

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 213

December 2024

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A CENTURION AND A WIDOW

Luke 7: 1-17

GMB It has been helpfully suggested (C A Coates, Outline of Luke (vol 10) p 97) that these two sections illustrate what Simeon saw in chapter 2 of this gospel; the centurion representing “a light for revelation of the Gentiles” (v 32), and then the widow at the gates of Nain “the glory of thy people Israel”, v 33. It might be an example, of the way that Luke writes with method and the two incidents going together may bring out the extent of the new wine and new skins which we read of at the end of chapter 5: what the Lord had brought could not be limited to Israel but extended to the whole world.

In relation to this centurion's bondman, I was wondering whether he continued a theme we have seen so far in the book, where the Lord's activities are to restore persons to service. We saw that with the mother-in-law who had a fever (chap 4: 38), and then the man with the withered hand (chap 6: 6), and here specifically it is not the centurion himself but his bondman that the Lord acts in relation to, on the faith of the centurion. We say that Mark is the servant's gospel but service seems to be in mind here in Luke also.

DAB I find all that interesting: it is helpful to suggest that we just focus on these two narratives and put them together because we get a bit closer into the detail of them. One thing that struck me as the passage was being read is that what is highlighted with the first case, the centurion, is his faith - he comes to Jesus; whereas when we come to the gate of Nain, neither the widow nor the considerable crowd make any appeal to the Lord - they do not seem to recognise that there is a power there that could meet the situation they are in, and the Lord acts unprompted. I know He is prompted by His own feelings, His own compassions, but I thought that was a rather interesting contrast: in one section there is a response to faith, and in the other section nothing is brought to attention except the need. I like what you say about restoration to service, but there is also the restoration of relationships; the son was given to his mother. It was the only relationship she had; so she had been left without any relationship at all, and that is restored.

GMB And the bondman is restored to his master. It is interesting what you say about the distinction between the two cases. There are two sides of the gospel in that; there is the drawing power that is answered in faith, but then we must remember that the gospel has only come out

to us because He has drawn near Himself, without anything to call forth that drawing near on our part.

DAB The bondman reminds me of Onesimus. Paul says he is not now a bondman only “but above a bondman, a beloved brother”, Philem 16. I am not suggesting that the centurion would have given this bondman any special treatment, necessarily, but he could not have looked at him without thinking he had asked Jesus for this man, and it would establish a second line of relationship with him which was on the line you are speaking of?

GMB I was thinking of that verse; Paul says, “once unserviceable to thee, but now serviceable to thee and to me”, Philem 11. More was brought in as a result of what occurred here than had been lost to this centurion.

DAB So Luke may be making more than a medical point in saying that he was “in good health”. He was able to fulfil his position in manhood in a way that bore the imprint of what the Lord Jesus had done in him.

DAB-w The note to “save” is 'make perfectly well' (note a) which perhaps links on to what you have been saying.

DAB That is another feature we see in Matthew's gospel; they were mending their nets (chap 4: 21); they were making them whole, I think that is what the word means there, see note to 1 Cor 1: 10.

GMB The reference to 'make perfectly well' is striking in this chapter, and then the account of the healing of the woman with the flux of blood in the next chapter, v 47. We are not given the history prior to this point, but there was evidently a work that had proceeded with both of them before this, that this centurion should be conscious that this was One who could cure, or make his bondman perfectly well. There is a hidden work preceding these incidents in Luke.

DAB-w I do not think that it is without significance that this account comes immediately after the Lord speaks about the house built on the rock and the one built upon the sand, chap 6: 48,49. Do you think the centurion would represent one whose house was built upon the rock? The winds and the streams had come. He had this concern, but his faith was founded in One who would be able to make perfectly well.

DAB And the widow's house was on the sand? I am not suggesting it was because she made bad decisions, but everything around her had

crumbled in adversity.

DAB-w Even the whole context of that paragraph, even all those around speak about “A great prophet has been raised up amongst us”; but they had still not come to the rock. I was thinking of the woman in John 4; she starts with a prophet (v 19), but the Lord leads her on. These people, this company, never seem to get further than the sand.

GMB The occupation of the centurion was with the Person, “begging him that he might come”. Those at the gates of Nain were occupied with what was according to nature and was terminating in death. This seems to go further than anything we have seen in the prior chapters in Luke. We have seen that the Lord brings in conviction, cleansing, healing, forgiveness, restoration of health, but this is death itself that is met here - the termination of every natural hope - that the Lord Jesus is able to meet. A hope bounded by death is built on sand.

GEW I was wondering whether there was something seen of the kingdom of God here. Without knowing much of history, it has been said before that it was an unusual aspect that there was a centurion who cared. This centurion clearly cared. I have found it helpful to see that something that marks the current dispensation is kindness; it prevails in this dark and evil world. Kindness may no longer be known, I understand, when the saints and the Spirit are gone. Here we see one who is a man of war, yet there is something of care shown. I wondered about what you have said about the hidden work.

GMB I wonder if what you are suggesting might indicate that there was something of new wine and new skins here. As to what you are saying as to kindness, we are in the time when “the kindness and love to man of our Saviour God appeared”, Titus 3: 4. Mr Coates makes a remark as to this book that it is ‘the divine disclosure of the personal charm of Jesus’ (CAC Outline of Luke's Gospel, page 74). Scripture tells us, “The charm of a man is his kindness”, Prov 19: 22. There is something seen in the centurion here that was kindred to the spirit of Christ Himself.

DAB-w Historically it would be right to say that the Roman civilisation was marked by cruelty: in one way, it was very civil, very ordered, but it was marked by cruelty. A centurion was of significant rank in this system. To have kindness was altogether different from the system he represented, that side of what he had been brought up in and presumably once was.

GEW We know that even in the world around us. I am thinking of employment, how persons gain any form of promotion. The centurion had perhaps been through several promotions, but it would not have been because of his kindness. As you are saying, in that system - and man's system today is the same - it is not kindness that men are demanding; there is a certain ruthless character that is necessary to promote their interests. It is helpful what has been brought in as to the charm of a man. God has made Himself known in a Man, the great wonder of God's love being made known in such a way, and the centurion values that.

SMW Linking with what has been said before, he was really occupied with the Person; he comes to it, "I am not worthy". I am thinking of what has been said; he had this place in man's system, but really he was occupied with the Man later described in Philippians 2: 5-11.

GMB Mary said earlier in this book, God "exalted the lowly", chap 1: 52. We have an example of that here, do we?

I wondered whether we could get some help as to why it says that this centurion, "loves our nation, and himself has built the synagogue for us". It was not just that he loved the bondman. I do not know whether the bondman was Jewish, but perhaps that is indicated.

ILB I suppose in a general way it showed that he loved what belonged to God, because they were His people; they still are His people; but I wondered whether it indicated that he obviously knew of the Lord Jesus and the power to heal. Luke earlier had said, "the Lord's power was there to heal them" (chap 5: 17); you could write it across this gospel. The centurion had also come to love what belonged to God. I was thinking of what has been said as to being unworthy: the elders of the Jews say, "He is worthy"; they were still on that line of what we are, but quite clearly the centurion realised his own unworthiness. In a general way I would say that he loved what God loved.

