

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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THE ONE WHO DID THE WILL OF GOD

Hebrews 10: 5-10

Isaiah 50: 4,5

John 4: 4-6, 31-34

Luke 22: 39-46

JSS I wondered if we might get help to enquire together, relying on the Holy Spirit, as to the Lord Jesus as the One who did the will of God. We read in Hebrews these wonderful words which are quoted from the Psalm relating to the incoming of Jesus into manhood: "thou hast prepared me a body". I was just struck by the fact that the whole will of God was accomplished by a real Man in His body: the body of a real Man. "Lo, I come": we see His willingness, not someone doing the will of another begrudgingly, or with their own will fighting against it. This is One who came in love to do God the Father's will. "Lo, I come to do thy will". Where we ended reading we see something of God's purpose, and what that will was to accomplish: "by which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all". It was the will of God that such as we, through grace, might be set apart for the holy service of God. What a majestic thought of God!

I read in Isaiah because we get the reference there to the ears and the tongue. I wonder if we not only see here the way that the Lord Jesus did the *scope* of God's will in its entirety but He was also intelligent as to its *detail* every day. We see His obedience: "I was not rebellious". Obedience was essential in the completing of God's will.

Where we read in John's gospel we see an example of Jesus doing the Father's will. It has been referred to many times that what happened in this chapter must have been what the Father's will was for the Lord Jesus on that day: "he must needs pass through Samaria". Think of those feet of His; that body being carried by those precious feet to this particular place and to this woman. She was one whom God would have secured as a worshipper for Himself. I was interested in the reference later on in the chapter where the Lord Jesus says, "My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me, and that I should finish his work". The Lord Jesus lived by doing the will of God; it was His food. I think it would involve the thought of what He was sustained by, but also what He took pleasure in; perhaps we could consider that.

And then in Luke's gospel we see the Lord in Gethsemane, although it is not referred to as Gethsemane in Luke, but we know that is

where it is, on the Mount of Olives. You see Him on His knees, in dependence. Think of that precious One, obedient, sustained, intelligent and dependent too. Think of such a One as the Lord Jesus praying. It shows the reality of His manhood and His dependence. I wondered if we could get help in considering the Lord Jesus in this way.

RAB Everything for us is set out in the Lord Jesus Himself, is it not? It is perfect, perfect obedience: "Not my will, but thine".

JSS Very good; I think that is helpful. So He is a perfect Model for us, is He not? We have to begin by realising that our own will leads to what is offensive to God. The Lord Jesus never had to do that. He always did the things that pleased the Father. From the moment that we referred to here, His incoming, always.

RJG Would you say more to help us about the scope of the will of God? I was struck by what you referred to as to the saints being brought in, being sanctified. That has a very wide scope, do you think?

JSS I am not sure if it is something you can exactly define but it is a vast thought, is it not? 'What is God's will?', we could ask. It is what is according to His pleasure, what pleases Him, and in Ephesians we get the different thoughts there as to God's will. "The good pleasure of his will", chap 1: 5. Part of His will is that we might enjoy a relationship with Him as sons, with His Son. Part of it is that we might be aware as to "the mystery of his will", chap 1: 9. That is the secret knowledge now of what God will soon do publicly, to head up all things in the Christ. That will be seen in the millennium, but believers are in the secret of that now. And then, "the counsel of his own will", chap 1: 11. We have an inheritance that we enjoy at the present time. But I think we could simply say that everything that has been secured for God's eternal pleasure has been accomplished by this One in doing His will?

RJG Think of the great scope of it, that the Lord was able to take up everything and secure it for God. It brings out His greatness, do you think?

JSS Yes. This is the only One who could have done this. This chapter is making the contrast between what the law was, and the offerings of the Old Testament, and what they were incapable of. It is interesting; it speaks a number of times about what God did *not* take pleasure in: "Thou tookest no pleasure in burnt-offerings and sacrifices". And also in verse 8, "burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou willedst not, neither tookest pleasure in". What a contrast to the

One He *did* take pleasure in, because He did His will, and He was able to accomplish it. In contrast with what the law was incapable of doing, since it was unable to please God, the Lord was capable of doing it, and entirely pleased Him.

SD I was thinking there was one in the Old Testament who was told that “obedience is better than sacrifice”, 1 Sam 15: 22. I wondered if that relates to God's will because of course the Lord fully fulfilled it, did He not?

JSS I think that is helpful. So it required One who was perfectly obedient to do the will of God. It shows the reality of His manhood, does it not? Obedience does not apply to God. God is the One who has a will to which others are to be obedient. So it shows the wonderful reality of the Lord's manhood. This will was secured by a real Man, and I was just struck by that.

JL It surely must include also this perfect knowledge of the entirety of God's will. No doubt He was involved in the counsel of God's will, but His complete knowledge of it would be essential to His undertaking it, would it not?

JSS Yes, I think that is helpful, that in becoming Man He never ceased to be who He was as God and as such knowing all things: knowing the end from the beginning, knowing what lay ahead of Him, and yet His willingness to come into this body that was prepared for Him, a body of a real Man.

JL I am always impressed with the addition of the word, “Lo”, as if to call attention to the wonderful undertaking that the Lord could fully and wisely commit Himself to do and did do.

JSS Yes. It is worthy of our attention, is it not? These words we get here, “Behold” and “Lo”, point to something that is particularly worthy of our attention. Nothing like this had been seen before.

PAG Do we get some help as to the scope of God's will in what you referred to in Ephesians, “the good pleasure of his will”, “the mystery of his will”, and “the counsel of his own will”. It gives us a sense of the scope of it, does it?

JSS Help us a bit more, yes, I think it does.

PAG Well, “the good pleasure of his will” involves marking us out beforehand for adoption to Himself, Christ Jesus. That is really what

took place before time was; so His will covers the past and it involves His purpose. "The counsel of his will": He works all things according to "the counsel of his will" but it is in view of those who have pre-trusted in Christ; so that is the present. And then "the mystery of his will" involves that all things should be headed up in the Christ; that is in a day yet to come. But one other thing we notice from these scriptures is that every aspect of His will is centred in Christ.

JSS That is very helpful. So there is no part of His will that is outside of what Christ is and what He has accomplished. I think that is good. It is "the counsel of his **own** will". God takes counsel with no one else. This is God's own original thought that there should be this One to fulfil His will, to head up all things in Him and have everything for His eternal pleasure, secured by Him and in Him.

TM MrAJ Gardiner's hymn would set it out, do you think?

God's will in its vastness Thou lovedst
And camest as Man it to do (Hymn 39).

These scriptures that you have read bring out the vastness of God's will.

JSS I think that is very helpful. The Lord Jesus, because of who He was, knew the vastness of it. And yet His willingness to come into manhood's form, a bondman's form, to fulfil it would freshly affect us.

