

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

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WHAT THE SPIRIT HAS BROUGHT US INTO

Galatians 4: 1-7

Romans 8: 12-17

John 17: 22-26

PM I was freshly affected this morning with what the Holy Spirit has brought us into; not only as to place, wonderful as that is, but as forming in the believer the very feelings and affections that are suited to that place. I wondered if these verses might help us to follow that up a little, because the Holy Spirit operates in the believer that he might be perfectly at home in the presence of divine glory. It says, "God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts". How wonderful that is, that the Spirit of God's Son, the One who responded in absolute perfection and in the enjoyment of the relationship, is the same Spirit dwelling in the saints to make us to be entirely at liberty in the presence of the Father. In Galatians the Spirit is crying, "Abba, Father", and He is doing that in the saints. In Romans we have the leading of the Spirit bringing out not only that we are sons by calling, but as formed by the Spirit we are sons by character, and are able to cry, "Abba, Father", because of the operation of the Spirit. Then in John 17 the last verse affected me, "that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them". We shall always be creatures; we shall never be beyond what is creature, but divine Persons have operated that man should be made entirely suited to be before the Father with the affections and feelings that are suited to the Father's own heart.

JTB That is very helpful. The Spirit was uniquely placed to discern the Father's affections for the Son, do you think? And His intent would be that there should be some reflection of that in ourselves as sons. I was also affected this morning by the simple expression in relation to the Father, "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph 3: 14), as if filial affection should derive in a very real and tangible way from our knowledge of the Father; but as articulated, you might say, expressed, by the work of the Holy Spirit.

PM The Holy Spirit was there at the waters of baptism and witnessed the Father's expression of His delight in His Son, and the One who offered Himself without spot to God did so by the eternal Spirit, and how acceptable and perfect and how deeply He appreciated the perfection of that Offering! The Spirit saw it all, and knew it perfectly, and that same Spirit is in us.

JTB We had reference yesterday to, “who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God”, Heb 9: 14. The Spirit, speaking reverently, was witness of the perfection of that life in manhood of the Lord Jesus, so that there was no hesitation in the Lord Jesus invoking or having that blessed delivering up of Himself: “who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God”. The offering was really endorsed by the Spirit, do you think?

PM And offered in the power of the Spirit as entirely suitable. How wonderful that moment was! Think of those years when the Spirit was here upon the Person of the Lord Jesus, finding delight! The Lord Jesus could say as to the Spirit, “ye know him, for he abides with you”, John 14: 17. They knew the Holy Spirit's presence because He was there with Christ and in Christ, but they were going to know the Holy Spirit as in themselves. How wonderful!

TWL So the Spirit has come to us from where the Father has glorified Christ, where He has bestowed on Him according to His own feelings. Does that fit in with this?

PM It certainly does. And the Spirit has come to us from that very scene where Christ is exalted, where the Beloved is exalted; and the Spirit is still hearing what the Father and the Son are speaking about to each other, and the delight they are finding in each other. That is a wonderful thing: “whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak”, John 16: 13. Think of the communications as they are proceeding between the Father and the Son today, and the Holy Spirit is bringing those very communications into the heart of the assembly and into the heart of each one who makes room for Him. Is that not a wonderful thing?

TWL Maybe we sometimes think of those communications being in relation to administration, but the communications that go on between the Father and the Son would be primarily the communications of affection.

PM Yes, they are.

TWL I was just thinking, in the light of this, that “crying, Abba, Father” is so that the reality of the affections become true in us. Would that be right?

PM Well, that is just what impressed me this morning. It is “the Spirit of his Son”. We have the Father's Spirit in Ephesians, but here it is “the Spirit of his Son”. How the Father loves that the One who - one has to

Speak carefully and reverently - was with His Son all the time. He is the same Spirit that has been sent out to us, and He cries in our hearts, "Abba, Father". Is that right?

TWL Yes, it is, and just the wording of this as well is very precious because it is not 'the Spirit of *the* Son'; it is "the Spirit of his Son". It brings in the *whole* thought of the *personal* feelings of the Father, not just Christ as He is in His glory as the Son, but what He is; "**his** Son" makes it personal.

PM And brings out the circle of divine affections. We had that in the hymn this morning:

Brought to rest within the circle
Where love's treasures are displayed (Hymn 136).

