nothing that we can do of ourselves in relation to becoming this, but it is divine provision which has been afforded towards us. And God in His grace and His mercy has provided His only Son for us, and doing that has revealed the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has provided His own Spirit. So all of these, showing divine love towards us, are surely a benefit to me in relation to becoming more heavenly.

JTB Reference was made earlier to the calling. I was thinking about

2 Timothy: “has saved us, and has called us with a holy calling” chap 1: 9. But just in connection with our brother's question, we are to consider our calling, are we not? As we consider our calling, it takes us back to consideration of Christ, does it not, and that helps us? And I was wondering again from that first chapter in 2 Timothy: “but has been made manifest now by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has annulled death, and brought to light life and incorruptibility by the glad tidings”, v 10. I thought “brought to light life” is the last Adam. Incorruptibility is the second Man. There can be no failure attached to the second Man. Nothing could be corrupted, or impinge upon it. The second Man is inviolable, is He not? But “brought to life” is really the last Adam, do you think?

DS Your explanation of that is very attractive. The two thoughts come together, “brought to light life and incorruptibility by the glad tidings”. I think that helps with our brother's question. The One who is my Saviour becomes attractive to me; I see the many matters He has undertaken for the glory of God and for the blessing of man. And this Man has brought to light life; there is quickening power in Christ. But incorruptibility means that there is nothing the enemy can do to defeat Him. Any man and every man needs to have to do with a man who is as mighty as Christ. But this is a wholly spiritual matter: to see that He has taken away the first order of man; the last Adam, a quickening spirit. I think that is very helpful what you are bringing in.

JTB He has annulled death: death has no entrance into this great sphere of life. In the sphere of quickening, death can never enter, can it?

DS It is attractive and helpful to open up my simple impression that the heavenlies involve a Man who is in charge of this environment. He has annulled death, and He has brought to light life and incorruptibility. This is outside of the enemy's domain altogether, outside of the flesh, and it is in the Spirit's hands, is it not? And there is quickening for His own pleasure, and there is quickening for the glory of God, do you think?

TWL Going back to the question how we can become more heavenly, does the beginning of Colossians 3 help us? “If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above, where the Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God: have your mind on the things

that are above, not on the things that are on the earth; for ye have died, and your life is hid with the Christ in God”, v 1-3. That is heavenly persons, is it not?

DS “Your life is hid with the Christ in God”: that is the Man that we have been speaking about. He has brought to light life and incorruptibility. The secret of that in the soul is that I am in touch with a Man who has defeated everything that comes against me and my nature. It comes against me, and my walk here in the world. And so I am in touch not only with a heavenly Man, but a Man who is incorruptible, a Man who brings in quickening life, a Man who does everything for God and everything for me. That brings the attractiveness of the Saviour to me in a greater way. And as I ponder Him more, when we gather to remember Him in the Lord's supper, there is bound to be an answer, collectively in the saints, do you think?

TWL “Quickened us with the Christ” not 'by the Christ'. “Quickened us with the Christ” is positional. It is a case of the life that pervades that whole scene, and we have part in that. It is not simply that I am a saved person, and I touch eternity, but I am quickened “with the Christ”. It is positional. And that is how God views us, and that is what God has made us. Does that fit in?

NRC I was just thinking that as well. If we are quickened with Him in His current position, we are associated with Him also in relation to where He is. He is in heaven; so that is our position as well, is it not?

SCL What we have just been talking about brings out the importance of spending time in the presence of the Lord. I was thinking of that scripture, “We all, looking on the glory of the Lord ... are transformed according to the same image”, 2 Cor 3: 18. There is a very practical reality of spending time in the presence of the Lord Jesus. I suppose giving a practical example, I recently found the benefit of reading something in the gospel of the Lord Himself before coming to the Lord's day morning. You get a very real touch of spending time in the Lord's presence, do you think?

DS “We all, looking on the glory of the Lord” involves all the saints collectively, and the Spirit sustains a heavenly people in the divine presence. They are heavenly personnel: they belong to the heavenly Man, and they are quickened, so they have power to respond in life; they have a knowledge of this Person. They have a knowledge of His

movements. And all these things, by the Spirit's service, come together to bring out an answer to Him and to the Father.

SCL It is a hugely uplifting and encouraging experience to consider the expanse of the host of heavenly persons. We sang,

Every tribe and tongue, (Hymn 156).

You may say the expanse alone is impressive, but the true miracle is that each individual is displaying Christ in perfection before God. What an encouraging environment to witness and be part of.

DS The encouragement for all of us is that we should take up what it speaks of in Corinthians, that we are heavenly ones. This is not putting a demand on anyone. This is not forcing you into something, but this is by attraction. I think everything in Christianity is by attraction.