RB He emptied Himself and humbled Himself.

JSS That is Philippians 2. These are wonderful descending movements of love, showing His willingness to go down, emptying Himself. That is relating to His coming into manhood, is it not, taking a bondman's form and then humbling Himself when He was a Man, becoming obedient even as far as death.

RB It is something we need to contemplate, because we are so ready to assert our will, are we not? It humbles us as we think of One who had a will of His own but was always subject to the will of Another.

JSS Yes, that is just what freshly affected me. If in any measure, in any small measure, I do the will of God, it is not what I have always done. I used to do my own will and I often still do. Christ only ever did the Father's will. What a joy for the Father to see this new kind of Man on the earth, never seen before: "that he may establish the second"; what a delight to heaven.

JW It is interesting that this section begins with, “Wherefore coming into the world”. At that point He came from an area where the will of God was not in question, and He came into an area where the will of God was not prominent at all, and at that point He says, “I come to do thy will”.

JSS Yes, it is very affecting that the Lord was willing to come in to such a world as had disregarded the will of God and really had no place even for this One, the Lord Jesus. And yet we see His willingness to go on, His willingness to come in and go down.

JW No doubt He had some idea of what that involved for Him.

JSS Yes, I think so.

RJF Could you open out your thought a little more please as to the body that was “prepared”? If I recall correctly the Lord is the only One of whom it speaks about a body being prepared.

JSS Well, I would like others to help, and you can help us too. “Thou hast prepared me a body”. “The holy thing also which shall be born shall be called Son of God”, Luke 1: 35. This was a divine work that such a One should come into manhood's form. “Thou hast prepared me a body”, but it was the body of a real Man, a sinless, perfect body of God's preparation. Think of Him taking that up.

RJF I appreciate what you say because I think it is a matter worthy of contemplation, but scripture brings out that the Holy Spirit was instrumental in this, that something should be prepared. It was of divine handiwork but then too perhaps the psalm brings out the matter of exercise because it speaks of His ears as being 'digged' or 'hollowed out' (Ps 40: 6 footnote *h*), suggesting that this was not something that just happened, but there was intense exercise involved in it.

JSS You get the thought in preparation of deliberate care. That is the impression I have. This was the body that God had in mind, and this One would, in this body, fulfil His will. What a matter!

GJG In that connection, we could not say that the Lord was part of creation then.

JSS No, help us some more. I think that is right.

GJG It just seems that it was a sovereign supreme act that He came in. As you quoted, “the holy thing also which shall be born”. So He does not take His place exactly in creation. He is amongst men but He

is of a totally different order.

JSS “Having been found in figure as a man”, Phil 2: 8. This was the Creator, but in the reality of manhood. I think that is good. He derived nothing from this world.

BWL The Lord was His own spirit when He became Man. The body involved a condition that could be laid down in death, could it not?

JSS I think that is very affecting, that this was a body of blood and flesh, and that would be capable of being laid down. It *had* to be, in order for God's will to be completed. I think that is helpful.

PAG The feature of Adam is that Jehovah Elohim formed man, and what was in view was image and likeness (Gen 1: 26), while Christ as Man learned obedience through the things that He suffered, so there was what became Him as Man, and as has been rightly said, He came into a condition in which He could die, yet there would be no thought of formation of likeness, would there? It would always be there. “Who is image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation”, Col 1:15. He is not part of the creation but He is the Head of the creation. You could not think of something in that sense having to be formed, and thus it must be so. We are in the image of God. Man is a creature, but there is what is formative required in us to bring about likeness. With Christ it would not be so, would it?

JSS I think that is very helpful. I cannot really add to it.

AGM I was just thinking in that connection of the parenthesis in verse 7: “(In the roll of the book it is written of me)”. If we read it without that it is, “Lo, I come to do, O God, thy will”. He was the perfect One who did the will of God. What it was spoken of Him in the roll of the book was as doing that. So that He did not come in just to meet the need; He came in for the pleasure of God, and in order to secure a vast company of persons like Himself.

JSS Very good. I think that is helpful. So it must relate to God's purpose, before time. But this reference to the roll of the book, I feel I cannot say much about it. It is something that I do not understand very much other than it was something that was there, recorded, as part of God's purpose that this is what should take place in order to secure His will. We can worship God for that.

BWL The person that we know as the Lord Jesus committed Himself to becoming Man to carry out God's will. That was before time.

“Wherefore coming into the world”; that is as Man He says that, but the other verse goes back into eternity, if we could use that expression.

JSS Yes. I feel my limits very much but I think it is good what you say. In the first reference “coming into the world”, that refers to the Lord's incarnation: coming in as a Man, coming in to do God's will. It was appropriate for man to do the will of God. And here He was. But yet this was not something that was done as a reaction to anything. It was part of God's purpose that He should do so.

RB This is really what is before us at the Lord's supper. The Supper is not just to meet our need; the Supper is to do with God's will, is it not?

JSS We gather in the wilderness to eat the Supper; it is the beginning of what we do in that occasion, but it is to lead to the worship of God, is it not? That is what God has in mind: “by which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”. Why was it God's will that we should be sanctified? So that we might serve Him; so that we might worship Him. I think that is right what you say. Say some more about your thoughts as to the Supper.

RB I was struck by what has been said. Really it is what is before us at the Supper, when we have God's will before us and what Christ has done, what He has effected. It sets us forward and raises in our hearts a worshipful spirit, does it not?

JSS I think that is exactly right. The bread and the cup: those are tokens, as the hymn says, of His matchless love (Hymn 339).

Perhaps we could look at Isaiah. I was struck with the references to the tongue and the ears: “The Lord Jehovah hath given me the tongue of the instructed”. The note to “instructed” is likened to 'disciple'. The Lord has been referred to in ministry as to the true Disciple, the instructed One, CAC vol 12 p21. So what He spoke when He was here was according to what He heard: “he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed”. I think we get a particular reference here as to His obedience: “I was not rebellious”. Everything that He heard from the Father He did in perfection.

JL We were emphasising in Hebrews the laying down of His body in death in completion of the will of God, but this would be the daily exemplification of His fulfilment of that blessed will, so delightful in the Father's sight, would it not?

JSS I think so. That is what impressed me: “morning by morning”.

Sometimes we are asked to do something, given an objective perhaps that has to be done within a certain time and then we do not have to give any account of what we have done relating to that until the due time has come, but the Lord Jesus had perfect awareness of the Father's will - you might say, if it is not too common to say it - His daily will. "Morning by morning": what would the Father have this day according to His pleasure? Every day of His life delighted the Father!

AJL It says here, "as the instructed". Do you think He knew the instructions already?