The Spirit has come from that very scene, bringing into the hearts of those that love Christ the very feelings suited to Him.

DHM We are really introduced into the place of divine secrets. These are precious things that the world knows nothing of, but the whole aspect we are introduced to, the feelings of divine Persons, is quite wonderful. How the Father feels about the Son! The Spirit hears these conversations and is able to relay that to us, and freshly touch our heart in a living way. There is a hymn that says,

Thou takest heav'nly glories of the Son,
And bringest every precious feature near. (Hymn 401)

We experienced that, I think, this morning.

PM And we are to treasure these occasions because we can touch something that is entirely outside of this scene altogether, and outside of man's responsibility. We can touch something that is according to divine purpose and rests in the circle of divine love.

DCB It is presented here that "God sent forth his Son" and then that He "sent out the Spirit of his Son". I was wondering if there was some importance in these Persons and their distinctiveness and glory but taking up that place as being sent. There is a wonder about it. It brings the aura of the place that they have come from; They are freighted with the area, the place, They have come from as sent.

PM That is helpful and relates to divine purpose, does it not? "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son", not merely 'when the fulness of time was come' but "when the fulness of the

time was come, God sent forth his Son". How great that is, God sent Him out in service and in sacrificial service, having "come of woman, come under law". He was here as having come that way, and God sent Him forth. How wonderful that there was a Man here upon the earth whom God could send forth! But then He has "sent out the Spirit" of that blessed Person "into our hearts". I would like to get some impression of this in a deeper way. He has not just sent it out for our minds; the Spirit has not just come in relation to our minds although He forms the renewed mind, but He has come into our hearts that there should be affections and feelings that are suited to the Father's house.

DCB Yes; the first reference to the Spirit in Romans is His shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts (Rom 5: 5); so really the commencement of that activity is from within our hearts, and magnifying the love of God to us. These thoughts would meet together, the shedding abroad the love of God and the way in which we are brought into the practical expression of sonship.

PM Yes, and brought to share the Father's feelings as to His own Son. The hymn says that:

In Thy grace Thou now hast brought us
Sharers of Thy joy to be,
And to know the blessed secret
Of His preciousness to Thee. (Hymn 277)

The Spirit has come forth from that very scene in order that we might be strengthened to be sharers of the Father's appreciation of His Son.

GMcK Do you have an impression about "because ye are sons"? It appears to me that it is the sovereign grace of God. It is all conferred, "because ye are sons". I wonder if we get an impression of the wonder of that sovereign gift. I was noticing that in the second scripture, "for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *these* are sons of God". That is a bit different, is it not?

PM It is. Why is it different?

GMcK It seems to be almost more the practical aspect of it. If we are led by the Spirit of God, we really come into sonship, but I wondered whether in contrast this scripture is so attractive "because ye are sons". There is a glory to be given that is consistent with that great gift of being a son.

PM Yes, and does that relate to the purpose of God? It has often

been said that we were sons in purpose before we were sinners in responsibility. In Galatians it is the way God has held us in His own thoughts in His purpose. "Because ye are sons": it is all from the divine side there. But in Romans the features of sons come into expression. It is a formed thought really in Romans, but I was impressed with this reference, "God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts". There is something very tender and sensitive in that, is there not? And He is only doing that to those that are His sons.

NRC Do we get here a sense of what you have brought before us: "God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts"? It is the desire we would have as believers to come into the gain of these things, but do we also see the desires of divine Persons, that they may dwell within our hearts?

PM That is important. We often view things from how they affect us, and the blessings are very wonderful, but I think we really begin to appreciate the greatness of what God has done when we see how He has done it for Himself. He has done it for His own pleasure, for His own glory, that He might have a scene that is filled with persons that have the feelings that are so like the feelings of His own beloved Son. The Father's house will be filled with persons that are like that.

NRC That is helpful. I often think in relation to the Supper, when we approach the Father, it is our right to be there as sons and, speaking for myself, it is easy to forget perhaps the desires of the Father to have the many sons in His presence and what that means for Him as well. I was impressed with that and the thought of the desires of the Spirit longing to be in the hearts of those who want Him.

PM The service of God, as we know it - and there has been a great opening up of light regarding the service of God over two hundred years or so - is all for the divine pleasure. God finds His pleasure in those that have the feelings and affections that are like His own beloved Son.