BRL I have just been piecing things together and what you say about attraction is very fine because it recalls I was reading something this morning. It was in relation to younger persons and sisters coming to the Supper, and it was said that, wherever there was true affection for Christ, it would find expression through somebody in the Supper, and I think that was for the encouragement of everybody. In what we have been discussing, you cannot help but see the joy and satisfaction that Christ would have in the assembly as being formed of these heavenly ones who have this pure affection for Him.

DS The place that such an answer to the heart of Christ will come out is in the assembly. And that is a wonderful thing to ponder, that Christ as a real Man desires real affection and He finds it in the assembly. So that is in saints, individuals like you and me, and that is a wonderful thing.

We can get some help in Ephesians: "who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ". It shows that the heavenly personnel are not taken into something that is small in its outlook, but it has an expansive thought. That was my thought in it. I think the great desire of the Lord Jesus is to take us into the presence of the Father, and as taking us to the Father things expand as under the hand of Christ. It says here, "spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ": we are placed before the Father in Christ. It seems that there is an expansive thought of heavenly ones in the heavenly environment where the Father has pleasure in that which Christ brings.

DHM We have had help in relation to the order of the service, have we not? We worship the Lord Jesus when He comes in amongst us, and that is right, giving Him the first place; He delights to take it. We are with Him in marital relationships and union but then there is a movement to the greater part of the service when He, having heard a portion for His own heart, delights to take us to the Father's presence, in spirit into that prepared place we touched already. And in one sense that is the great mission that He has, to take us there, those that have been secured, the redeemed, those that belong to Him. Hebrews says, "bringing many sons to glory", chap 2: 10.

DS I think that is the great ultimate in the service of God, and in the purposes of the love of God. We sing a hymn,

Thou gav'st us Father, in Thy love,
To Christ to bring us home to Thee (Hymn 88).

The purposes of the love of God are that He gives us to Christ to bring out the glory of that One, and shine Him in our hearts, and then take personnel back to the Father who are Christ-like. And there, as in this environment, I think He blesses us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies. Where is it? It is in Christ Jesus.

JTB We had reference this morning to "he that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one", Heb 2: 11. There is a fine note to "sanctified". It says, 'Simply the character of the persons without reference to done or doing' (note i). They are characteristically heavenly. and we are one, are we not, of the same kind? They are all of one. Of the same kind it means. And all of one kind with the Sanctifier. What a joy for the divine heart, is it not, as well as for us to be in such an environment as among the sanctified ones?

DS What a pleasure this must be for the Father then that He has Christ-like persons in His presence:

Every feature Christ reflecting (Hymn 83).

Think of the glory or the vastness of every blood-bought saint redeemed and brought with Christ into the Father's presence. They are heavenly personnel. They are sanctified, as He is sanctified. Although He is distinct, and always will be in one sense, there is no distinction in the sense of the character of the personnel who are brought there. They are like Christ in that sense.

DCB I was thinking of the Lord as the Minister of the holy places. That is what has been referred to in a sense, that matters are opened up so that we have a liberty as guided by the One who is indigenous to heaven, but who has brought us there, and would guide us in that place as to what is suitable to the Father.

DS I like what you say there. Help us further then as to the Lord guiding us in this environment.

DCB At the time it is a matter of simply being sensitive to what He is saying by the Spirit, so that we move forward. I think also we have in the service part of what the Lord has opened up as Minister of the holy places. So we have some knowledge, some teaching, that would help us. But that is not to take away from the activity of His headship at the time.

DS It brings out the distinctiveness of the Person who has undertaken to bring everything back to the Father. As Minister of the sanctuary, He knows the personnel, and He knows the Father, and He knows what the Father's desires are. And by the Spirit, He would seek, do you think, to bring out that which would minister to the Father's heart for His own pleasure? Is that because we are blessed? I think the blessing of the heavenlies must be in view of that.

TWL In relation to all of this that we have been saying, which has been very good, it says, "he has chosen us in him before the world's foundation". According to John 17, "thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world", v 24. The character of what man was to be for God was always in view before sin ever touched anything. And then we tend to be limited by what we are as failures, as sinners, as persons away from God, but that is not where God starts. God starts with His Man first; and "he has chosen us in him before the world's foundation" is what we were going to be in purpose before ever sin touched us. That is the God who saved me. Does that fit in with what you have in mind?

DS I think so. So the heavenly ones who have heavenly character are really those who are in the purposes of God before time began. And it was in His purpose too to make it so that these personnel who are still in nature and still in the weakness of the flesh should be sustained. He gives us of His Spirit. He gives us the Lord Jesus, as Minister of the sanctuary. So that the whole service of that which should be taken up for the glory of God should be carried out in a dignified way, in a manner

which is wholly spiritual and is wholly suitable, so that really the character can be said that they are heavenly ones. It is wonderful to see that, is it?