JSS Well, again, because of who He was, as God He is all-knowing. And yet as a Man He learned things. The Lord Jesus as a Boy growing up would have learned things in a way that was perfectly appropriate to that stage of His life. What a wonderful Model of obedience that as the One who in His Person was God, knew everything but took the place of an instructed One. It is affecting to our hearts, is it not?

PAG Would you say that in relation to Lazarus? Natural sympathy might have caused Him to go sooner, but it was not a matter of natural sympathy. It was a matter of the glory of God. And He went at the time that was appropriate in order that God's glory might be demonstrated, do you think?

JSS I think that is very helpful, and that He might be marked out Son of God in power by resurrection of the dead. If He had gone before Lazarus had died that opportunity to display that glory would not have been there. But He did and it shows His absolute perfection. Patience would come into doing the will of God. Hearing and speaking too are very closely connected in Scripture. The man that could not speak right, the first thing that the Lord did was touch his ears, then his tongue, Mark 7: 33. It says too, "what he sees the Father doing". Think of the Lord's attentiveness daily, seeking out what the Father's will was for that day and doing it in perfection.

JLB Mrs Cowell's hymn says,

Obedience flowed unquestioned: perfection of a Son

JSS That is beautiful. Sometimes we do something but we are doing it against our own will; never so with Him. Morning by morning, every day in perfect accordance and obedience, and intelligence too. Sometimes we might do something that we are asked to do without understanding why we have been asked to do it. The Lord Jesus knew

what He would accomplish day by day: the Father's delight.

RJG He was occupied in His Father's business, Luke 2: 49. Would that involve the detail of the will of God, and understanding it?

JSS Very good. That was at the age of twelve, was it not? It shows us that even at that early age He was occupied in His Father's business, and that would be characteristic: every day, every moment of every day.

JW I was just looking at that verse. He was sitting in the midst of the teachers, hearing them, and asking them questions, v 46. And then they were astonished at His understanding and answers, v 47.

JSS Very good. He placed Himself in a position that was appropriate to his age in life, "hearing them and asking them questions". We would encourage the children to ask questions. The Lord Jesus in His perfection asking questions; the Lord Jesus in His person as God knows the answer to every question, and yet it was appropriate for Him at that stage to do so in the reality of His manhood.

RB These communications were heavenly, were they not? I was thinking that one of the gospels says, "And every one went to his home. But Jesus went to the mount of Olives", John 7: 53; 8: 1. It is from that elevated sphere He got His instructions, and the influence of that He brought back into the scene of woe and misery, did He not?

JSS Yes, I think it is very good to see that, that the Father's will originates in heaven. And the Lord Jesus brought what was heavenly into this poor world. How persons benefitted from it.

RJF In that regard would you allow then that the Father's will included this time of communion where the Lord was just for the Father?

JSS I think we would have to say that the Father delighted in the communion with the Son, and the Son delighted in the communion with His Father. It must have been according to His Father's will that He did that. "But Jesus went to the mount of Olives"; it appears characteristic, delighting in that communion.

GJG I was thinking of the scripture that speaks of the Lord as being found: "David, the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who shall do all my will" (Acts 13: 22); think of the divine pleasure. And it is "all my will". We have been speaking about the different aspects of the Father's will but every part was carried out, was it not, for the Father's pleasure?

JSS Yes, I think that is very helpful. Where you quote in Acts 13, it refers to David, but it was really looking forward to Christ: “who shall do all my will”. I think that is wonderful. You see the confidence and the assurance that God had in this One that would do it and do it all. He was able to do it and He was willing to do it.

CJMCK Can you say something as to why it was important that the will of God should be done? Why was this necessary?

JSS Well, I would like to hear what you say, but I suppose we could think of it in two ways. One was that God might secure what He desired in His heart, what He purposed. He desired to have a universe with Christ at the Centre, and persons like Him worshipping Him forever. It had to be done in order for that to be secured but do you think there was also the element of demonstration to the world that there was a Man who did do God's will? Do you think there is an element of testimony? What would you say?

CJMCK I am glad of what you say. He could say, “I have glorified *thee* on the earth”, John 17: 4. I think it has already been pointed out that He came into a world where every man did his own will. The hymn says,

For Thou are glorified as God
By Him, the Man anointed - (Hymn 356).

That is Man in right relation with God, doing the will of God; it would be just and right that God should be glorified as God by His will being done. Is that right?

JSS I think that is very helpful, to see that God, having seen every other man from Adam forward, including Adam and everyone else since, doing their own will and not God's will, how right it was that God should have a Man doing His will and being seen to be doing His will publicly for God's glory. I think that is good.

DJS You spoke about the contrast you get in Romans 5, the contrast between the one man who was disobedient - which means we are all sinners because of that, constituted sinners; and then you get because of the Other that we are all constituted righteous. It is good to see that contrast, is it?

JSS I think that is exactly right. In verse 5, “I was not rebellious”. He was the only Person who could ever have said that. These are the words that only one Man could ever say, “I was not rebellious”. Everyone else was. What a matter that He was the obedient One,

always obedient.

CAMcK In relation to David, God said, “Jehovah looketh upon the heart”, 1 Sam 16: 7. I was thinking of that. It is really a heart matter is it not, the will of God? I am thinking about the Hebrew bondman who says, “I love my master . . .” (Exod 21: 5), and his ear was bored through with an awl, v 6. That committal to the will of God there; I wondered if God's love really lay behind His will.

JSS Yes, I think that is exactly right and very helpful. It was a love matter for the Lord Jesus to do His Father's will. You reminded me of the reference in Psalm 40, which was referred to in Hebrews:

To do thy good pleasure, my God, is my delight, and thy law is
within my heart, v 8.

It was there; it was His delight to do the Father's will. I think that is most attractive.

RJC Do we see something very mutual in relation to that? The Father's delight is in Jesus: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight”, Matt. 3: 17. But the Lord's delight and His movements were in relation to the will of God. It is tremendous to contemplate, is it not?

JSS Yes, I think it is very beautiful to draw attention to that, the Lord's delight in doing the Father's will and the Father's delight in seeing Him do it. That is very precious.

We may look at John's gospel. This passage is well known to the brethren but I was freshly struck by verse 4.: “he must needs pass through Samaria”. It seems it was to find this woman; and also it says, “being wearied with the way he had come, sat just as he was at the fountain”. What a scene: the Lord of glory, the Creator of the universe, here in manhood's form wearied with the way that He had come, and sitting just as He was: His availability and readiness to help this woman. I was also impressed by this matter of food: “My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me, and that I should finish his work”. It seems to be presented in a way that the Lord Jesus was sustained and satisfied by doing God's will.

MRB Do we see in this that the will of God was intrinsically pleasurable for the Lord to do? We might think it was not pleasurable from a natural viewpoint: He was wearied by the way He had come; where you read in Luke, it involved suffering for the Lord; but there was

an intrinsic pleasure in the will of God, was there not?