SCL Is that the importance of heirship? "But if son, heir also through God", and then the passage in Romans also refers to heirs. It is not just those, speaking carefully, that have witnessed the affections of the Father and the Son, but there is an experience there; so that our response to the Father is as sons who have experienced the Father's love, and it is expressed by those who have been characterised by the Spirit of the Son for whom He has such great love.

PM I think so. Would you agree that an heir inherits from their

father? We are “heirs of God”. We will go out into the world, if we are left here tomorrow, but an heir of God is a dignified thought. We move here not as governed by the principles of the world, but an heir of God moves out in testimony in dignity because he has an inheritance from God Himself. That is a very high standard, but it is here on the page of Scripture, and we should not shrink from it. We should seek by the Spirit, as having the Spirit crying in our hearts, “Abba, Father”, to move here in that holy dignity. That really is the testimony.

TWL Does it help us to see that heirship is the title to lay claim to the Father's name? It gives me the right.

PM You will have to explain that.

TWL Heirship means that I have the right to inherit what my Father proposed; so, as going out into the world in that dignity, I have the right to lay claim to that Name because I am an heir, not just because I know the feelings of an heir, but I have a right to lay claim to the Name. So we had a reference this morning to, “I ascend to my Father and your Father”, John 20: 17. The Lord Jesus does not say ‘our Father’; the Lord Jesus says, “my Father”, and I have the right to lay claim to that according to this. Would that be right?

PM Yes, I think so. What you are suggesting is very challenging and it is to exercise us, I believe, because we are passing through a scene that is most undignified. There are abominations on every hand, but we are to move here as “children of God”; that is a wonderful thing.

SD It is a very interesting enquiry. I was thinking of what was said with regard to being heirs. I was wondering if there is a slight difference because, of course, in this world, the heir does not inherit until such time as the parent dies. For instance, the king just now has inherited because the queen has been taken. The thought of heirs according to God is that we come into a blessing because Christ has died, but He has been raised from among the dead, and we come into the blessing on that basis.

PM Is heirship not made available to us because the Lord Jesus has died, and not only died but has risen again? It is because of Him that we come into the gain or enjoyment of being heirs of God, and being children of God as born of God. These things are important to lay hold of, that the believer owes his origin, not to anything here, but he owes his origin to God Himself, not only as Creator but in order that we might become partakers of the divine nature.

SD I think that helps, and I suppose you see it in type in Israel with regard to Joseph's sons: "Bring them, I pray thee, to me, that I may bless them", Gen 48: 9. The thought is that the inheritance is theirs. It is the Father's delight that it may be so.

PM I was looking at that verse earlier: "Bring them ... to me, that I may bless them". How wonderful that is! The Lord Jesus has done that; He has brought us to God. It says that in John 17, "And now I come to thee", v 13. He was not going alone; He was taking His own with Him into the very presence of His Father.

KRC As to your thought about the Spirit being sent out, it brings in a sense of the serviceable side of the Spirit and His obedience to come and serve and be willing. I was thinking of Peter in the early Acts. He spoke there of the Spirit as "poured out" (chap 2: 33), which brings in the sense of the grace and the wonder of the love of God that His desire is to give of His Spirit, and that is for our blessing. There is a sense of wonder at that too, is there not?

PM There is: "he has poured out this which ye behold and hear". There it was. The Spirit then had not descended as a dove like He did upon the Lord Jesus, but there was the testimony to the Spirit being here in the way in which the testimony was moving forward in the appreciation of the glory of Christ where He is at the right hand of God. How wonderful that was! It is the same Spirit that is here today. Now, He operates through vessels. I find it challenging: do I give Him the room to operate in order that there should be such a testimony that could be seen and heard?

I thought in Romans 8 there is the leading of the Spirit, not just that He has been "poured out", or that He has been sent, but there is the leading of the Spirit: "for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *these* are sons of God". That is characteristic, the features of sonship coming into expression, not only by title, but seen in character by the Spirit's work here, and such persons are crying, "Abba, Father".

JTB This is often related to the wilderness, is it not? So, it is very challenging: "for as many as are led by the Spirit of God"; so that in our daily responsibilities does that characterise us? There is something very glorious that we can still cry, "Abba, Father" as conscious of the leading of the Spirit. Do you think it suggests that that is the Spirit's objective, that we should cry, "Abba, Father"? The leading must lead to that, to have a purpose, do you think? That is a very positive thought.