DAB It is notable that he does not plead these works; he does not ask the Lord to reward him for building the synagogue. At the same time, referring to what has been said about Philippians 2, there are features of manhood according to God that He is pleased to identify. We have here a man who loves his bondman, "a certain centurion's bondman who was dear to him"; that is a feature of manhood according to God. It is not necessary in the world to love your staff, but it is a feature of manhood according to God. And then he devoted himself to the Lord's

interests and the Lord's people. It does not say whether he paid for the synagogue - I am not sure that is what was meant, but if he helped with the building of it, that was a considerable undertaking. It showed that he had spent a lot of his time devoted to God's people. Those are features of manhood according to God. Then his faith is another feature. They do not exactly qualify him, but they do attract the Lord's interest.

ILB It says, "And Jesus went with them", and even after these elders of the Jews had said that he is worthy, "Jesus went with them". It aroused the interest of the Lord, speaking reverently, to help this man, but what comes to light is, as the Lord again says, "Not even in Israel have I found so great faith". Luke, as a Gentile too, would be in accord with this. It is interesting in the gospel that persons who showed great faith were not of the Jewish people but of the Gentiles; it must be God's work alone.

GMB I wondered if what has been said is helpful in bringing out the way that these two sections go together, because if we apply the widow at the gates of Nain to Israel, the thought of resurrection and death being overcome in relation to Israel really awaits a future day, but that gives this first passage a particular bearing on this dispensation. What has been brought out is that there is a recognition that we are worthy of nothing and the only ground on which the centurion is brought in is faith. I wondered whether that would link with this dispensation in a particular way. This centurion knew that he was among those who were, "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise" (Eph 2: 12); he had no claim, and did not even count himself worthy to come to Him, let alone for the Lord to come to the centurion. And yet the ground on which he is taken up is "so great faith".

DAB-w I was wondering if this man would represent one of many of whom the Lord later said, "they who have not seen and have believed", John 20: 29? There are others that the Lord heals, and it is often that belief is consequent upon the healing, but he believed before any healing came in.

GMB I certainly think he would be in that class; that is true in this dispensation. I was interested in the thought that was brought in as to the way that his faith is credited here, because we get that in relation to the woman later in this chapter, "Her many sins are forgiven; for she loved much", v 47. It is not that his faith was the *cause* of the bondman's salvation, or the love of the woman the *cause* of her sins

being forgiven, but there is something that the Lord Jesus finds in those that He secures. The Lord is able to point to these features as 'justifying' Him in having taken up their case.

ILB Faith is the gift of God. The Lord would have recognised that. What he says recalls the word, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work", John 5: 17. This man recognised that the Lord was under authority. Do you think the Lord would have appreciated that, and was moved by the work of the Father that had gone on ahead?

DAB-w Could the scripture, "They were thine, and thou gavest them me" (John 17: 6) extend to this man then, not just His disciples?

ILB That would apply to all who belong to Him, would it not?

DAB-w He recognised that they belonged to the Father, which would have been something really that drew Him to them.

DAB What the centurion is really saying is, 'Do not come because I call you, only come if the Father sends you'.

GMB The reference to the Father having worked hitherto is interesting because Simeon says, "a light for revelation of the Gentiles", and this centurion had extraordinary light in that he recognises that the Lord Jesus was acting under the authority of Another and subject to the will of Another.

DAB But that does not cause the centurion to doubt. There is no 'if' here. Faith sees the way that God has come out, and faith understands the power of God, but it also recognises the will of God. What the centurion says is, "say by a word and my servant shall be healed"; he neither doubted the power nor the will to heal him; he recognises that all is under the direction of God, but God will act in this way.

GEW That is a great exercise and test each day. Mr Eric Burr said many years ago that a diplomat who had been stationed in a certain country for a certain period of time was sometimes in danger that he would 'go native', whereas a person with that responsibility should always take their bearings from the country they are from. I suppose this man, as many centurions would, would take his bearings from Rome; that would be how he would think of things. I was thinking of what has been brought in as to the Lord's direction from the Father, how remarkable this is that here is one not looking to Rome, but looking to heaven itself. What a work of God! That is for every believer, and that is why it is a challenge: do I, in every aspect of my practical life, take

bearings from heaven?

DAB These references to Rome are interesting because even the governor would have to refer to Rome for some things, and wait ages for an answer with no means of guessing what the answer would be; and an informed emperor would act on the spur of the moment. But here we have faith that is certain about the way God will act, as faith sees the heart of God; but nevertheless the centurion does not want to take the credit for this. It is like someone saying it is not because a convert heard my preaching, but because God acted; and how much greater and how much more rock-like that is.

GEW Our brother referred in his thanksgiving this morning to unchanging love. There would be caprice with the emperor, as we find in any man, but this centurion would know that there was that which was unchanging.

GMB He would not invite the Lord to do anything outside the will of the Father, would he? You need to know the Father's heart for that. It was Satan who tempted the Lord to do something outside the will of the Father: the centurion was not going to do that, but he knew the Father's heart and could have confidence.

DAB I was just reading an unpublished comment of Mr Darby, that Satan might point out the word of God to you, but he will never help you do the will of God.

ILB I would speak carefully, but what he says of himself here, as he relates it to the Lord, is remarkable, "I say to this one, Go, and he goes". Speaking reverently, if the Father said 'Go', the Lord Jesus went. And then, "to another, Come, and he comes; and to my bondman, Do this, and he does it". I trust I am speaking reverently but that could relate to the Father and the Son.

DAB That forms a couple of thoughts: firstly in John 11 when Lazarus was ill, the Lord waited for a word and Lazarus died. I am just applying this to what has been said about these two sections; it says here that "Jesus went with them", that is with those the centurion sent; so we could say that the Father had said to the Lord in this first paragraph, 'Go'. But then, in the second paragraph, the Father said to the Lord, 'Come', and it says He came to the city of Nain. So He went to those who were a far off and to those who were nigh, Eph 2: 17. I do not know whether this is an interesting application of this passage? With the centurion, the Lord is ready to go, and at the gate of Nain He comes.

What has been pointed out is that all that is under divine direction, and authority.

DAB-w In verse 9 the Father had said, “Do this, and he does it”.

DAB It might be a word or it might be a touch. How the Father enters into all the details of this is very blessed.

GMB It draws out in that way that the Lord Jesus was here as One that serves. You would have thought that the centurion would have said, 'I also am a man who *has* authority', but he says, “/ also am a man placed under authority”. The light here is extraordinary: he saw the place that the Lord Jesus had taken as coming into manhood - going back to Philippians 2 again, it says, “taking a bondman's form”, v 7.