TWL Yes, and that is what I was thinking about when I made reference to Aaron. When you saw Aaron's sons operating it would have been in exactly the same way that Aaron operated. So when it came time to put an offering on the altar, it would have been exactly the same order, done exactly the same way. It would have been the laying on of hands exactly the same way. And it would have just been Aaron over again, such as in the service of God. We bring to God like Christ brings to God. But He is distinct.

DS The scripture says, "has raised us up together and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus". I read some other verses there, but that was the verse that really was in my mind. "Has quickened us with the Christ, (ye are saved by grace,) and has raised us up together, and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus". What a settled place this is. There is power, there is quickening, but this seems to imply that everything here has been the purposes of the love of God, and has been brought to fruition.

TWL "Raised us up together, and has made us sit down together" becomes a settled place. It is not activity for activity's sake. It is God resting in His love and us resting in the love of God. It is things which love has the liberty to act as it chooses because it is in heaven. Sin has no entrance there. Breakdown has no entrance there. Failure has never come there. Things like that have never happened there. And subsequently the reality that I am a heavenly person settles me in the presence of God.

DS And a heavenly person is at home here. Just as a child coming home comes in and is settled in their own home, a believer who is heavenly, as taken with Christ into the heavenlies and heavenly places, is at home in this environment, would you say?

TWL Yes. When I was much younger the older brothers that were local with us used to say, 'Go into the presence of God, and enjoy yourself'. That is heavenly; go in there and enjoy the relationship. Do not ask for something, just go and sit there and enjoy the love of God for what it is. That is a wonderful thing.

JTB Does 2 Chronicles 6 just capture what you are saying? “Then said Solomon: Jehovah said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. But I have built a house of habitation for thee, even a settled place for thee to abide in forever. And the king turned his face and blessed the whole congregation of Israel”, v 1-3. They were all suitable to occupy that place, were they?

DS That is a good scripture to bring in, it brought into that settled environment that God is at rest there, and He blesses the people. That is our portion, is it not? Is that the portion of heavenly personnel who are taken with the heavenly One into the Father's presence so that God may bless us? So, we come away refreshed. You come away strengthened in your affections because of the God who loves to bless in His own environment, would you say?

JTB “The king turned his face and blessed the whole congregation of Israel”; that suggests Christ delighting to take us in before the Father and to be at home there in that settled place.

Edinburgh

10th March 2024

List of Initials (local unless otherwise shown):

D C Brown; J T Brown; N R Cumming; B R Lock; S C Lock; T W Lock;
D H Marshall; J M Newberry, Glasgow; D Spinks, Bo'ness

“EMPTIED HIMSELF ... HUMBLING HIMSELF”

Alastair J McKay

Philippians 2: 1-11

I want to speak to you tonight about a Person who “emptied himself” and “humbled himself”. We live in a world where these things are foreign, and that is why I read the early part of the chapter, “regarding not each his own qualities”. The enemy of your soul would love to occupy you with yourself. I feel the way the world is moving is to occupy men with themselves. There is great incentive in the world to do well, and I do not diminish that in any way because we have to make our way in this world; but there is a Person here who “emptied himself” and “humbled himself”. I know it is a Person that everyone in this room has heard about before - the Man who did not think of Himself at all.

The scripture says in Luke's gospel, “for every one that exalts himself shall be abased, and he that abases himself shall be exalted”, chap 14: 11. Here is the evidence for that scripture, “he that abases himself shall be exalted” - Christ Jesus, your Lord, who I trust is your Saviour, has “emptied himself” and He has “humbled himself”, and He has done that in order to secure you for Himself and for His God, and God has exalted Him! We will not get very far working out our own salvation by looking at ourselves. What do we find when we look at our own qualities? You look in the mirror and what do you see? I will tell you what you see: you see a sinner; you see one who needs a Saviour; you see one who needs Christ; you see one who has come short of the glory of God; because scripture tells us, “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”, Rom 3: 23. That is what I see when I look in the mirror, and I trust it is what you recognise, dear friend.