PM I think so; and is it not wonderful that He operates that the very expression the Lord used in addressing the Father should be taken up by persons here? “Abba, Father” is a very feeling expression, is it not? That feeling expression has been formed in persons here through the operation of the Spirit so that the Father should have that which He finds delight in even in the present time.

JTB We have the reference in Corinthians to the fact that “the Spirit quickens” (2 Cor 3: 6); so our souls are moved as conscious of the touch of the Spirit both in relation to our responsible pathway but too as brought into things divine and precious, the touch of the quickening power of the Spirit. It is very affecting that “the Spirit quickens”. Other divine Persons quicken as well, but the Spirit quickening seems to have a very precious touch as to quickening our souls, our spirits, our very inner being in relation to divine things, and in our relationship with the Father in that sense.

PM For the sake of those that are younger, can you tell us what quickening means, and how we experience it?

JTB It is an actual thing, is it not? Your whole inner being is moved really in that sense. There is a touch of movement and action that comes into our inner being, as best I can describe it. It is something that is perhaps very difficult to touch or to describe. You feel a thrill of movement in your heart as something touches your affections, and it is really a touch of quickening:

Before I was aware,
My soul set me upon the chariots of my willing people, Song of Songs 6: 12.

That is in relation to the Lord, but that is really the kind of activity, action, that characterises the believer as experiencing quickening. It is a movement, is it not, in the Spirit?

PM I think that is very helpful. You may read, or in your prayer to divine Persons something may come to you, as well as in the service of God a hymn or a thanksgiving may move your whole being. Your heart is thrilled because you have some fresh impression that comes by the Holy Spirit, and that is in view of life being maintained in the believer, is it not? The psalmist says, “quicken me according to thy word”, Ps 119: 25.

JTB You referred yesterday to,

Draw me, we will run after thee!

Song of Songs 1: 4.

The drawing is really a quickening touch that thrills our hearts and really actuates us in movement towards the Lord Jesus.

PM That is helpful. So, we have here, “The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit”. That is a very sensitive thing also, is it not? He is witnessing in the spirits of the saints that there is that which is here that is derived from God.

SCL Do you see how precious what you have made reference to is to the heart of God? Those being “led by the Spirit” is deeper and more intimate than just those that are moving according to a sense of right and wrong. As the Lord moved according to the affections of His Father, so those persons that are sons of God are moving according to the feelings of the Father as the Lord did in this scene. What that means to the heart of the Father, that there is that relationship of such intimacy that we govern ourselves by what the Father is feeling!

PM You are touching something that is very vital. If I only do something because I am told that is what I ought to do, when the test comes, I will go and do something else. Sadly we may know something of that, but what you are saying is important that the believer is led by the Spirit. Light may come from God as to assembly behaviour or personal behaviour. But if it is not taken up with the Spirit, it will become just the law and, when the test comes, I shall turn away from it. What the Spirit is doing is maintaining livingly an answer to divine light that comes and forms in the believer that which is in keeping with it. Would you agree?

SCL Yes, and it has struck me that the joy the Father has is that those that are walking that way are seeking to do so as sons out of affection for their Father, not to put ourselves onto the same level as Christ but to be characterised by the way in which He walked for His Father, and in affection for His Father. Those that are characterised by sonship, that is what the Father sees, those that love Him enough to walk in this scene as sons out of affection for Him, do you think?

PM Well, it was a lover of the Lord Jesus who said, “He that says he abides in him ought, even as *he* walked, himself also so to walk”, 1 John 2: 6. That was said by someone who rested in the bosom of Jesus.

DHM Do you think it goes back to our affection for the Lord Jesus? John 14 says, “If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will beg

the Father, and he will give you another Comforter”, v 15, 16. That refers to the *gift* of the Spirit. But there is a further thought here that such persons would come under the leading of the Spirit. Is that not so propitious in terms of what we are talking about of these disclosures?

PM And He is making disclosures, is He not? The Lord Jesus speaks of that in John as to how the Spirit will bring back a report: “whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak”, John 16: 13. There are living communications. Christianity is not to be treated as a mere religion; persons think of it thus: but Christianity is a living organism where everything is deriving from a Man in another world altogether and is being formed in view of display for the glory of God.