DAB I was thinking about that form of a bondman; that was not an afterthought of God's; it was not to fit in with the emerging situation, but manhood according to God serves. So the form the Lord Jesus took was determined to shed light upon the character of manhood seen in the Person whose form it was, and what He had come to do, and also His relationship with God would come out, even in the form He took.

FMcK I was wondering if there was anything in who the centurion sends? Initially it is the elders, who we have talked a bit about, but then it is his friends. Was that a more spontaneous thought, do you think? They would just be those who were with him at the time, but maybe he had to send for the elders - and what they say adds to his thought. With the friends, it was a truer representation of what he was thinking.

GMB What strikes me is that the elders knew what the centurion had done, but the friends of the centurion knew what type of man he was. It is an intimate thought; it is not just a question of what he had done for the nation in building the synagogue, but the friends knew that he was one who did not consider himself worthy.

DAB It is sad how the elders managed to turn this thing around on themselves, “has built the synagogue for us”. How easily we put ourselves in the central place, which a friend does not do: the friend is thinking about the person on whose behalf they have come.

DAB-w The friends begin with, “Lord”. The elders thought of “us”, but the friends come and own the authority of the One whom they are approaching.

GMB It may suggest that this centurion was not alone in having these feelings; that there were others who recognised the power and the

heart of the One whom they approached.

DAB-w It is a flavour of what Peter is going to find when he comes to the centurion in the beginning of Acts, part of that sheet out of heaven. He was with a company in the house, Acts 10: 23.

JTC It is a great picture of faith operating even when the Lord was literally on the earth. It does not appear that there was actually contact made at this point between the Lord Jesus and the centurion or the bondman, yet such restoration was brought about as a result of faith.

GMB I wonder whether there is an indication in that of the distance at which the Gentile was, “that ye were at that time without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world”, but that distance is overcome here.

JTC I thought it was affecting that this was brought about as a result of faith. It was faith operating, literally. The Lord had touched many that He came in contact with to heal and to cure, but this man is restored to good health by the power of the Lord Jesus in response to faith.

ILB “Blessed they who have not seen and have believed” (John 20: 29); this man believed beyond any doubt. There is no record of him seeing the Lord physically but he knew the Lord in his own heart. He knew the heart of God really, and he knew the Lord, which again maybe links with this being the Gentile, “light for revelation of the Gentiles” because in the broad bearing of things the Gentiles are the ones who have not seen and yet believe.

GMB What has been said made me think of John 10, “And I have other sheep which are not of this fold: those also I must bring”, v 16. He had to go out to them to bring them in.

DAB How wonderful; although there is a sense to which His mission was to Israel, it was never limited to the Jew. We read about the Syrophenician woman (Mark 7: 26); God had to act for that woman because of her faith. Faith in that sense is a universal principle; it does not observe the national boundaries that the Jew valued.

DAB-w How far can we take that thought? It says in the beginning of Acts, “the Lord added to the assembly daily those that were to be saved” (chap 2: 47), which I take to mean those of the remnant of Israel. Then we might think of the eunuch: Philip went out to gather him, Acts 8. Would that have its broad bearing that the Lord's servants have gone

out to collect them?

DAB I wondered. The centurion says, "I say to this one, Go"; and the Lord says to Paul, "Go, for I will send thee to the nations afar off", Acts 22: 21. That is an assertion on God's part to bring the gospel and its healing power to people like me.

DAB-w Paul was someone who was sent. Peter's mission was to the people of Israel, and he remained in Jerusalem, at least by record, but Paul travelled far and wide.

DAB It is a very simple word, we have it in Acts 10, "go with them", v 20. The Spirit says to go, and that was to Gentiles.

ILB In one sense, we are not invited: we are compelled to come in. There were those who were invited and they all had excuses, but then it says, "Go out into the ways and fences and compel to come in", Luke 14: 23. The Gentiles are compelled to come in.

DAB-w That is helpful because these were the lame, the sick, the waifs and strays, the wanderers, that is the Gentiles; that is who we are but we are still compelled to come in, unworthy like this centurion was.

GEW The Lord could say to the woman, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when ye shall neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem worship the Father", John 4: 21. I was thinking of all the boundaries that had been there and what persons were occupied with. She had said earlier, "Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well" (v 12); it was occupation with themselves, as we had earlier as to the synagogue, "he ... has built the synagogue for us"; now the Lord is bringing them into something that is far greater, the worship of the Father.

DAB This adds to what has been said, "he must needs pass through Samaria", John 4: 4. We could say, very carefully, it is not just the Gentile that is compelled but God's grace compels Him as well. I was thinking that the earlier part of this book is taken up with persons who can be brought to Jesus to be healed, but I do not think it is going too far to say that this man was probably incapable of being brought - why not bring him if you could? It reminds me of the man at the gate of the temple called Beautiful; he had never walked, Acts 3: 2. That is a sign of what is now proclaimed in the gospel that, where there is no power, the Lord's coming has brought what was needed which is available to faith.

GMB That links with the way that Matthew ends, where you might have thought that the focus would have been on Israel, the Lord says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations”, chap 28: 19. It is the disciples continuing what the Lord was doing here.

DAB They were under authority, and the Name that they are sent in conveys that authority.

ILB So if we think of this second section as referring to the Lord's Jewish people, it says He was, “moved with compassion”. Speaking carefully, He is going to be moved with compassion in relation to them again, because they will be brought to the most helpless state possible and He will be “moved with compassion” in relation to them.

GMB We were referring after the reading on Wednesday to the reference in Romans 11: 15: “what their reception but life from among the dead?”. It awaits a future day; it will be as it were the third rank in the first resurrection, the first fruits are Christ, then those who are His at His coming; and then the Jews are brought in again, 1 Cor 15: 23. As well as the bearing on Israel it also brings out that there is nothing that the Lord could not overcome. Death had not yet been overcome in Luke's gospel, but Mr Coates says as to this verse that 'we know of no instance in which death was in His presence without being despoiled of its prey', CAC vol 10, Outline of Luke's Gospel, p 99.

ILB The hymn writer says:

Disease, and death, and demon,
All fled before Thy word (Hymn 189).

It was impossible that such could not be met.

DAB-w At the time of the rapture all the works of the power of death in the believer will be undone, right back to Adam. Another has said, there will be a moment upon the earth when every saint in Christ will be alive, the power of death undone, and there will be a moment when everyone who is in Christ will be alive upon the earth.

GMB We can say that at that point there will be evidence that death has been despoiled, but its power has already been broken. The fact that that He Himself has been into death means that death has been overcome already.

ILB “He touched the bier”; the Lord of life and glory actually touched the bier. He went into death Himself; it is a remarkable thing that the One in whom life is intrinsically, in this instance touched the bier, but

really He tasted death for everything.

GEW And the bier did not go any further, “he touched the bier, and the bearers stopped”. No other could have done this. He tasted death for everything, and how great a matter that this procession here, formed because of death, did not continue; no other had such moral power to do this.