But you look at this scripture and the writer says, “For let this mind be in you”, “this mind”, a different mind, a different order. Dear friend, the Lord Jesus was here as a Man, but He was here as a Man after a different order. It was His own movement to come, and that movement involved that He “emptied himself”. I feel very measured by this, but Mr Darby's note is very helpful (note 'n'); it says, 'he made himself of no reputation'. Hold to that, dear friend! It helps us to see that the Lord Jesus did not empty Himself *of anything*, but He made Himself of no reputation. He left an area of glory, the glory that He had with the Father, (scripture speaks to us about that - John 17: 5), and He “emptied himself”; your Saviour made Himself of no reputation. What a

glorious Man! You will not find that in the world around; you will find men eager and concerned to make their own reputation. Dear friends, here is your Saviour; He made Himself of no reputation: "the Son of man has not where he may lay his head", Luke 9: 58. Think of your Saviour Jesus being here, and He says, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the heaven roosting-places, but the Son of man has not where he may lay his head". He sought no place amongst men; what a humble lowly Man: "he emptied himself"; He made Himself of no reputation. He subsisted in "the form of God"! It was His own movement in love for you, dear friend; Jesus has done this for you.

The Lord Jesus made this great movement, and He made it for me. If I was the only one who had sinned, He had to come this way, but He has come this way for all of us, He has come this way for you, He has come this way for every inhabitant in Linlithgow tonight, He has come this way for every soul that lives on the planet, because there is room in the house of God for everyone. The work of Christ is sufficient for all. He took a "bondman's form", "taking his place in the likeness of men". He did not take a place alongside other men; He took *His* place. It was a place that was determined for Him. It was a place in which He could undertake and carry out and fulfil the will of God; His place, the unique place. Scripture speaks about the fact that imitators will come, those who will seek to imitate, those who will seek to bring doubt into your mind as to the perfection and the uniqueness of Christ; He took *His* place. No other place like it! No other man could take that place; that place belonged to Jesus, and it belonged to Him alone. "Having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself": what a movement! What grace! Not only did He empty Himself, but He "humbled himself".

I know that we know this scripture well, and we have heard it before, but I feel the need to emphasise it, "humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross". Dear friends, this is so important! The word here is "becoming obedient **even unto** death", not obedient *to* death. That could never be said of Jesus; that is my lot, that is your lot as sinners before God: we are subject to it. The Lord Jesus was "obedient even unto death", He was obedient even as far as death itself. He went that way in holy obedience to the will of God, and in going that way it involved that He "humbled himself": "having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross". Your Saviour was nailed to a cross of wood. That shows us what men thought of Him. They said, "We will not that this man should

reign over us”, Luke 19: 14. He was nailed to a cross of wood, crucified. As I understand it, it is one of the most painful deaths imaginable, and the Lord Jesus went that way, He went that way as One who “emptied himself” and “humbled himself”. He went that way in perfect obedience and love for God. In going that way, He has opened up the opportunity for you and me to be saved. That is the simplicity of the gospel, the simplicity of the glad tidings! The Lord Jesus has gone that way for you!

We used to be told at home that His work was vicarious, a word my father loved using; it means, 'on account of others'. It was on account of us! He did not go that way for Himself; He went that way on account of others, on account of you and me: “that the death of the cross”. What was involved in that death? It involved suffering at the hands of men, suffering for righteousness' sake at the hands of men. Think of how He was scourged, of how He was treated, how He suffered! But that was little compared with what He suffered for sin, what He suffered from a holy and righteous God, those three hours of darkness when the holy and righteous wrath of God against sin was poured out upon Him, upon One of whom we read that He had subsisted in “the form of God”. Scripture tells us that he was “made sin for us”, 2 Cor 5: 21. Think of that! Think of God making Him sin, pouring out upon Him what He abhorred, upon the Man whom He loved. Dear friends, does it touch your heart? Do you know this Man for yourself? Do you know Him as your Saviour? He died for you! He died for you at the end of those three hours; He exhausted the judgment, and He died there on the cross; He said, “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit”, Luke 23: 46. Think of that glorious statement that the Lord Jesus could make, perfect communion restored. His blood was shed; it was poured out: your sins can be washed away in the blood of Jesus. I trust they have been! Have they? Have they been washed away? Have you acknowledged before Christ your guilt as a sinner? Have you said to Him, 'Lord, I need a Saviour'?

Then in verse 9, “Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and granted him a name, that which is above every name”; this is what God thinks of Christ. What did man think of Christ? 'Away with Him'; “We will not that this man should reign over us”. Here is what God thinks of Him, “Wherefore also God highly exalted him”; dear friends, your Saviour is exalted! Your Saviour is no longer in the grave; He is risen, and He is ascended, and He is crowned with glory and honour, and He is seated there at the right hand of God, “on the right hand of the

greatness on high", Heb 1: 3. He is seated there for you, and He is seated there for God, and He is ready and available for you tonight as your Saviour. That is what God thinks of Him! He has put Him there.