DCB Part of the exercise that introduces this is, “but if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live”. That is a very exercising matter, that there needs to be a depth of exercise that the flesh is not allowed, and it is really as that becomes characteristic that the Spirit’s leading is known.

PM It shows that in ourselves we are not able to “put to death the deeds of the body”; it has to be by the Spirit. There is no other power to do so but by the Spirit of God. I would say, Speak to the Spirit. I am speaking to younger ones particularly: speak to the Spirit of God! Tell Him what you think! Tell Him how you feel and the exercises that you face, and He will help you through them and He will direct your heart to the Lord Jesus and give you power to deal with what is out of keeping with Him.

MB Do we see the leading of the Spirit in Acts 8? It says, “And the Spirit said to Philip, Approach and join this chariot” (v 29), and he is able just to bring up the word that the eunuch was looking at in Isaiah 53 so beautifully.

PM It is a very attractive passage. Philip joined the chariot, then the eunuch says, “concerning whom does the prophet say this?” v 34. O what words they are, “concerning whom does the prophet say this?” He spoke of One.

NRC I am glad that our brother brought that up because I was just thinking of that as well. It says, “But when they came up out of the water the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, and the eunuch saw him no longer, for he went on his way rejoicing”, v 39. There is one there who is in the gain of being led by the Spirit. We spoke yesterday as to there being some who were full of the Holy Spirit. It does not necessarily say

it here, but you get some sense of the similarity here as to someone who is in the gain of the complete desires of divine Persons in experiencing the love for themselves. He was “caught away”, but the eunuch “went on his way rejoicing”.

PM It was not the intention that the eunuch should be occupied with Philip, but the Spirit of God saw to it that he should be occupied with another Man. “He went on his way rejoicing”.

I thought about this last verse in John 17, “And I have made known to them thy name, and will make it known; that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them”. Think of the greatness of that, that the same character of love with which the Father loves the Son should be in us. It is a very wonderful thing that it should be so. That is what the Lord prayed for, that we might experience that character of love, and that we might love the Son with that same character, not in its fulness as the Father does, but the character of that love should be known.

DCB You began at verse 22, about the Lord's glory. I know that has been related frequently to sonship, but there is a glory in receiving the Spirit too that would be fundamental to enjoying anything that you see in this chapter, especially the final verse you referred to.

PM That is helpful. There could be no glory of sonship apart from the Spirit, could there? I know this has often been linked with the glory of sonship, but it must include the gift of the Spirit, because He says, “And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one”. Now, what is the power for that? It is the Spirit, is it not?

TWL Is this seen in the Father's acclamation of the Son? It comes about after the Spirit came upon Him. It is the character of the Man that moves by the Spirit. Does that fit in with this?

PM I think it does: “the glory which thou hast given me”. Think of what it meant at that moment when each divine Person was there and what glory surrounded that moment. John saw it: “the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form as a dove upon him”, Luke 3: 22. How wonderful that was, that the Spirit should be seen in a bodily form. That is distinct, is it not? The Spirit is not received by us in a bodily form, but He was by Jesus. What glory marked the relationship as the Father and Son and the Spirit went together on that journey!

TWL This is preceded here with, "I have made known to them thy name". Earlier on in verse 6 the Lord says, "I have manifested thy name". The name of the Father was manifested in a Man on whom the Spirit had settled, and subsequently the love that we should know, Christ having a special place in it, but the love that we should know, is according to what was manifested in a Man who was moving by the Spirit. Would that be right?

PM "Am I so long a time with you, and thou hast not known me, Philip? He that has seen me has seen the Father; and how sayest thou, Shew us the Father?" (John 14: 9), one in motive, one in affection, one in purpose. What movements they were, and yet the affections that flowed from the Father to the Son in character, is what flows towards us. How wonderful these things are!

TWL Going back to your thought in relation to what comes into display, the love between the Father and the Son can be taken account of by the Spirit who came from that place and takes us there. Would that be right?

PM Yes, He does, and there is nothing less in view than that those that have been secured should be brought into the very scene where Christ is: "I desire that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory". That is the operation of divine love, and it is a wonderful thing to be lifted above all that surrounds us to be occupied with the One who is the Centre of God's thoughts and all for His own pleasure.