JSS I think that is helpful. The scripture says, “the Christ also did not please himself”, Rom 15: 3. Naturally, we would choose to avoid doing something that would lead to us being wearied, or that would cause us suffering, but the Lord so loved the Father's will that He was willing to accept the suffering. We will see in Luke more intense suffering. The acceptance of God's will will result in suffering, but the Lord continued in it. His delight, as the brethren have been saying, was to do the Father's will, and therefore He went on with it despite the weariness and the suffering.

RB Where does divine sovereignty come into this, because in this section the Spirit of God draws attention to the well which Jacob gave to Joseph? If you go back to Genesis that was sovereignty. Where does sovereignty come into the matter?

JSS I do not know if I could properly answer that. The Lord speaks to this woman He meets with about the Holy Spirit and about the Father. She would have had no place or title in Israel, but it seems that God in His sovereignty had caused that the Lord should come and find this woman and reveal such things to her. We can be thankful for God's sovereignty that this is what has happened for us too. That sinners such as we have become the objects of God's sovereign mercy and His grace. Have you got some more impression as to Jacob and Joseph?

RB I was thinking while we have been speaking as to how far the Lord is prepared to go in order to secure that which is in the divine heart. This woman was in the divine heart, was she not?

JSS Yes, very good. I think that is very helpful. So that to accomplish what was God's sovereign will, it would be at great cost, great suffering: not only what is physical here, and what was suffered at the hands of men but indeed what He would yet suffer from God Himself. The Lord accomplished, through great suffering, the will of God. I think it is helpful to draw attention to that.

PAG God's sovereignty would involve His rights. God's will and His rights cannot really be detached from one another, can they?

JSS As we speak about sovereignty, it makes us think of a monarch or a king, one who has the right to do what he wishes because of who they are. And God has that right supremely because He is the One who has absolute authority. He has the sovereign right to have a will, and

that that will should be brought to pass. And it has been, perfectly. Can you help us some more about it?

PAG Well, one of the things - one of the many things that Christ did as Man in fulfilling the will of God was to demonstrate also that God's rights were being upheld. God had a right to this woman. To put it simply, she had been stolen by sin, and God had a right, and He was going to exercise that right. And He exercised it in Christ drawing near, do you think?

JSS Yes, I think that is very good. It comes back to what was said earlier as to this demonstration that there was something in the world which was going on against God's will. Jesus was undoing the works of the devil, was He not? He was securing persons, such as this woman, and such as you and me. It was a demonstration of God's will.

JL In that it says, "Jesus ... sat just as he was"; does that add a particular lustre to the consistency and constancy of the Lord's pursuit of the Father's will?

JSS Yes. He did not in any way have to change anything to prepare in view of speaking to this woman. "Just as he was" would always have been perfect. You get the sense too of the reality of His manhood associated with it: wearied, sitting just as He was. That One willing to endure, speaking carefully, physical tiredness and weariness in order to accomplish God's will.

Maybe we could get some help as to the thought of the food. This was something the disciples did not understand; "Has any one brought him anything to eat?". The Lord had said, "I have food to eat which ye do not know"; "My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me". Not only that: "and that I should finish his work". So the doing of it was His food, but also that He should finish it.

RJG The Lord says in chapter 17, "I have glorified *thee* on the earth, I have completed the work which thou gavest me that I should do it", v 4. I was just thinking again of the Father being glorified. What the Lord undertook and completed.

JSS Yes, that is very good. So there is no thought of anything being left incomplete. "That I should do the will of him that has sent me, and that I should finish his work": "His work", and His will. I just thought this matter of food was affecting, that the Lord Jesus considered it in that way. Food is something that is required daily; food is something that we

require for sustenance; food is something that can bring satisfaction. It seems that the Lord Jesus found these things in doing the Father's will and also at this point anticipating its completion.

SD Can you help us? In chapter 21 He is asking, "have ye anything to eat?", v 5.

JSS "Children, have ye anything to eat? They answered him, No". I suppose that this is another contrast because Peter had been away doing his own will, and it resulted in there being nothing to eat. So with Jesus we see quite the opposite. The Lord Jesus, in actively doing the Father's will, found that there was something that had the character of food for Him. And we see in that same chapter the Lord in His grace has some food for them, all ready. There was "a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread", v 9. The Lord in His grace provided that for them. Even despite Peter and the others having pursued their own will resulting in a lack of food. But the Lord Jesus in doing the Father's will found His sustenance and satisfaction.

SD I wonder if companionship and fellowship comes into this. It certainly does in that instance.

JSS I think in terms of the Lord Jesus, He is unique in that He did the Father's will perfectly and completely. But there is also what we are to do in relation to God's will. We are to see Christ as a Model. Well, are we looking at Him and seeing how He did the Father's will and seeking to learn from Him and be like Him?

BWL In John's gospel the Lord is making the Father known, is He not? Do you think that is involved in finishing His work? The Lord had been free to speak to the woman about the Father earlier: "The Father seeks such as his worshippers ... they who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth", chap 4: 23, 24. God has been revealed in that way. And that is complete, is it not, but then there is to be an answer from us?

JSS Yes, I think that is very helpful. So the revelation of the Father to those who would appreciate it must have been part of God's will. It must have been part of the Father's will that that should be made known. God's will was not merely that persons who were in their lost sinful state should be rescued, but there is so much more than that; the revelation of the Father. I think that is very good.

JL It is specifically said about the Lord in Luke's gospel that He

hungered (chap 4: 2), and where the reference comes in it is immediately followed by the Lord's own words, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God", v 4. That is wherein His food really was, and what sustained Him in joy, was it not? The word of God. It was not just material food, but that was where the food, if we could say so, brought in that living energy.

JSS Yes, I think that is a helpful scripture to bring in in relation to that question. That was when He was being tempted of the devil; and He hungered before that. So you might say, humanly speaking, that amount of hunger would have brought in tremendous physical weakness. In such a position He is able to face the devil as a dependent Man, quoting the scriptures and speaking of that food. I think that is helpful.

JW I wondered if these scriptures, the fact that He hungered and also being wearied with the way He had come, bring home to us the fact that the Lord was a real Man. We might think that because He was God He could do anything but what He did here was as a Man.

JSS I think that is very helpful. It just brings home to us the reality of His manhood and what He felt; He felt the reality of these things like weariness and hunger. Because of who He was He could have alleviated these things, but He chose not to because He was doing the Father's will as a dependent Man.

JW I would say for myself, I find it difficult sometimes to distinguish when a particular passage is referring to the Lord's manhood or His divinity; there are some things we just have to accept

JSS Yes; I share your exercise in that. I think in our human minds it is not really something that we can comprehend, the fact that He is a real Man and remains God at the same time. It is beyond human comprehension.