I just want to refer to Matthew 22: 42: "What think ye concerning the Christ?". We know what many think concerning the Christ, and the scripture in Philippians has just shown us what God thinks concerning the Christ. But now, "What think ye"? What do you think? I just want to leave that question, leave it in your ears and hearts; what do you think of Him? What is your thought of Christ; what does He mean to you? Does He mean enough for Him to be your Saviour? I trust He does. I trust that you can see in Him the salvation of your sins; I trust that you know as the hymn puts it:

And thy heart shall lose its burden,
By His side. (Hymn 344)

I trust that has happened. But what else do you think of Him? Do you think of Him enough to give Him a place in your life? Do you think of Him enough to say, 'Yes, I want to know more; I want to be with Him; I want the Holy Spirit', that great gift that we spoke of earlier?. It is a gift that is given to those who ask; it is given too to those who obey. But it is given to those who ask; have you asked? Do you think enough of Christ to say, 'I want that gift that He is speaking about; I want to understand it, and I want to lay hold of that gift, because I want Him in my presence, I want to be close to Christ, and I want to have Him in my life'. You can do that in the power of the Holy Spirit. Do you think enough of Jesus to remember Him, to call Him to mind, to answer to His commandment? He has given that appeal, "this do in remembrance of me", Luke 22: 19. May we be encouraged to do that, dear friends; may we be set forward to remember Him and to give Him the place that rightfully belongs to Him; "What think ye concerning the Christ?"

What is your thought of Him? How much does He mean to you? It is often said that we put our energies and we put our time into what is precious to us. Well, "What think ye concerning the Christ?". I have spoken to you about One who "humbled himself", One who "emptied Himself", a Man who has died for you; what do you think of Him? How precious is He to you? May He be precious, may He be the most precious thing that we have, that we may be ready for that moment when He comes for us, because that is very, very soon. We are often told, and I feel the edge of it, this may be the last gospel preaching. It may be the last gospel preaching any of us here in this room may hear;

will you be ready? There is coming a moment, and the moment is very soon when scripture tells us His own will hear “an assembling shout, with archangel's voice and with trump of God”, (1 Thess 4: 16) - it will cry out! Those that put their trust in Christ will hear it; I trust everyone in this room will be among that number.

For His Name's sake.

Linlithgow

14th January 2024

THE LORD JESUS INDISPENSABLE

David A Brown

John 15: 5 (from “for without me”), 7, 8, 15 (from “but I have”), 26, 27; 20: 10, 11 (to “without”), 16-18

Not long before the Lord took our sister home to be with Himself, my wife and I went to visit her in the care home in Linlithgow. Just before we left, she turned to me and said, 'David, what would we do if we did not have the Lord? I would therefore like to say a few words about the indispensability of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to challenge every heart in this room as to whether the Lord Jesus Christ means anything to you. When our sister said that to me one of our gospel hymns came into my mind, one which we have in our hymn book:

I could not do without Thee,
O Saviour of the lost,
Whose precious blood redeemed me
At such tremendous cost! (Hymn 220)

These words could surely be sung by our sister as knowing the precious, redeeming blood of the Lord Jesus Christ for herself! She knew Him, that blessed Man, as her glorious Saviour, and she had trusted in Him. She knew Him for herself, and was moved to commit herself to His testimony and interests. Through all her difficulties, all the pressures that she endured in her life (and many here know full well what suffering she went through), I do believe that she found Christ indispensable to her. It says in chapter 15 of this gospel at the end of verse 5 (which we read yesterday in our reading meeting) “for without me ye can do nothing”. As we read that passage what our sister said to me in her room came back to me.

Linking on with that thought of the indispensability of the Lord Jesus, I would like to touch on three features that are referred to in chapter 15. The first one is as to becoming “disciples of mine” (v 8), and I think we have seen something of the features that are referred to. A disciple of His simply means a follower of the Lord Jesus. I read recently that a great deal of exercise and suffering is gone through in becoming a disciple of the Lord Jesus, and I think we could certainly say we have seen that. “That ye bear much fruit”: what fruit is borne as a result of discipleship. Chapter 15 of John's gospel is a wonderful fruit-bearing chapter.

In chapter 6 of the same gospel, there is a reference to other disciples. They said, "This word is hard; who can hear it?" (v 60), and then the scripture goes on to say, "From that time many of his disciples went away back and walked no more with him", v 66. In that same chapter we have His own disciples with Him, and He raises a question with them "Will ye also go away?", and Peter says, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast words of life eternal; and we have believed and known that thou art the holy one of God" (v 68, 69); not only "believed" but "believed and **known**".