DAB The provisions of God are a very fine thing. There is no reference to the elders in Nain; presumably there were some, but they were well out of the way. The only service that could be rendered to this young man was to carry him to the grave, and no one was able to help the widow at all; and yet the love of God is available. How touching that is: in a sense it is the nation, and maybe the unbeliever - maybe even one of us in moments of doubt we wonder if anything or anyone can help - but there is always One who will meet the situation out of the compassion of His own heart.

GMB He sent forth “the crushed delivered” (Luke 4: 18) here, did He not?

ILB In one sense it is the gospel, “*you*, being dead in your offences and sins” (Eph 2: 1), the word in the gospel is, “Wake up”. Again, He alone is able to do that; the most eloquent preacher will not wake the lost soul up; it is only the Word of God penetrating into the heart that will wake a person up, Heb 4:12.

DAB It is very striking that there are occasions when the Lord Jesus speaks to deaf people, who hear; here He speaks to a dead person who hears. It is remarkable: “when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard shall live”, John 5: 25.

DAB-w Are we to learn anything from the fact that this youth seems to do more than Lazarus does? He sits up and begins to speak; Lazarus came forth bound and others loose him, John 11: 44.

ILB I do not think that there is anything recorded of what Lazarus says at all.

DAB-w Neither of them lose this title of being dead, “the dead sat up and began to speak”. It struck me, linking it to the gospel, the power in the gospel, “Wake up”, and then he is able to sit up and then able to speak. The gospel does not just save us, it sets us forward; it establishes us in Christ, and it enables us to bear responsibility, all under the power of the Spirit. That is really a full gospel.

ILB In Luke 15 it says the father received the younger son back, “safe and well”, v 27. The previous man here was “in good health”. God is desirous that persons are found here in good health, not only saved, by putting our faith in the Person and the blood of the Lord Jesus but well. We may be safe, but He would have us well.

GMB The testimonial aspect referred to might be confirmed by the fact that the consequence of this is that, “fear seized on all, and they glorified God”. As to the distinction you draw with Lazarus, I think the next thing we hear of Lazarus is that he was sitting at table with Jesus, John 12: 2. It seems more a personal thought as to his portion on the other side of death, but here there is one who can sit up and begin to speak and can be given to his mother. This fear that seized upon all is not the fear of the bondage of death any more.

ILB Elsewhere it says, “they shall call his name Emmanuel ... 'God with us'”, Matt 1: 23. They say here, “God has visited his people”.

Sidcup

1st September 2024

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CONTEMPLATING THE SUFFERINGS OF THE LORD JESUS

Colin A Seeley

Luke 22: 39-46

We read this section on Lord's day but we did not speak about it; there was a helpful enquiry raised in the reading as to what place the Lord's sufferings would have at the Supper. I think what we arrived at in the reading was that the contemplation of the sufferings of the Lord would give tone to the responses to the Lord, our responses to divine Persons. I think the contemplation of the Lord's sufferings would add a certain richness to our responses, and to all who have part in the service of God.

This incident in the Lord's life is remarkable and never ceases to yield impressions for believers. One thing we do know is that not all the incidents of the Lord's life are recorded in each gospel, but this one is, and the gospel writers each have their own impression as to it. We know that in Matthew and in Mark, the place is not referred to as the mount of Olives, but it is described as Gethsemane. We have been taught that the gospels of Matthew and Mark are known as pressure gospels and it is in those two gospels that we have the Lord's exclamation on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", Matt 27: 46; Mark 15: 34. That is very affecting to think about, that Matthew and Mark present this particular section from the point of view of pressure. Gethsemane means the 'wine press'; it is a place of excessive pressure.

But Luke does not speak of Gethsemane; it says "he went according to his custom to the mount of Olives", and we noticed when we were reading the end of Luke 21 that that was His custom, "he was teaching in the temple, and by night, going out, he remained abroad on the mountain called the mount of Olives" (v 37); so His own would be used to going there as well with Him. As they were at the mount of Olives it says, "the disciples also followed him". John does mention the place too, in chapter 18; immediately after that remarkable prayer of the Lord's in John 17 it says, "Jesus, having said these things, went out with his disciples beyond the torrent Cedron, where was a garden", chap 18: 1. We have Gethsemane, we have the mount of Olives, and we have a garden. I did notice in the ministry that one brother said that the places in John's gospel were of little consequence, because in that gospel the glory of the Person is before us.

Here the Lord Jesus is at the mount of Olives "and the disciples

also followed him". We have also been helped recently to see that in certain points in the Lord's life He takes Peter, James and John with Him, those three servants, three disciples. These three apostles might be spoken of as the nobility; think of all that they meant to the Lord. In Matthew and Mark at Gethsemane He takes those three with Him. The view that we have in Matthew and Mark is that there are two companies, some disciples are left a little further back, and Peter, and the sons of Zebedee, James and John, are taken with Him. But that is not what we find in Luke's account; he says here, "the disciples also followed him"; I wonder if that would help us in relation to assembly response. Luke clearly writes with Paul's ministry in mind, and he has one company in mind; so "the disciples also followed him". The Lord here says, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw".

The Lord's sufferings are unique, and we cannot enter into them. But at about a stone's throw this company who loved the Lord, and the company that He loved, was able to take account of these sufferings that the Lord Jesus was enduring here; "about a stone's throw". There has been contrast with the ark as we have been going over reading in Joshua. The distance that the children of Israel had to remain behind the ark was two thousand cubits, chap 3: 4. That matter of the Lord going into death was uniquely His; persons could not follow there! But here they are just a stone's throw. What do they see? They contemplate a praying Man!

That is another feature of Luke's gospel, where the Lord Jesus is presented as we have had helpfully illustrated in these readings, He is a praying Man, even on the mount of transfiguration. Matthew and Mark do not mention that, but in Luke it says, "And as he prayed", chap 9: 29. Here He is praying; "and having knelt down". These are helpful distinctions between the gospel writers. In Matthew it says, "he fell upon his face" (chap 26: 39), and in Mark, "he fell upon the earth", chap 14: 35. But what a dignified picture this is of the Lord Jesus. It says, "and having knelt down he prayed". He is a most wonderful example for us; "Father, if thou wilt remove this cup from me: - but then, not my will, but thine be done". As He is praying, divine support comes in for Him, "And an angel appeared to him from heaven strengthening him". He is a perfect dependent Man. I love to think of heaven being intensely interested; the angel appears to Him from heaven strengthening Him. What a picture that is for our contemplation! It has been helpfully pointed out that in Matthew's gospel it is a finalised thing after the matter as to Gethsemane, and He says "Arise, let us go", chap 26: 46. As He is

arrested, He says He could have called on ten legions of angels, v 53. That was not required then because the Lord was going that way, but here the angel appears to Him from heaven “strengthening him”. There is no mention of an angel in John's gospel; that would not fit in with John! Angelic support would not fit in with John's gospel because John presents Him as a glorious divine Person. But here we have, “And being in conflict he prayed more intently. And his sweat became as great drops of blood, falling down upon the earth”. What a remarkable matter that is! I suppose it would indicate to us the reality of His manhood and what He was suffering here; “being in conflict”.