DGC Can you say something about the food satisfying? When food is introduced in the gospels there were the loaves and fishes; there was satisfaction, Mark 6: 41, 42. Then they cast the net, and they could not draw as there was so much, John 21: 6.

JSS I think that is a very helpful reference. He says, "my food". It seems He did not consider anything else really to be food. "My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me". He took satisfaction in doing it. Sometimes we do work or we do something and we do not find

a great deal of satisfaction in it because we find it onerous, but the Lord Jesus found satisfaction in doing the will of God.

DGC There is no measure to it either. There is little lasting satisfaction in doing our will, but God's will brings complete satisfaction.

JSS Very good. Doing His will brings about satisfaction.

We should just touch on Luke's gospel. The simple impression I had here was the Lord's dependence, expressed in Him kneeling down in prayer. "And when he was at the place"; think of that: the place where He was to anticipate in His spirit the whole horror of what lay ahead of Him, Satan no doubt bringing that to bear on Him. And yet even at this time, He was in perfect communion with His Father, praying. I feel this is holy ground but again He is a Model for us. He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw. They would have been able to have a clear view of Him.

AGM We have taken account of Him being wearied. In this section He is strengthened by the angel. It is very affecting that the Lord goes through this matter intently. His sweat became as great drops of blood. That really brings out the reality of His manhood. What the reality of His inward agony was as He was facing this matter! It is really the devil seeking to present the cup to Him, but He will not take it from the devil's hand. He would only take it from the Father's hand as under His will.

JSS "The cup which the Father has given me, shall I not drink it?", John 18: 11. It is from the Father, and it is something for us to contemplate, the Lord Jesus acting in this way; kneeling and praying and being strengthened even by an angel. He would have created that angel. And yet here it comes to Him as a man strengthening Him.

JL Does "a stone's throw" include the thought that there came a point, firstly, by anticipation, in Gethsemane but then later in reality on the cross, where He alone could go forward in relation to the will of God? We are exhorted to pursue that will, and the Lord says, "Take my yoke upon you" (Matt 11: 29), which I suppose involves participation in the will of God, but there was a point where none could share with Him.

JSS Yes, I think it would include that. His disciples were apart from Him; they were in a different place, this distance away from Him. He was really going through this with His Father, alone, at this time, was He not? He and His Father in perfect communion. He was there, as has been referred to, as a Model. None of us will have to face intensity of

suffering in our spirits like this; yet He is a Model for us. He prays as a dependent Man.

JLB Do you think knowing the will of God brings divine disclosures? I was thinking about Samuel. It says that he was “in the temple of Jehovah, where the ark of God was”, 1 Sam 3: 3. And then it comes to a point when he said, “Speak ... for thy servant heareth”, v 9. Then ultimately God “let none of his words fall to the ground” v 19. Do you think we have to be able to discern?

JSS That is good. It comes back to the thought of hearing and being intelligent as to what we hear and that gives character to what is said. I think that is right. So we have these words of the Lord Jesus recorded here.

PAG I just wondered if you had more to say about Him praying more intently.

JSS Well, I think one thing that has been said before, which we must guard against; it does not mean that the way in which He had prayed up to that point was lacking in any way. Perhaps as the contemplation of what was being brought to Him, as the intensity of that increased He prayed more intently, correspondingly. I want to be careful and protect the greatness of this One. What would you say?

PAG I think what you have said is right; we must guard against the suggestion that anything that had gone before was insufficient. One of the things the enemy does is he seeks to distract us. And here the enemy would be seeking to distract the Lord. It was one of the features of the Lord's pursuit of the Father's will that He was never distracted by anything. He prayed more intently. The enemy, as it were, could say what he wished; it would have no effect on Him. He would simply pray more intently. He would simply continue to occupy Himself entirely with the Father's will and pay not one whit of attention to what the enemy said.

JSS Very good. I think that is helpful.

RB Was He drawing on the Father's love, praying more intently? This incident never changed that love, did it?

JSS Yes, very good. We spoke of that communion earlier; the Lord Jesus was still in perfect communion with His Father at this point. Knowing the Father's love, how it would sustain Him with the conscious knowledge of the Father's love in a time like this, do you think?. How it

would sustain Him! I think that is good.

RB With His sweat falling as great drops of blood actually might suggest that His heart was under severe pressure, and He never deviated, did He?

JSS Very good, that internal agony, and I suppose that the disciples at this time never fully realised what He was enduring. Immediately He is concerned about them. “Rising up from his prayer, coming to the disciples, he found them sleeping ... rise up and pray that ye enter not into temptation”. What a matter that the Lord went through that with His Father, but conscious of the Father's love, despite the agony that He was experiencing.

JW “About a stone's throw”. There is what is beyond us completely, but there was something here that the disciples could take account of, do you think?

JSS I think that is a helpful way to put it. You might say they were not alongside Him in this exercise. He was going through it Himself. But they nevertheless could learn from it; they could observe. Or they ought to have been observing, but it seems they fell asleep, as I would have done too, but He was there as an Object, a Model for them to learn from.

TM “And rising up from his prayer”. Does it bring out the strength and power of prayer?

JSS Yes, I think that is absolutely right. He is a Model for us in that: “rising up from his prayer”. Do you think that He had, through prayer, received strength? Is that your thought? So He would go on from this point. Nothing could cause Him to deviate from what He was going to accomplish, to finish the work.

BWL We spoke earlier about the Lord's will and the Father's will being one, but the Lord never manifested His own will even in doing the Father's will. It was the same will; but it was always to be seen as the Father's will. But here with what lay before Him as a real Man, He asks, “If thou wilt remove this cup from me”. That brings out the reality of His manhood, does it not? He would shrink because it was going to involve being made sin; it was going to involve the forsaking. So that this request here is still in complete dependence on what the Father's will is for Him.

JSS It is beautiful. We see those two things together. I think the

word 'recoiling' has been used; His holy being recoiled from the anticipation of what lay ahead in being made sin and tasting death. And yet, "not my will, but thine be done". I think it is good what you say, that He had His own will but He did not exert it; He did not pursue it. How different to all of us.

JL There is a reference here to Him being in conflict. Would that bear on what has just been said, that it was the awfulness of being made sin? Would that bear on the thought of the conflict the Lord was passing through?

JSS I would be glad to hear what others say. I think one element of the conflict is with Satan, the devil presenting something and trying to deflect Him, but He is superior to that. We referred earlier to the time that the devil tempted Him, left Him for a season. This is the devil coming back.

JL Yes, I have no doubt it includes that too. And it has been said He was not distracted; He was not overwhelmed either, but He was in conflict. There was such an immense issue that lay ahead of the Lord Jesus that it caused Him to pray more intently, did it not?

JSS Yes, we can just contemplate it.