In the next verse which we read it says, "but I have called you friends, for all things which I have heard of my Father I have made known to you", v15. How wonderful it is to be a friend of the Lord Jesus! Can He call you His friend? Being a friend means you can receive the secrets of the divine mind. That is a very blessed matter. When you have a friend, you can confide in that friend, and his or her concerns become your concerns, your interests. Consider one such as Abraham: "he was called Friend of God", Jas 2: 23. Think of the wonderful disclosures that Abraham received from Jehovah Himself! Such therefore is the portion of a friend of God. "For all things which I have heard of my Father I have made known to you". How wonderful it is to have these precious disclosures!

And then at the end of the chapter in verses 26 and 27 the scripture speaks of a "witness". I know that the reference in this chapter is to the witness of the apostles, apostolic witnesses, but I have in my mind that our sister was a witness. I remember taking her to the hospital in Musselburgh many years ago to visit her husband, and what a witness she was to those who cared for her husband during those difficult times. The Lord too bears witness, "because ye are with me from the beginning". Well, our sister has continued faithfully and despite all the suffering and sorrow in her life, she has continued until the end of her pathway here.

I thought of Mary of Magdala as displaying something of these three features. Chapter 20 is a wonderful, triumphant chapter, because Christ is out of death and for the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ we have a wonderful hope (as we have sung in Hymn 152), and what our brother has said in prayer, and that is that our Saviour is out of death. Death could not hold Him. He -

Burst the portals of the grave (Hymn 414).

How He vanquished death! Scripture says, He “has **annulled** death”, 2 Tim 1: 10. That means to make it of no account. I thought that Mary was a wonderful disciple. If you think of the other disciples it is said of them that they “went away again to their own home”, but it says of Mary, “But Mary stood at the tomb weeping without”. What a disciple she was, a follower of the Lord Jesus! Love held her at the tomb of Jesus. She thought that everything had gone and the One whom she loved had gone, but she was to realise that the One who had gone through death was now a risen Man before her.

Later we read, “Jesus says to her, Mary. She, turning round, says to him in Hebrew, Rabboni, which means Teacher”. I think that when the Lord said to her, “Mary”, He was seeing right into the depths of her heart. She was indeed a friend of the Lord and as a result He was about to give her the wonderful message. How wondrous were the disclosures of His heart to her! “Jesus says to her, Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God”. What a message, dear brethren! Think of that blessed Man, now in resurrection with the glory and stability that brings to the soul, and now about to be received up in glory. She witnessed to others what He had said to her. It says, “Mary of Magdala comes bringing word to the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had said these things to her”. What confidence the Lord Jesus had in Mary, and I trust that we can each say in our own measure that the Lord can have confidence in us.

As I finish I would like to raise the challenge with each one of us again, is the Lord Jesus indispensable to us as He was to Mary in John 20?

May the Lord encourage us here and particularly the family of our dear sister that we might be comforted together, for His Name's sake!

PRECIOUS AS GOLD

Paul A Gray

Ezra 8: 27 (from “and two vessels”, 28 (to “also are holy”)

I suppose most people know that copper is not as precious as gold, and yet the Bible says here that it is. How can that be? Well, it is because God can do things that we cannot do. He can achieve results that we cannot achieve. He can bring things to pass that we could not begin to do. And God has brought about a victory over death and the grave in the death and burial and rising of the Lord Jesus. He has done something that none of us could do. No one can save themselves, and no one can save those near to them. It tells us in the Bible that:

None can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a
ransom for him,
(For the redemption of their soul is costly, and must be given up
for ever),
Ps 49: 7, 8.

But God has done it. He did it for our sister, but He has done it for you. You may ask why He did it for you. He did it because of His love. You may ask what you did to deserve His love. You did nothing, because that was not the point. These thoughts of God were prompted by His heart of love and they are directed towards everyone to whom this is addressed. We are here because our sister has been taken home to be with the Lord, but we are also here because the Lord Jesus wants to speak to each one of us; He has something to say to each one of us. He knows you. He knows where you are and He can do something for you that you cannot do for yourself: He can give you eternal salvation. You may ask whether you need it. Again, I seek to base what I say on what the Bible says. It says, “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”, Rom 3: 23. That is everyone. But what does the Bible say next? - “being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood”, v 24, 25. God has come near to you in the Person of His own beloved Son. The Lord Jesus, who is God in His own holy Person, become Man, and He has come near to you in order that He might set you free as He did for our sister.

We need salvation, and then we need to be sustained in our lives once we have salvation. The Bible speaks about being “saved in

the power of his life", Rom 5: 10. Our sister was evidence of one who was "saved in the power of his life". She had a life, you might say, down here but she had a life that was "hid with the Christ in God" (Col 3: 3), and that was what sustained her. No one else could have sustained her in all that she passed through, but the Lord was able.