Let us remember what that conflict was! This was the enemy returning to seek if he could, by bringing the horror of all that was ahead of the Lord Jesus, to divert Him from the pathway. What a blessed Man! He rose up from prayer, came to His disciples, and found them sleeping from grief. What can we say about that! How different would I have been? These dear men did not have the Spirit, but it is wonderful if we can be alert and have our spiritual sensibilities exercised in relation to these sufferings. “Why sleep ye? rise up and pray that ye enter not into temptation”. I think that is a prayer that we can all pray right now, that we do not enter into temptation and that we are kept, our souls are kept. So that as we contemplate these sufferings of the Lord, these anticipative sufferings in relation to all that was to follow, may our responses in the service of God have an increased note of richness. The sufferings of the Lord Jesus are intended to affect our hearts and to keep us soft. The Lord spoke about His sufferings when He was recovering those two that went away on the road to Emmaüs; “Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?”, chap 24: 26. And then at the beginning of the Acts; “he presented himself living, after he had suffered”, chap 1: 3. I do not think we can ever move far away from the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. I had in mind these distinctions in the way that the gospel writers present them for our help, as under the power and indited by the Holy Spirit. This is the word of God, and nothing can affect the hearts of believers like the contemplation of these matters and the precious perfect way that each gospel writer presents them.

I trust that this may be for our encouragement and that as we have said that there may be a richer note of praise for His Name's sake.

Word in Meeting for Ministry in Glasgow

11th June 2024

GOD'S LOVE MANIFEST

Stuart M Webster

John 2: 1-11; 9: 1-12, 25 (from “one”), 35-38; 21: 1-14

The time of the glad tidings is a most glorious time. It is a time when God would rejoice to manifest or make known to His creature the fulness and greatness of His love. We sang at the outset -

God is sending out the message
Of His wondrous love and grace (Hymn 219).

That is the character of what God would have you to know this afternoon in the glad tidings -

Sends it from the highest glory,
Radiant in the Saviour's face.

That is the One that God would desire to make known to you this afternoon in the glad tidings. I trust we all may have our eyes open to see the radiancy and the glory of what shines in the face of Jesus.

I have a simple thought in relation to these three scriptures as to what is manifest. In the first scripture, at the commencement of the public service of our Lord Jesus, it speaks of this great sign, “This beginning of signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory”. I trust we may see something of the glory of that One, the greatness of that One. In the second scripture in relation to the blind man, he was brought into wondrous blessing, which we all are as accepting the overtures of the love and grace of God. It says, “that the works of God should be manifested in him”. How glorious that God would take up such as you and me as vessels of mercy, that His work may be manifested in us.

In the last scripture that we read, it speaks of the Lord Jesus manifesting Himself to His own having been risen from among the dead, and what they find is that the Lord Jesus was able to sustain them for everything. And so it is with us, beloved, whatever time may be left to us, the Lord would rejoice to manifest Himself to us and bring in what is needed to sustain us and maintain us until He comes. How glorious the glad tidings are when God is speaking in the overtures of His love and grace.

This first scripture refers to a day when the Lord Jesus commenced His public service here at a wedding in Cana of Galilee;

and there was a deficiency at that occasion. There are a couple of things I would just like to draw out. The mother of the Lord Jesus says, "They have no wine. Jesus says to her, What have I to do with thee, woman? mine hour has not yet come". Think of the One that was there, the greatness of the One that was there. The Lord Jesus was born of woman, and yet as He came out in His public service what He would draw our affections to is that He is the blessed Son of God. He was sent of God, the One that came here as a blessed Man. Oh the wonder of it, that God would come here as a blessed Man! The mother of Jesus was His relation according to nature, and we can understand her affection for Him, but what we are drawn to is the greatness of the One that was here, the blessed Son of God. He says, "What have I to do with thee, woman? mine hour has not yet come". The One that was here was an altogether different kind of Man.

Think of the glory of the One that was here and the way that He had come. We touched on it this morning at the Lord's supper, how the Lord Jesus came into Manhood, humbling Himself. How glorious to contemplate such a one humbling Himself; a brother remarked after the morning meeting that only the Lord was able to do that, to humble Himself in this way. It says He was "found in figure as a man", Phil 2: 8. Oh the wonder of it, and here He was at the commencement of His public service. I trust we all may have our eyes open to see the glory and the greatness of the One that was there.

We are told that "there were standing there six stone water-vessels, according to the purification of the Jews". That may link on with what we had in the reading today; there was that which was according to the law, but, as was evident in this occasion, there was a deficiency. Man was not able to fulfil the law, whereas the Lord Jesus could say, "I am not come to make void, but to fulfil", Matt 5: 17. Here is the One that was come to fulfil the law, and as coming in, He was able to provide that which was for the satisfaction and enjoyment of those that were here. I do not want to go into the detail of it, but the feast master says, "thou hast kept the good wine till now". Think of all that had gone before, think of all the great men that were before, especially the prophets speaking of our Lord Jesus; it says, "thou hast kept the good wine till now".

The scriptures tell us what was to be seen in that blessed One as He was found amongst men. The Lord Jesus did a great miracle here in turning the water to wine - never had such a thing been done

before, never has it been done since. It was a great miracle, but what I want to draw to your heart's attention is the One that manifested His glory; the Person that was there, and His greatness . We can read throughout the gospels of the great acts of power that the Lord Jesus did in coming into contact with men, the great healing power seen in that One, all manifesting His glory. At one point it had to be said, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?", Matt 8: 27. Think of the Creator God there, manifesting His glory. In another place it could be said, "Never man spoke thus", John 7: 46. Think of the words of grace that were proceeding out of the mouth of the Lord Jesus in His public testimony here. Have you had your eyes opened to see the glory of that One, the One that God presents to you, that Man alone, Jesus alone.

Have you seen Him in all His glory and greatness? Think of His pathway of full committal to His God and Father. As we get in John 17, He says, "I have glorified *thee* on the earth", v 4. What glory there is to be seen in Him, who could say, "now glorify *me*, *thou* Father", v 5. His Father was so satisfied with that blessed One that He glorified Him, and has given Him that place of pre-eminence in glory, as we sang -

Sends it from the highest glory,
Radiant in the Saviour's face.

Beloved hearers, do you know that One? Have you had your eyes opened to see the glory that is manifested in Him, the greatness of His Person? There is no other one besides Jesus; there is no other Man to be presented to you this afternoon than God's beloved Son.

We read of this blind man in John 9. It speaks of him being blind from birth, no doubt speaking of the condition that we are all in as in the condition of sin. The psalmist says, "in iniquity was I brought forth, and in sin did my mother conceive me", Ps 51: 5 The Lord Jesus, and the Lord Jesus alone, was able to provide what was needed for this man, and so it is with us, beloved. The work of Jesus alone is the only means by which we can know salvation, what it is to be saved from our lost state, saved from our sins; it is because of the work of Jesus.