PAG What has been said is helpful and right. It was a matter of righteousness that He should accept the cup from the Father; rather than simply take it of Himself; it was appalling. No man would willingly do it, but He did not exercise His own will. It was not something that anyone would willingly do, but because it was the Father's will He would do nothing else. It is beyond us in that sense. He took something that no man could take, save Himself. And He only took it because it was the Father's will. His will did not have to be suppressed or set aside, but no man by his own will would ever take such a thing. It was a righteous thing to take it from the Father, would you say?

JSS Yes, that is helpful.

CC Would you see an illustration of this in Revelation 5 as to the Lord being "the lion which is of the tribe of Juda" (v 5), and then "a Lamb standing, as slain", v 6? I was just thinking of these two features that we have been speaking over as to the strength and power that was in Him, but He did not turn aside for any. But then too He was led as a lamb to slaughter.

JSS Yes, I think that is very good. It reminds me, of the verse, "a

king, against whom none can rise up”; “a horse girt in the loins”, Prov 30: 31. Think of that, His devotion to the Father's will, and yet it was accomplished through sacrifice and suffering. The Lamb would remind us of that. Those who have this view in Revelation can look back and see that God's will has been completed.

Peterhead

9th November 2024

List of Initials:

R Bain, Fraserburgh; J L Buchan, Peterhead; M R Buchan, Peterhead;
R A Buchan, Peterhead; D G Coull, Aberdeen; C Cumming, Aberdeen;
R J Cumming, Aberdeen; S Duthie, Aberdeen; R J Flowerdew, Sunbury;
R J Gray, Peterhead; G J Gaskin, Aberdeen; P A Gray, Linlithgow;
A J Laurie, Brechin; J Laurie, Brechin; B W Lovie, Aberdeen; A G Mair,
Cullen; T Mair, Cullen; C A McKay, Brechin; C J McKay, Glasgow;
D J Speirs, Bo'ness; J S Speirs, Grangemouth; J Webster, Fraserburgh

COMFORT

Mark B Grant

Psalm 94: 18, 19

2 Corinthians 1: 3-7

Philippians 2: 1-5

John 16: 7-14

I was encouraged by the hymn and prayer. The scriptures we have read speak of comfort, encouragement and consolation. The first scripture, Psalm 94, has been on my mind for some time:

In the multitude of my anxious thoughts within me thy comforts
have delighted my soul.

I have never seen a time like it when there is so much that the human heart and mind could be anxious about. There is so much that belongs to the modern world in which we are that has been designed to intrude and press upon men and woman and boys and girls, and that causes anxiety.

This scripture, and the others we have read, show us that comfort is to be found in divine Persons and what they provide. There is, of course, natural joy and comfort, and I would not try to minimise that because there is much naturally that causes us joy and comfort and happiness. Those things are right and of God, and we know them and enjoy them and I think we are intended to, but lasting joy and comfort, and comfort that will not break down, is only to be found in divine Persons.

It is a prominent thought in scripture, I think, demonstrated in the last scripture we read, in the way that the Lord Jesus introduces the Holy Spirit to His own as another Comforter; that is the way in which He introduces that glorious Person. When He speaks of the Spirit of truth, both times, in chapter 14 and 16, He presents that Person as the Comforter. So, the Spirit of truth, that title used as the Lord Jesus is speaking to His own about the Comforter, would tell us about how the truth is to comfort us. There is in the present time so much that we could be anxious about, and it does perhaps cause anxiety. I would not want to try to enumerate things or be specific because for each one of us it might be something different, but we are to find comfort in divine Persons.

In 2 Corinthians it is, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord

Jesus Christ, the Father of compassions, and God of all encouragement". One of the ways that comfort can be known is through kindness and compassion and also through encouragement. The One that we have been brought to know as our God and Father is "the Father of compassions, and God of all encouragement".

Compassion is something that was seen especially in the Lord Jesus when He was here. In the gospel on Lord's day, the brother preaching referred to the Lord Jesus being moved with compassion. Compassion is a lovely thought, is it not? It conveys depth of feeling; and sympathy; and kindness; and care; and concern. And in the case of the Lord Jesus, He fully understood and appreciated the situation that was referred to when He touched the bier, Luke 7: 14. He felt the situation that that woman was in; but He also felt the root cause of why that situation had arisen, the whole matter of death and all that belongs to this scene. Think of the feelings of compassion of the Lord Jesus.

I was thinking about how in the Epistle to the Hebrews it says, "he ... took part in the same", in blood and flesh. So, He knows and understands the condition that we are in, although He was in it sin apart. He has been here and seen and experienced the things that we see and experience. He felt those things perfectly. We are perhaps numbed or overcome by things, but He felt these things perfectly. He knows and understands. But then the Father is the Father of compassions. I sometimes like to think of the Father in this way, that He is just like the Lord Jesus. It helps me to understand what the Father is like. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and He is the Father of compassions, and He cares about us. The Lord Jesus says that Himself. He has affection for us, that is what the Lord Jesus says. "The Father himself has affection for you, because ye have had affection for me" (John 16: 27), and God is "preserver of all men, specially of those that believe", 1 Tim 4: 10. He has a special interest in believers in the Lord Jesus. So the Father is intensely interested in the detail of our lives.

We might think our anxieties are so small, and perhaps I sometimes feel myself that the things that I might be anxious about, things that should not matter, are almost trivial, but the Father cares about us; there is nothing too small or big for the Father - He is the Father of compassions. As we have to do with divine Persons, they would come in and comfort us. And He is the God of all encouragement; it is not just encouragement; it is *all* encouragement.

So in all the ways and things we can be encouraged by, He is the God of those things as well as the God with whom we have to do, in whom we can find encouragement. And there are so many ways in which we can find encouragement in divine things and in divine Persons.

The way that Paul writes emphasises that if we are going through tribulations ourselves it is to be for the benefit of others, for their encouragement, or if we are encouraged, it is to be for the encouragement of others. So the Lord Jesus is One who cares about us. The Father is One who cares about us. But then what we go through is to be for the benefit of each other, and we prove that in our links together. The way that Paul speaks about it is tremendously encouraging; think of the sufferings and tribulations Paul went through, and he is really saying that it was for the benefit of others. That is an amazing thing.

And then also he says, “even as the sufferings of the Christ abound towards us”. So, again I was thinking in relation to the scripture in Hebrews that He has taken part in the same condition. It is a wonderful thing and I think it is good to keep that in our minds that He has been here and taken part in the same condition and He has been here in the scene that rejected Him, the scene that we are passing through, and so He knows and understands everything that we go through.

Then in Philippians it says, “If then there be any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and compassions, fulfil my joy, that ye may think the same thing”. While there is far more in this scripture, what was in my mind tonight was that if we are to be a comfort and a consolation to one another, these are the features that will cause that. It is this “lowliness of mind, each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves; regarding not each his own qualities, but each those of others also”. So where you have a company of persons that are marked by these features of going down, that will be a tremendous encouragement and comfort and consolation to all of us, to each one of us.