The Lord can do something else we cannot do: He can gain victory over death. He has done it Himself, of course. That is the first thing. He died; He shed His blood; He was buried; and He rose triumphant from the grave; but to quote again what the Bible says, this Saviour is referred to in, "God's glad tidings ... concerning his Son (... marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead) Jesus Christ our Lord", Rom 1: 1, 3, 4. You and I cannot gain victory over death, but He can.

And here is another thing He can do: He can give every saint a body of glory, and He is going to do it. He is going to do it for our sister; He is going to do it for everyone that believes on Him. He is going to do it for everyone that is sheltered by His own precious blood, right back as far as Adam. Will He do it for you? I can say with absolute certainty that He wants to, but the way into it is by believing.

You may not be sure if you believe; you may not be sure if you can believe. Let me tell you this also: there are more things that God can do that you cannot do. He can give you faith, and He can also give you repentance; these are gifts from God. It says, "But without faith it is impossible to please him" (Heb 11: 6), but what God requires in His righteousness, He gives in His grace. It says, He "enjoins men that they shall all everywhere repent" (Acts 17: 30), and yet where does repentance come from? It comes from Him. And then if you believe on the Lord Jesus as Saviour and your sins are forgiven, you find that you are sheltered under the precious blood of Jesus. "Without blood-shedding there is no remission" of sins (Heb 9: 22) but that has been given too. And then you can have the gift of the Holy Spirit. God has given the Spirit "to those that obey him" (Acts 5: 32), and the first act of obedience is to trust in the Lord Jesus as your Saviour. These are things that God can do that we cannot do.

Now, we come to these two vessels. It would be hard to speak of our sister without also thinking of her husband; they are in our minds together. They are both with the Lord. That is not a matter of sentiment. It is not that they have gone to meet each other; they are

both “with the Lord”. They are in His presence, which “is very much better” (Phil 1: 23) but while they were here, they were a testimony and they were an example; and what started off as copper became “precious as gold”. The Lord was pleased to set amongst us “two vessels of shining copper, precious as gold”, and in that He showed us what He can do; and He can do it for everyone. He says, “Ye are holy unto Jehovah; the vessels also are holy”. He loved them; He appreciated them.

You will find copper in the Bible in what is called the tabernacle system, a place called the tent of meeting that was set up by God's instruction - you can read about it in Exodus - in order that He might be worshipped, in order that He might be approached. In that tabernacle there was an altar of acacia wood, and it was covered over with copper. What did the copper do? The copper withstood the fire. The Lord Jesus was the perfect example of that. He went through the fire of the wrath of God on the cross. “Him who knew not sin” God “has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him”, 2 Cor 5: 21. And too He took away our sins: “who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree”, 1 Pet 2: 24. He did all that. The fire of God's wrath was there and at the end of three hours Jesus said, “It is finished”, John 19: 30. He did everything. And that was precious in the sight of God; there was never a time more fragrant to God than when the Lord “by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God” (Heb 9: 14); and yet in our brother, and in our sister whose body is now before us, the Lord worked out likeness to Himself. He would desire to do that in every one of us: “the vessels also are holy”.

I just want to close by quoting one other verse of scripture in the prophet Isaiah 43: 4. We have spoken about “precious as gold”. This is what the scripture says, “Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee”.

That is all I have to say, beloved brethren and friends. I trust we may be encouraged, and I trust we may have our faith and trust in the God who can do what we cannot do and is set to bring us through. The Lord will bring out every saint in triumph and glory in a day to come. May we be among them for His Name's sake!

RESURRECTION

Alistair M Brown

John 5: 24-29

All that we are doing today in gathering with a view to burying the body of our sister whom the Lord has taken home is done in the light of resurrection. Resurrection is a tremendously important matter. Our brother has referred to what God does that we cannot do, and clearly men are incapable of raising one another or themselves from the dead. But God has the power to raise from the dead, and we can say from this scripture that that power has been given to one blessed Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is, of course, God in His own Person. He is God “manifested in flesh”, 1 Tim 3: 16. He is a wonderful Man. For those of us who know Him, He becomes more and more attractive to us, and more and more indispensable as we have also been reminded. One desire that those of us who believe in the Lord Jesus and love Him carry in our hearts is that others should do so as well. We would appeal again to any heart which has not yet submitted to Christ and surrendered to Him in repentance and in faith, to do so. What a Person He is! Our sister knew Him, and brothers have spoken about the results that there were in her life, and in the life of her dear husband too. They were themselves undeniable witnesses to the reality of what Christ has done, and to His saving power, and to the blessings of Christianity.