It speaks here of the Lord Jesus spitting upon the ground and making mud as ointment. It is, no doubt, referring to the down-stooping love of Jesus, the way that He has gone to provide that blessed remedy for each one of us. Think of the way that the Lord Jesus has gone, that path leading up to the cross, where He took upon Himself the whole

question of sin. Blessed be His name, the Lord Jesus has fully exhausted the judgment of God against sin so that God has a holy and a righteous basis to come out towards you and me. Have you availed yourself of the work of Jesus? Do you know what it is to come to the cross and believe that the Lord Jesus has died for you? Do you believe that He has shed His precious blood that you can know what it is to have your sins forgiven? We were reading of it yesterday, of how it is spoken of in the Old Testament in relation to the passover lamb, how the children of Israel were to take the blood and put it on the door-post and lintel; and the word is "when I see the blood, I will pass over you", Exod 12: 13. Think of God's valuation of the blood of Jesus, the only means by which we can know what it is to have our sins washed away. I trust we are all sheltering under the precious blood of Jesus. If you come to the Lord Jesus, owning Him as your Saviour, you will come into untold blessings that God has in mind for you. Paul says that He has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ" (Eph 1: 3); what blessings are ours! I trust we all know what it is to respond to the overtures of love and grace of God: how precious to think that we might all be vessels of mercy in whom the works of God can be manifested.

This blind man was questioned as to who had given him sight, and He could answer, "One thing I know, that, being blind before, now I see". Dear young one, dear older one, is it one thing you know? Lay hold of it in your soul that Jesus in His love has gone to death for you, and you can avail yourself of Him as your Saviour. In one sense this man did not need to know anything else but the love of the Lord Jesus.

I read on to bring out how the works of God proceed in this man so that he became a worshipper. He made this great confession in relation to his having had to do with Jesus. How solemn it is that he was cast out, and maybe that is how we find it in this world: as we confess the Lord's name we may come under reproach. But the Lord Jesus had His eye on this man and He has His eye upon you. And you can prove what this man found - it says that the Lord Jesus found him; and He says, "dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him? And Jesus said to him, Thou hast both seen him, and he that speaks with thee is he. And he said, I believe, Lord: and he did him homage". The works of God were becoming manifest in that vessel of mercy; he not only came to know the Saviour, Jesus, he came to know Him as his Lord, as he says, "I believe, Lord: and he did him homage". He became a worshipper, and

that is what God desires with us in the glad tidings, as the Lord says earlier in this book in relation to the woman of Sychar's well, "for also the Father seeks such as his worshippers", John 4: 23. That is what God's desire is in the glad tidings, and it is as becoming worshippers that the works of God become manifest in us. What a wondrous testimony there is just in this room, of vessels of mercy in whom the works of God can be manifested. I trust you have availed yourself of the Saviour; then, as I say, lay hold in faith of that precious work and know what it is to have Jesus as your Lord and to become "such as his worshippers".

I read at the end of John where the Lord Jesus has gone into death. He went into death as the mighty Victor; He could not be held by its power; and He is now a risen Man out of death. It speaks here of how the Lord Jesus "manifested himself" to His disciples. They were those that had been with the Lord Jesus in His pathway here and they had an attachment to Him. It is a solemn matter to think of how Simon Peter, as taking his eye off the Lord Jesus for a time, could say, "I go to fish". You may say that he returns to his previous occupation, but again the Lord Jesus had His eye upon these disciples here. It says, "This is already the third time that Jesus had been manifested to the disciples, being risen from among the dead". How the Lord Jesus would rejoice to manifest Himself to each one of us. It says this is "already the third time"; you get a sense from the way in which John is writing that the Lord Jesus could not hold Himself back from making Himself known to His lovers. As we read through the passage the disciples had gone out to fish in their ship, and they were not able to draw anything through the night. But when the Lord Jesus comes into their circumstances, there was that which was over and above what they required, how precious. So it is, beloved, as the Lord manifests Himself to us in our circumstances, He will bring in what is needed to sustain us and maintain us.

The Lord Jesus had made Himself known to Mary having risen from among the dead: what wondrous, glorious things the Lord Jesus manifested to her. He could say to her, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God", John 20: 17. What manifestations the Lord Jesus would rejoice to make to us. The Lord Jesus manifested Himself again to these disciples in the previous chapter where they were, having shut the doors through fear of the Jews. The Lord Jesus manifested Himself to them and what He was able to bring in was peace to that company. And so it is still, beloved; I

think we had a sense of it this morning, as the Lord Jesus rejoiced to manifest Himself to us, bringing in all that is needed: the peace, the joy, the liberty that we are able to enter into.

The Lord Jesus always desires to manifest Himself and, as manifesting Himself to us, He brings in everything that will sustain us until He comes. What a blessed One we have to do with in the glad tidings! I trust we have all had our eyes opened to see the glory and greatness of that One, the glory and greatness of the work that He has accomplished to the full glory and satisfaction of His God and Father. May we lay hold of in faith that precious work, and become a vessel of mercy where the work of God will be manifested.

I close by referring to a verse in Colossians 3: 4: "When the Christ is manifested who is our life, then shall ye also be manifested with him in glory". How precious! What precious words, beloved,

May it be the portion for each one of us, for His Name's sake.

Grangemouth

18th August 2024

THE DAY OF GRACE

David A Barlow

Ephesians 4: 9-10

1 Kings 18: 41-45 (to 'rain')

Ecclesiastes 11: 3

Jeremiah 8: 20

I am not intending to refer directly to the first scripture that we read, but it might be a key for the rest of the scriptures we are going to consider. I seek help, beloved, to say a word or two as to the greatness of the day of grace that we are in; the significance of it, the importance of it. We sang in our hymn at the outset of this meeting:

Message of Jesus, message of love,
Telling of welcome to that bright home above! (Hymn 202),

and you will notice that there is a sober tone in the second two scriptures I read. There is, at the end of both of those scriptures, the thought of permanency, the thought of something happening from which there is no going back, a moment that every person must face, when their time of responsibility here upon the earth is ended. And when that time comes, the message of welcome to that man, that woman, that boy or girl, will no longer apply. I do not wish to dwell on the sobriety of that; what I want to talk to you about is this present time, a time when God is presenting His Saviour, His beloved Son, the One who has accomplished all things to God's eternal satisfaction. God would have you to receive Him for yourself; He would have you to accept the work Christ accomplished on the cross for you, so that you can come into all the favour and blessing that God has in mind for you. That is the time we are in now, "a sound of abundance of rain"; and it is possible for God to bless you because everything that is contrary to God, everything that you and I have done, and everything that you and I are that brought in distance from God, has been met by the perfection of the work of Christ, so that God can now present in love His beloved Son for you to accept for yourself.