Edinburgh

25th September 2022

Key to Initials:-

D C Brown, Edinburgh; J T Brown, Edinburgh; M Buchan, Aberdeen;
K R Cumming, Edinburgh; N R Cumming, Edinburgh; S Duthie,
Aberdeen; T W Lock, Edinburgh; S C Lock, Edinburgh;
D H Marshall, Edinburgh; P Martin, Colchester; G McKay,
Manchester

LIFE

Jim R Walkinshaw

John 1: 1-5, 14-16; 11: 21-27

I was very encouraged, in view of the hymn that we have sung and our brother's thanksgiving, in the presence of death, to speak of life! As the hymn writer says:

Life is found alone in Jesus,
Only there 'tis offered thee (Hymn 266).

These scriptures that we have read draw our attention to that blessed One, our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the scripture says with the authority of God's word: "All things received being through him, and without him not one thing received being which has received being. In him was life, and the life was the light of men".

I think if I can speak a little of our sister, although it is not the intention nor would it be her wish for attention to be drawn to her specifically, that the light of her life was her faith and trust in her Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, One who had died for her. But not only had He died for her, He lives again. He is One who was gone into death; as He says elsewhere, "No one has greater love than this, that one should lay down his life for his friends", chap 15: 13. The question is whether I can find my life, find my joy, find my satisfaction, in such a One as our sister no doubt did? It was the testimony of her life; she found her joy and satisfaction and life in Another, in our Lord Jesus Christ. How wonderful that is! To have some sense in your soul that there is One glorious Man who has loved me enough to die for me! How great He is!

I read this first section because it brings out the greatness of the One of whom we speak, One who was in the beginning "with God", and "was God". How great is the Person of whom we speak, One who in His Person is beyond us to comprehend, and yet the preciousness of what comes out in God's ways is that that blessed One is the Word. It says simply here, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us". Think of what that involved for the Saviour; think of what it involved for the One who was life and that "life was the light of men"! The apostle Paul brings it out in Philippians; he says, "but emptied himself" (chap 2: 7), what that meant for Him. One who "did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God: but emptied himself" (v 6,7), found here in figure as a Man. And as here He "humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross". The way that the Lord

Jesus went was the way of the cross. He suffered there, and He died on the cross. He suffered there because of sin; He suffered there, I can say, for my sins; the apostle Peter says, "who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree", 1 Pet 2: 24. It is a precious matter to be able to say He bore *my* "sins in his body on the tree". Can you say that? Can you say the Lord Jesus bore your sins in His body on the tree? And that He shed His precious blood, a witness to that work was completed there to the entire and eternal satisfaction of God? So "the Word became flesh"; that One who was so great came into manhood and here He displayed the love of God. It says, "and we have contemplated his glory", then lower down it says, "No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, *he* hath declared him"; He was here declaring and demonstrating the love of God.

Chapter 11 is a wonderful chapter to read in the presence of death; these persons here were grieving, as are we in this locality, and many others around, and the family, feeling the loss of a dear sister and what that will mean. But the Lord Jesus, I believe, would come in with a touch of comfort as He did with Martha here; and He says, "I am the resurrection and the life". I would suggest that everything that we have in relation to the future rests in Him, and our faith and trust as in Him would bring in the comfort and the grace. Indeed, I might say the joy too, as we look at what we have been anticipating in our hymn, that the Lord Jesus is coming again, soon coming to take all those that love Him to be with Himself. So, the Lord Jesus says to Martha, "Thy brother shall rise again". We would be sure, as our brother suggested in thanksgiving, that our sister will rise again! The Lord is coming, and all those that love Him will hear His voice and will rise to be with Him, and we will meet Him in the air, "and thus", the apostle says in 1 Thessalonians, "we shall be always with the Lord", chap 4: 17.

So I wondered if our hearts might just be encouraged in being occupied with the One who is life, "the resurrection and the life"; He says, "he that believes on me, though he have died, shall live". Our sister at the present time, spirit and soul, is in bliss with the Lord Jesus, we know not in what situation it may be, but we know that she is with her Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. And then He says, "every one who lives and believes on me shall never die". You have a never-dying soul; if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you will be kept in life, and that life can be enjoyed even at the present time; even in the presence of death itself, life can be found in Jesus, and can be enjoyed at the present time.

May our hearts be encouraged and may we know more of it for His Name's sake and His glory.