We can read in the Bible, and everything that it says is true, and we can speak from the Bible, and it is wonderful that God's word is available to us. There is also a witness borne in the lives of believers, and we have seen it in our dear sister. Her words were quoted, 'What would we do without the Lord?'. What indeed would we do without the Lord? We would have no hope. Believers in Jesus, our dear sister among them, have hope because of who Christ is and what He has done. One of the things that He has done is to go into death and break its power by rising from it. I believe that. Do you, friend? If we do not believe that, we need to go to God about it, because it is essential that we have our faith in Christ and in what He has done; and particularly in the fact that He is risen from among the dead. He was “raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father,” (Rom 6: 4), and what power there was in that matter! It is a history-changing event. The world was never the same again after Jesus rose from the dead. The effect of what He has done continues now and it fills the heart of most of the people who are gathered in this room. It fills the heart of millions of

believers, those who belong to Jesus.

I wanted to draw attention to what the Lord says, “he that hears my word, and believes him that has sent me” - that is, the Father Himself - “has life eternal”. He then says, “an hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard shall live”. When the Lord refers to the dead in this verse, He is not speaking about people who were physically dead but to people whose ears were stopped, those who had been under the influence of Judaism, for example, as Jewish people were, or perhaps others who believed in false gods or idols. They were dead as far as God was concerned, and what the Lord says is “an hour is coming, and now is” when these people “shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard shall live”. Well, “the voice of the Son of God” is heard in the preaching of the gospel, and those that hear, as our sister did and as most, and I trust all, in this room, have heard, then we have life in Him.

The Lord also says in chapter 14 of John's gospel, “because I live ye also shall live”, v 19. That is the life that believers derive from Christ, a life that is different from the self-centred and self-seeking life that belongs to me naturally. That life is derived from Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, to which reference has already been made. The gift of the Holy Spirit is a wonderful gift of God to those that ask and to those that obey. It is a blessed matter! The Lord Himself says, “the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard shall live”. I appeal again to each one here, have we heard the voice of the Son of God? It is not a voice thundering in judgment; it is the voice of a Shepherd; it is the appeal of One who loved us enough to die for us. That is the voice of the Son of God.

And then He goes on to say, “he has given to the Son also to have life in himself, and has given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is Son of man” and then the Lord says, “Wonder not at this, for an hour is coming” - He does not say ‘and now is’, because this is future - “in which all who are in the tombs shall hear his voice”. That is a reference to the actual resurrection of people who have died. It is the voice of the Son of God in its irresistible power which will speak; and we know from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians that that voice will be heard by those that know and love the Lord Jesus as “an assembling shout” (1 Thess 4: 16), and the dead in Christ will be raised. Reference has already been made to bodies of glory, Phil 3: 21. What we are

saying here is all written in the Scriptures. None of this is a product of man's mind; it never could be. It is God's word conveyed in the Scriptures that the Lord's voice will be heard and those that have heard the voice of the Son of God in their lives here, as our sister has, will rise. She and those who have died in the Lord will hear that "assembling shout". Then "we, the living, who remain", as the apostle speaks (1 Thess 4: 17), referring to Christians, believers, who are living now, will hear that "assembling shout" too and we will be changed and given bodies of glory. What a wonderful thing that is!

That is our hope. If you go through life with that hope, friend, it is life-changing. The glory is for God, and the truth on which that hope rests is guaranteed by God Himself. It is in His word, and we believe it. It changes the believer from the inside out, and it changed our sister. She was given perseverance, and courage, and patience, and strength, and peace because of what she believed. Her faith was tested. None of us could speak about all that she went through in her life; what testing she faced, what sorrow - you might say, "sorrow upon sorrow", Phil 2: 27. Did it drag her down? Did it make her a miserable person? No, she was happy in the Lord. Her faith was in Christ, the One whose "assembling shout" she will soon hear.

Friend, do not risk being among those who are spoken of at the end of verse 29. Now is the time to "hear the voice of the Son of God" and to accept Christ and live. We have spoken of both our sister and her dear husband as examples. What examples they were! But we can all be examples. We can all convey something to those around us of the blessedness of having Christ as Saviour, as our sister did, and the blessedness of having hope in being with Him again when we hear that "assembling shout". Do not put it off, or put it away from you! Perhaps you are saying, 'Well, it is true for him, this person that is speaking, but it is not for me'. But if it is set out in God's word, and it is true for me, and if it is true for many in this room and true for millions of believers, then it is the truth. Please hear the voice of the Son of God speaking, hear it and receive it, and live. Make it true for yourself as it was true for our dear friend and sister, and may there be blessing as a result of the sorrow for the Lord's Name sake!

Bo'ness

15th July 2024

Words at the burial meeting for Mrs Marjorie Spinks