I thought about the beauty of this scripture in 1 Kings. I would commend to everyone to read about Elijah, and Elisha too; the sections of scripture where they are mentioned are full of wonderful stories, and here we come to the end of one of those stories. It comes in during a period of history when Israel had set up a false god, Baal, whom the king of Israel through a wicked queen called Jezebel had installed as a

god to replace the God of Israel. Then there had been a great public test, directed by Elijah, to see whether Baal was the true God, or whether Jehovah was the true God, and you can read about that. But also, for over three years before the time that we have read of, there had been drought over the whole land, no rain at all, and this section tells us about the moment when that drought period ended. You can imagine the desperate need at this point for water upon the earth. A drought can be very destructive; men cannot live long without water: so we can say there was a great need, a desperate need, for water. This is much like today spiritually, if you look at the conditions of the world around. What desperate need there is; how men are searching for an answer, some lasting satisfaction, and finding none. How many political ideas there are. We were considering that locally on Thursday during our reading; we thought about all these ideas that men bring up,- and we likened them to one of the plagues in Egypt, to the frogs that filled the houses and filled the land of Egypt. You can imagine the frogs jumping around everywhere, how like men who seem to have all these different plans and ideas, with no one having any lasting solution, and eventually every idea ends up being added to those stinking heaps. There is no satisfaction there: someone comes up with an idea, and it gets them nowhere, and then someone else comes up with a different idea, and it gets them nowhere too. There is no satisfaction and no life found in such things.

Thus, the world is in drought; what is there for us, what can we do, what can be done? Think of the drought that was upon the earth when the Lord came, nothing for God. It says that God looked upon the children of men to see if any did seek Him (Ps 14: 2; 53: 2); there were none, they had all turned back: but He found in Christ the one Man in whom He could have His full satisfaction, the object of His delight. And that is the cloud we read of here, no bigger than a man's hand. Think of that, all the potential that was found in Christ, the One whom God could mark out, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight", Matt 3: 17. He walked upon this earth, a Man amongst men, yet perfectly apart from them, wholly satisfying His God and Father, walking entirely according to the will of God. What a Man He is! What a Man He was! So our scripture says, "there is a cloud, small as a man's hand, arising out of the sea". What did that mean?

We read in Ephesians that "he also descended into the lower parts of the earth"; think of that: think of the depths that were fathomed

when He was made sin. He was made that, to bear what you and I, beloved, rightly deserved; He was made what God hated; He was made that which His holy soul recoiled from. God made Him to be sin for us, and there upon the cross He endured for all who have trusted in Him, and in obedience to the will of His God and Father, the wrath of a holy and righteous God. He went down to “the lower parts of the earth”, He became dead, but, “He that descended is the same who has also ascended”, and that is the cloud coming up out of the sea. Think of what Elijah knew when he realised that cloud was coming; what was the answer? There was going to be the sound of the abundance of rain, the whole sky was going to be filled, there was the wind, there was the darkness, and there was the pour of rain, “that the pour of rain stop thee not”. Elijah had a view prophetically of what was going to be secured out of the death of Christ; what is there that God cannot do? And now that He has His beloved Son set at His right hand, God is able to offer everything. He is able to bless you “with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ”, Eph 1: 3. He is able to offer you salvation; He is able to offer you a place with Christ forever. How wonderful, and that is what I thought about: as we read of the sky being filled here, so also the Christ will “fill all things”, fill all heaven and all the earth. What a time it will be in the eternal day when it will be seen that Christ is the centre of the universe, but right now He is the Centre of all that God delights in, and it is He whom God commends to you in the glad tidings: what a gospel!

So, the question now comes to you, will you accept Him? I would like now to draw attention to this passage in Ecclesiastes, “If the clouds be full of rain”. If we link it to our scripture in Ephesians, where it says that “he might fill all things”, it is like the clouds full of rain. And, if you just picture this, it is as if ever since the Lord has been set at the Father's right hand, there has been a pouring of blessing from heaven. The glad tidings have gone out, and it has been presented to you time and again; the day of grace has gone on; the pouring out upon you for blessing has gone on and on, and it has gone on from God's side for about 2000 years. “If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth”; how good God is; how patient He has been with me, how patient He has been with you, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. You have heard the glad tidings, you know the terms of the gospel, how many times did you ignore it? But the rain continued. God has continued, His hands outstretched to bless, continued to commend His Son to you. So, in this application,

you or I are like these trees in Ecclesiastes; if I can just apply it this way, the rain is constantly pouring upon the earth, constantly upon these trees, and a tree is rooted to the earth, is it not? That is one of the ways the Lord is marked out, as “a root out of dry ground” (Isa 53: 2), but you and I, we are rooted to the earth; we rely on the earth for our sustenance, but we are also bound here, and we are bound here as part of a fallen race. We are bound and marked by sin, and we live in an earth that is tainted by sin and soon is to go on to destruction. That is like a tree rooted upon this earth, and then it says, “if a tree fall towards the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be”, and you see that is a moment that happens to every tree; the question is, when a tree falls, where will it fall? Think of the permanency of it.

I was struck by this: I was walking back to my car after work earlier this year, and it involved walking on a bridge over a busy road. And on that particular evening the road had been closed to cars, and very near the bridge, in the road, you could see one of those white police tents. As I continued back to my car, I was able to speak to a security guard at the carpark, who had seen the incident, and it transpired that a man, presumably because he was late to catch a bus, chose, instead of going over the bridge, to run across the road, and that was it: he was struck by a car. I thought about that; his tree had fallen. Did it fall to the north? I do not know. But what struck me was, that morning as I was walking that exact route to work, the favour of God was towards both him and me, the day of grace was available to both him and me, and then, when I walked back that same route a few hours later, it was available just to me. The permanency of that is very sober to think about, because God has appealed to you time and again in the glad tidings, and He appeals to you again even now.

Beloved, I cry to you, fall to the south; what does that mean, fall to the south? It means you give up everything here, and commit your life to Christ: fall to the south, to see that Christ died for you, and see, though you deserved to be condemned because of all that you are, He took up the matter for you. Give up what is here; cast your life upon Christ; let your tree fall to the south, beloved. You see you can fall to the south now; that does not have to wait till you die. If the tree fall to the south, that speaks of the permanency of the work of Christ; it means you can fall upon Him. Give up your life to Him: find that everything that binds you here, and is already condemned, that would hinder your

blessing, is seen to have been removed, if you fall upon Christ, and commit your life to Him, beloved. Do not wait; do not leave it; do not be one of those who decides to put it off for another week, because, alas, there will be some, perhaps even this week if we are left here, whose tree will fall and God alone knows whether they fall to the north or fall to the south. Beloved, do not give it another moment, fall upon Christ, commit your life to Him, let your tree fall to the south.

Now I just want to draw attention to this scripture in Jeremiah, which has another sober message to it. Not to be occupied exactly with the negativity of it, what I want to say about this verse, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended”, is that it does not apply yet. The harvest is not yet past, and the summer is not yet ended. At this moment today the Lord would say, “behold the fields, for they are already white to harvest” (John 4: 35), and the summer, we might say is at its height. God's grace is shining towards you now; it is the very middle of the summer, and the beneficence of God is towards you. How wonderful it is, this day of grace.