Maidstone

6th Oct 2022

A LIVING HOPE

A Martin

1 Peter 1: 3-5

This scripture came to mind as our brother was speaking. Peter, in writing to believers in the Lord Jesus, says that we have “a living hope”. Is that not a precious thing? What is our hope? Many have hope as a kind of wishfulness, hoping that something might happen, but we have “a living hope”. When we read about hope in the Bible, it means absolute assurance as to the future. That is the meaning of hope in the Scriptures, assurance as to the future. And we have “a living hope”. Our sister had “a living hope”, and everyone who has a link with the Lord Jesus must have “a living hope”, because the day is soon coming when we are actually going to see Him face to face. What will it be to see Him, to see our Lord Jesus face to face! Wonderful prospect that we have! And it is an eternal prospect, not something that can be taken away from us. Eternal relationships will abide; they must abide; and they will never come to an end. Is that not blessed? We have this “living hope”.

And what is the “living hope”? The “living hope” is Himself; It is the Person; It is our Lord Jesus Christ. We have often been reminded that we do not exactly await just an event when He comes, but we await Himself. He is our Hope, and He is living now on high, and our sister has gone to be with Him in paradise. Is that not precious? What a portion she has, to enjoy, without interruption, the richness of His love constantly, and nothing of nature can intrude on that! Nothing connected with time can intrude on that. Nothing! She knows His love and she enjoys that love without interruption. Is that not blessed? That is her portion.

We have been begotten to this “living hope”; and it has been secured “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead”. When the Lord Jesus went into death, the power of death was broken. He went in as One upon whom death had no claim and the power of death was broken, but the evidence of that for us, and the triumph of it, is in the fact that He was raised, that He came out of death. The same Jesus manifested Himself in resurrection at the end of the gospels. He demonstrated to His disciples that He was the same blessed One whom they knew, and that He had come out of death victoriously. The fact that the Lord Jesus has been raised has secured

the “living hope” for us. Is that not blessed, beloved, that He has been the way of death and resurrection? In the experiences of our lives, it is wonderful to remember that the Lord Jesus has been that way before, distinctly and uniquely, but He has been that way, and that includes the fact that He has been into death. Now He has come out of death. Death could not hold Him, and He has come out, and He has thereby made a way through for us, for every one of His own, so that the believer truly sees death as the way into what is absolutely blessed. Is that not wonderful?

And soon our sister will be given a body, a body of glory. At the moment she does not have that. Our brother is going to undertake the final committal service for our sister in the condition of flesh and blood - when she is buried, but soon she will have a body of glory, a body that is capable of housing and displaying the work of God that has taken place in her. That work will go through into eternity, and our sister's identity will go through. Our sister will have a body that is capable of expressing, in glory, all that has been worked out in her in time, and this is true of every saint, every person, who has faith in the Lord Jesus.

Well, what is reserved for us, beloved, is an inheritance in the heavenlies, “an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance”. Is that not a contrast to what we see around? Things begin to fade, then they become defiled, then finally they become corrupt. What we have is “an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance, reserved in the heavens for you”. Peter is addressing believers here and he is saying, 'This is reserved for you'. You have an inheritance in the heavenlies; we might almost say, it has your name on it. Everyone who has their faith in the Lord Jesus and belongs to Him, has an inheritance that is reserved for them. Our sister has her inheritance. She will enter into it fully soon when the Lord Jesus comes and she will hear His voice and be raised. We will hear that voice, beloved! Every one of His own will hear that voice and we will see His face. What a sight that will be! May it be “a living hope” in our hearts for His Name's sake!

Word at the burial of Miss Rachel Pugh, Maidstone

6th Oct 2022

CAPTIVES SET FREE

Norman J Henry

Isaiah 14: 12-17

Luke 4: 16-21

Isaiah 49: 8-9 (to “yourselves”)

The moral conditions in the world that existed when Isaiah the prophet wrote this book still exist today. There is advancement in everything, but darkness in the souls of men remains. There is certainly a difference between what we read in Isaiah 14 as to Satan, and then what we have in Luke 4. Instead of binding men and keeping men in bondage, we have the Deliverer coming in. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me ... to preach”. What a preaching that was! Think of Jesus gracefully doing it. The One we are preaching here tonight is to be your Lord and Saviour and your Redeemer.