“For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”: it is a test to me, but I think we also prove it, the way we find this and the way we experience this; it is so different from the world in which we are, which causes us anxiety. What we may find in a company of believers is in itself a tremendous comfort. That is before we might get specific comfort through what might be said or communicated or what we

experience in the way of fellowship. Just to have a company where we can enjoy links with persons who are marked by these features is a tremendous comfort. They are the features that marked the Lord Jesus. Think of what a comfort it is to know the Lord Jesus and to know Him in this way. Well, these features are to mark us in some measure.

Then lastly to refer again to John's gospel. It is remarkable that the Lord Jesus says this: "But I say the truth to you, It is profitable for you that I go away". You can well understand the disciples at this point wondering, 'How would it be possible that the Lord Jesus could say this?'. But "the Comforter will not come to you; but if I go I will send him to you". So, that then is a tremendous comfort for us because we have never known Christ according to flesh and as the apostle says, "if even we have known Christ according to flesh, yet now we know him thus no longer, 2 Cor 5: 16. But we have the gift of the Holy Spirit, the One who is "the Comforter", or "another Comforter". And He has been sent from an ascended Christ. "He will bring demonstration to the world, of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment". That is the world that causes us anxiety and uncertainty and all of those things. But "he will bring demonstration to the world" of these things.

I think it helps us when we can rely on the Holy Spirit to understand these things; so we are not confused or overly worried about the condition of things in the world. The Lord Jesus says that the Comforter will bring demonstration of these things. What is proceeding in the world at the present time is concerning, but we are not to be surprised by it because the character of the world is such that we are not to expect any more from the world than what it is. The character of the world has not changed since Christ was here. The way it is expressed has changed and we had that recently: its changing faces and how it constantly changes? But really the character is just the same.

Think of the world that rejected Christ. How awful that was. Was there a worse moment in the history of the world than that? Well, the character of the world is just the same as it was then. The way it is expressed is perhaps more pervasive and particularly in our individual lives, it is so pervasive. But we have this One, the Comforter, who is here with us and in us to help us and comfort us. But then it says, "he shall guide you into all the truth ... and he will announce to you what is coming"; "He shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you". So, He is going to announce what is coming. And some of the writings in

the New Testament are to that effect, but also there is the present announcing of all that is proceeding from a risen and ascended Christ. So, we have a living link with that Man by the Holy Spirit and what a comfort that is.

But then too there is what is coming. There is perhaps no greater comfort than the hope of Christ. And it says in Thessalonians to encourage one another with these words, in relation to the rapture, 1 Thess 4: 18. But the Lord also says in Revelation to those in Thyatira, to the overcomer in Thyatira, “and I will give to him the morning star”, chap 2: 28. Thyatira I think has been related to what has been called the dark ages. So you think of the darkness of the world, and the morning star is the hope of Christ's imminent coming again. There is no greater comfort than that. What an incentive to be marked by these overcoming features, so that we might have in a greater measure, certainly for myself, the hope of Christ's coming.

Well, these thoughts have been rather scattered, but I trust they might be for our encouragement. For His Name's sake.

Word in Ministry Meeting in Grangemouth

8th January 2025

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

David A Smith

Isaiah 32: 17

Romans 1: 16-18

Romans 3: 21-25 (to “in his blood”)

Romans 5: 1, 2

I seek help to convey a simple impression as to the righteousness of God. The scripture in Isaiah 32 has come before me this week. It speaks of the working of righteousness and the effect of righteousness. I was thinking a little of all that we have had in the past week or so as to the increase in our knowledge of God, the peace of God and the God of peace. It led my thoughts to that scripture in Isaiah which, speaking of certain persons, says, “the way of peace they know not”, Isa 59: 8. There are many like that today, who do not know the way of peace. That things are wrong in the world is manifest. I have no doubt many people would not hesitate to give you a long list of things that they think are wrong, because there is no righteousness of God in the world. Many may even acknowledge that they are wrong themselves, but “the way of peace they know not”. It is a very blessed thing that that way is revealed to us in God's glad tidings, the way of peace and, above all, peace with God in relation to the welfare of your eternal soul; that is a wonderful thing to speak about. In the glad tidings we can speak about persons having peace with God; and that we all too might have peace in our souls. The way God has secured that for us and manifested it to us in the glad tidings is the way of righteousness. That has been established and God has established it Himself. It is a divine righteousness. No doubt many would desire to walk uprightly, especially as conscious of sins, seeking to do what is right as far as they feel able, but that is only trying to establish a self-righteousness.

I read this scripture in Romans 1, because Paul speaks of not being ashamed of God's glad tidings - he speaks of it as “God's power to salvation”. What a wonderful thing that is to lay hold of as we come to the preaching, as guilty sinners and helpless to help ourselves, that we can say about God's glad tidings that it is power. God's arm is not shortened that He cannot save. There is power in God's glad tidings; it says, “God's power to salvation”. How Paul had proved that. If there is one instance of “God's power to salvation”, you could see it in Paul himself. Think of all that man after the flesh is, in his willfulness and his obdurateness and his path of self-will, lost and mired in sin. In God's

glad tidings there is power to bring in salvation. It is “to every one that believes, both to Jew first and to Greek: for righteousness of God is revealed therein, on the principle of faith”. What is the link between the power in God's word and the guilty sinner, my friend? It is repentance and faith. That is the link between the sinner and what God proposes in the glad tidings.

God is righteous. He is righteous in all that He has done, He is righteous Himself, everything He does is right. God proposes that men, women and children should avail themselves of the righteousness that is of God through the precious work of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is a wonderful thing for a sinner to apprehend. It involves our salvation, that we should be saved, saved from our sins and all that attaches to us as sinners. How we as sinners are cast upon God for mercy! We have no claim. We have no claim to mercy - it would be presumptuous even to think it, such sinners as we are. “God commends *his* love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us”, Rom 5: 8. What a precious thing that is to lay hold of by faith.

What does it mean to receive it by faith? It means that works have no place at all. There is nothing you or I can do that would ever justify us in the sight of a holy God. As guilty sinners, what could we bring? We are wholly cast upon God and His mercy. God in His grace has come in, in the Person of His beloved Son, and has accomplished the mighty work of salvation on the cross. The scripture speaks here of wrath being revealed from heaven and that affected me as I read it. Where was it revealed? Was it on the guilty sinner? It was his due as guilty before God; but that judgment, my friend, fell upon Jesus. It fell on His head, that awful “wrath of God from heaven”, all that was due to sinful man. The wrath of God is a very solemn thing to think of, and yet it did not fall on men, it did not fall on the Romans, it did not fall upon Pilate or even the Jews, guilty as they were. Nor will it ever fall on the soul who puts their faith in Christ and in His precious atoning work. The penalty that was due to the guilty sinner fell upon the head of Jesus. He bore it in those three hours of darkness, when the judgment of a holy God against sin, fell upon the head of the Saviour.