I have thought a little bit about this scripture, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved”. This is a prophetic scripture, I believe, which means some will come to this realisation in a future day; they will know the reality of these sober words. And if some come to this, it means that they will recognise when it was harvest time, and it means they will recognise when it was summertime. You might say, by application, they were aware of the glad tidings, they were aware of what God offered in the glad tidings, and they knew, I suppose, or they could see something of the blessing of it, but they put it off because they had other things to do. They were aware it was harvest time; perhaps they even saw others, who evidently were enjoying something they did not; they saw there was a harvest time, and they were aware of all these things, and yet they put it off.

We were walking through a recently harvested field on Friday, and there is nothing there when the harvest has passed; there are just little stalks in the ground. Anything that is for benefit to anyone has already gone, and perhaps if you think about it, for some going back to school, it does feel like the summer has ended, does it not? I remember when I was at school, when you first started off your school holidays, the summer holidays stretched before you, it seemed to go on for ages, and the closer you got to the end of the school holidays the faster time seemed to go, and then you had those horrible advertisements on shop

windows, 'Back to school'. I always hated that reminder, going 'back to school'. And I found I began to get a bit more concerned the nearer it got to that point, wondering what the next year would bring, and things that needed to be done before it started became increasingly urgent.

But you see what we are speaking about here is different: not only has the summer holidays, if I can speak carefully and reverently, gone on for over two thousand years; but we do not know when it will end. There will come a moment when the harvest is finished; everything that God seeks to secure in Christ will be finished. The summer will be over, there will come that moment, and, alas, there will be some who then say, "and we are not saved". Do not be among them: come into the favour and blessing and grace of God, accept Jesus as your own personal Saviour, and find what it means to know Him as your Lord, as your Head.

Well, beloved I am conscious, that there is much more to the 'full gospel', and I understand that I am speaking to an audience who have heard the gospel before, have heard of the wonderful grace of God, have heard of the favour God has to bestow upon you, have heard about the blessed gift of the Holy Spirit of God. All of these things perhaps you have heard as terms: beloved, I would implore you to find them out for yourself. If you only know them as terms, find out what it means, that God has given the gift of His blessed Holy Spirit to those that obey, find out what that means for you, find out what that means for God too, to have those with whom He is pleased to bestow His Holy Spirit upon, those that can answer to Him in worship and adoration and praise, those that love Christ, the One that He loves. I commend the glad tidings to you for your blessing and to God's glory.

For the Lord's name's sake.

Sidcup

1st September 2024

THE BELIEVER'S HOUSEHOLD

Bill S Chellberg

2 Kings 11:1-3; 11-12

I would like with the Lord and the Holy Spirit's help to say a few words about the believer's household.

You might say this is an unusual scripture to read about the household, because it begins in a negative way. We have to face the negative things at the present time. The spirit of Athaliah is still alive. She destroyed all the royal seed, except for the one Jehosheba stole.

So this is a practice of the devil; a characteristic of the devil is to destroy everything of God. When we go back to Pharaoh, he was destroying all the male Israelite babies, Exod 1. And when you come to a few chapters before where I read, Jezebel was destroying the prophets, 1 Kings 18: 4. She wanted to destroy Elijah, chap 19: 2. And here we have another, a wicked woman, who is wanting to destroy the king. This is what our houses are in the midst of today.

The spirit of Pharaoh, the spirit of Jezebel, the spirit of Athaliah live today, and I hope everyone is aware of it. But I would like to speak about this portion of scripture as referring to a household.

It does not refer to Jehosheba's husband in this scripture; elsewhere the priest is named as her husband, 2 Chron 22: 11. I think this leaves the exercise open for those who are not married, but have a house. She was a godly woman; she wanted to preserve the king; so she stole Joash. He was one year old. It is not an easy thing to steal a child, and then to hide the child, but she hid him in the house of God, which is a place to which Athaliah would never go. So Jehosheba was wise, a wise woman, and she also provided care for him. She hid him there for those six years when Athaliah reigned over the land. Well, I believe this is like a believer's household.

Actually, Jehoiada was the priest at this time. In verse 9 he is called, "Jehoiada the priest". And I would like to say that he filled the position of a husband and a head of a household. He was associated with what Jehosheba did. He knew what she did because it was in the house of God, which was where Jehoiada frequented. That is where, in a sense, he lived. And I would like to say that the household of a Christian believer should reflect the character of the house of God. It should be that someone walking by the house of a believer would say,

'There is something different about that house; the people there are different; they do not look like us, they do not act like us. They are different'. Persons like this love the king. (After he is crowned king, he is called Jehoshaphat, v 21.)

I understand that, in the palaces of England, if they fly the flag, it means the king or the queen is in residence. This house, we might say, has the flag flying high, because the king was in residence. That is where he was. He was in residence in this house for six years. They had cared for him in their house. Someone said some years ago that in their marriage, there were three: 'The Lord, and myself, and my wife'. And I trust our brother and sister will have three in their house, so that it can be said that the King is in residence there. That is the way it should be.

Now I would like to refer briefly to a house in the New Testament. Somebody may wonder why I was talking about the Old Testament; so now I want to refer to a house in the New Testament.

There was a house where there were two sisters and a brother. Everyone will know who it is. The two sisters were once at odds with each other. When this house was first presented they were having a difficult time; the one sister, Martha, as you may remember, was busy with every little thing. They had invited Jesus in, but it seems she was all flustered about having Him in her house. She wanted to get everything just right on the table with all the proper things. She was worried about all that, getting the food ready. That was Martha. And she was aggravated at Mary because she had left all those things. All she wanted to do was to hear what Jesus had to say: she hung on His every word, Luke 10: 38-42.

Well, when they are next presented in Scripture, their brother, whom we were not introduced to before, had died. He was sick and died and Jesus went there. And here is Martha again, not yet understanding: she said, 'If you would have come earlier, he would not have had to die.' But when Mary came to Jesus, she was weeping. And then Jesus wept. What a wonderful Person Jesus was, that He felt her pain so much. And death always, of course, brings out grief to us. And yet, Jesus raised Lazarus, John 11.

The next time we are presented with that household - I like to say it is the house where Jesus was loved - they are sitting around the table eating. Martha is serving, but she is not overcome by it; she is

now serving properly. And Mary is there and she is anointing the feet of Jesus: what wonderful love for Him.

No wonder, after He went into Jerusalem and looked around at all the things in the temple where He saw all the money changers and the sellers, selling sheep and doves, and whatever they do (Matt 21: 12), He went out; and where did He go? He went out to Bethany to the place where He was loved, v 17. I would like my house to be like that, and I would like everyone here to have a house like that.

This young couple are setting up a household. The question is, 'Will the King be in residence there?' It is a beginning - we always begin as babes in our understanding of the King.

From that place, where He was loved, Jesus ascended into glory, Luke 24: 50-51. I trust we will each one be exercised by faith to make our household a place where the King is in residence. May the Lord bless our young couple and all who are here.

Wheaton, IL

27th September 2024

Word at Marriage Meeting