I wonder if everyone here has their faith and trust in Him. The way of salvation is through faith “repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ”, Acts 20: 21. The work has been accomplished and has been finished to God's full satisfaction so that what can be proclaimed now is the righteousness that is of God,

“towards all, and upon all those who believe”. What a wonderful thing, that, as the scripture says, “God commends *his* love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us”. It affects the heart as well as the conscience that He should take that place for me and bear my sins in His body on the tree. Based on the virtue of that precious shed blood, the sinner is accounted righteous before a holy God - a righteousness which is of God. Nothing of me: it is all in Him. He has secured it all in His suffering, in His shed blood and His rising again.

In chapter 5, it says, “Therefore having been justified on the principle of faith”. God is a just God. You can be absolutely certain of that. He is “a just God and a Saviour.” Isa 45: 21. It is an absolute rock in the soul of a believer, knowing that God is perfectly righteous, and is perfectly righteous through the work of Christ in justifying the sinner. He is perfectly right in doing that. The judgment that was due has been borne by another, so that I might be justified in the sight of God. He justifies “him that is of the faith of Jesus”. How simple the gospel is, but how glorious: “justified on the principle of faith, we have peace”. That is the effect of it. The “work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever”. On the basis of all that God has done in the precious work of our Lord Jesus Christ we can have peace with God. No qualms, no doubts, no questions, no fears, all gone - we can have peace with God. The conscience alerts us to our sinfulness. It is an uncomfortable thing living with a guilty conscience, but God proclaims His glad tidings to us that through repentance and faith in Christ we might have peace with God. We have a holy God on one hand and a guilty sinner on the other. However could there be reconciliation? Job asked as to that: “how can man be just with God?”, Job 9: 2. It meant that God Himself in the Person of His only beloved Son should come into this world and Himself willingly take up the cause of lost guilty sinners such as ourselves: there is one Mediator of God and men, “the man Christ Jesus”, 1 Tim 2: 5. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree so that we might have peace with God. The question is, does everybody have it? God is offering it today in the gospel. The work has been completed; everything has been done.

The scripture goes on to say that “we have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom we have also access by faith”. “But now without law righteousness of God is manifested, borne witness to by the law and the prophets; righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ towards all, and upon all those who believe”. That brings

stability to my soul, when I put my faith in Him. God has raised Him and glorified Him and set Him at His right hand, fully attesting His satisfaction with the work that He has done and I have faith in that Man, that blessed Man. I see Him there in all His perfection, raised at God's right hand in glory. I have faith in that blessed One: have you? Do you think there is a flaw in Jesus? Do you think there is any possible shadow or fault in Him? He has borne our sins in His body on the tree and removed them forever, and God has raised Him from among the dead and set Him at His right hand and glorified Him; and the call in the preaching is that you should put your faith in that blessed One. God has glorified the blessed Man who bore our sins and has set Him at His right hand. I see Him there in all His glory and all His perfection, all His moral beauty, all His attractiveness; and my faith and righteousness is in Him. I trust that is so for everybody here.

I read in our earlier scripture as to "wrath of God". For the believer, we know that Jesus has borne it. For the unbeliever, it is a most solemn thing to reject such glad tidings, to reject the righteousness that God is offering in the gospel, that anyone should ever say, 'It is not for me'. What a solemn position such a person is in! The wrath of God awaits impenitent persons who refuse the offer of divine grace. It is not God's mind that any should perish, but "that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth", 1 Tim 2: 4. Romans 3: 22, 23 reads: "for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God". We all have to confess that we have come short of the glory of God. Our faith is to be in One who has *not* come short, who fully glorified God in His pathway here and in the work that He has done, a blessed Saviour in whom we can put our faith and be at peace in our souls.

Then it reads, "justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth a mercy-seat". Christ has been set forth a mercy-seat. You will remember that in the tabernacle system it was made all of gold which speaks of His glory, the glory of Christ. On the mercy seat was the blood and "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of offences, according to the riches of his grace." Eph 1: 7. We proclaim Him as a precious Saviour for those who will put their faith and trust in Him. I would like to give a greater impression of the personal worth of Jesus and all that He has accomplished in a divine righteousness that is now available to guilty sinners.

I just want to touch again on chapter 5. It says, "Therefore having been justified on the principle of faith, we have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ". God has set Him forth as a mercy seat through faith in His blood and on that principle, on the principle of faith - that is looking alone to God - "we have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom we have also access by faith into this favour in which we stand". What is that favour? The believer in Jesus stands before God as a justified person, justified by faith in Christ. He can come into the very presence of God Himself in perfect restfulness and in the whole area of divine favour that is shed upon him. What a blessed place that is. I think we have some experience of it (especially as we assemble at the Lord's supper), of the divine favour by which we can come into the presence of God and "we boast in hope of the glory of God". That is, some appreciation at the present time, of His glory. God has set before us a blessed hope that is centred in our Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed realm of His glory opened up to us now in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are not justified for this world. He is not here anymore. He has been raised and glorified, the Centre of another world. We are justified as in Christ for another world. I believe that all enters into the hope of glory. That world where Christ is the Centre, where God's glory shines and where He is going to have those who He has redeemed with Him eternally. We shall know in blessed fulness then what the work of righteousness has secured for God and the effect of it will be a universe of glory and a universe of praise into which we shall enter eternally.

These are blessed truths, and they are open to all. God would not have anybody left out. We would pray as this gospel concludes that all may fully put their faith in that blessed One who has secured a divine righteousness and peace for us.

May it be so, for His Name's sake.

Sidcup

27th April 2025

FORGIVENESS AND THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

Frederick E Raven

That is what the commission of the apostle was, "to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God". What comes afterwards is what I should call supplementary, "that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me".

Forgiveness even is not known except by the Spirit. You do not believe that you are forgiven. You are never taught to do so and whatever people may think they do not believe it. What they believe is what is set forth in the testimony, *viz.*, that there is forgiveness of sins in Christ's name and that is universal - it is God's mind in regard of any man. When forgiveness in Christ's name was preached and believed people got the Spirit and that brought them into the enjoyment of it. The great end and object in Christ is that you may get living water. The point all through the Acts of the Apostles was that people should get the gift of the Holy Spirit. A person comes to Christ as needy with a request in his heart on account of his need and God knows what will suit him exactly and he gets the Spirit. The Spirit brings you into a world of reality. Cornelius by the Holy Spirit got the knowledge or witness of forgiveness. We too receive forgiveness in the witness of the Spirit.

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