The prophet here in Isaiah 14 refers to the aspirations of the devil. The devil had the status of sonship but he fell. He fell; pride was found in him. He spread out his evil, the effect of pride and being against God, into the whole human race. One sin brought the race down: one sin. It was something immediately before man that God used to put him under responsibility, that he had not to eat of one of the trees. There were plenty that were fruit-bearing; there was the tree of life which stands out peculiarly, Gen 2: 9. One tree was “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”. You might ask why God put it there. There was another will in the universe aside from God's will, and therefore man was placed in such wonderful circumstances but under the commandment that he was not to eat of that tree. Immediately he ate it, the other will than God's will permeated the race with awful results. It is not just every sin, but every amusement in the world, every sport, everything in the business world, everything is permeated by the wicked hands of Satan, who exercises his will contrary to the will of God. He said, “I will ascend into the heavens, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit upon the mount of assembly, in the recesses of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High”. You think of that; that is man's pride, and the world is permeated by the pride of man; it sustains man.

When we come to Luke 4, we have the descent of the humble Jesus; He treads His way according to the will of God. He stands up in the synagogue in Luke 4 and He reads in simplicity, but so powerfully, of the abundant grace of God. It is a wonderful message; what they

needed most was in that message that He brought. He has been bringing it ever since. Wonderful! I am just touching this first passage lightly, but you will see very clearly what has marked the world that is round about us. The prophet says, “none the less art thou brought down to Sheol”; That is what God said about Satan: he was cast out of his domain from the heavens; he is brought down to Sheol, “to the recesses of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee; they shall consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that shook kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness, and overthrew the cities”. Everything of the world is caught up; they serve their gods, “the god of this world” is referred to in the 2 Corinthians 4: 4. It says that he “dismissed not his prisoners homewards”; he does not let man go. How can man be delivered from the world's system? He has no power to do it. The power of the devil is greater, and he has kept prisoners in this world; no one can deliver unless God does it; He can do it. If God comes in, He comes in in Christ. Men are held as prisoners in a power that they cannot get delivered from. No wonder the message from Luke is so attractive.

We will move on to this beautiful scripture. “He came to Nazareth, where he was brought up; and he entered, according to his custom, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Esaias was given to him; and having unrolled the book he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor; he has sent me to preach to captives deliverance, and to the blind sight, to send forth the crushed delivered, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord”. Thank God it is still running; the acceptable year of the Lord is still running; it has not closed yet. That is wonderful. It is going out for men; when man does not have the power, he does not have any power to deliver himself, the Deliverer comes. He is speaking here in the synagogue; He is saying what He has come to do, and preaching the acceptable year of the Lord; is that not wonderful? I think it is a wonderful matter. Thank God for every person that has opened their ear to such an appeal.

It says, “having rolled up the book, when he had delivered it up to the attendant, he sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon him”. What an object for them. Here was One who could deliver me from my lost estate. I know what it is like to get deliverance from sin. I was captive to the world in sin; I knew I had to get out of it some time, but I had no power to get out. Divine grace brought me out.

Abundance of grace is preached: “abundance of grace, and of the free gift of righteousness”, Rom 5: 17. That is the God we are dealing with; He has abundant resources to meet the prisoner today, to get deliverance for the prisoner, those who are captive to their desires and everything that holds men. You have so much presented to man; it is extraordinary; some other new things that they are introducing to try to hold man, to satisfy his heart of desire. God knows that; God is aware of that. He has the means to deliver the sinner. That is what the glad tidings involve. You need deliverance from sin and to be free of self. Everything that marks this world, the devil, the god of this world, engenders this in the hearts of men so that they can live without God. They are so far away from God that they just want to walk in their knowledge, but at the same time they are making inanimate things, gods for their heart. They put those items in their heart and it is something they can look at and that was a form of idolatry that spread, even in the Christian world.

Here, Jesus is the blessed attractive Man. He comes here, and He is the Deliverer, God's Deliverer for men. What a Saviour He is. Do you feel the need? Are you going to make use of what is in Christ? His power is far greater than Satan's. He will yet take him and cast him into the pit for a thousand years; finally he will be banished for ever, his influence will be gone. At the moment he still wields power. Think of the bondage that sin brought in, death. Men have turned the world of life into fear and bondage, to sin and to death: man's hopeless condition. Someone said to a person recently, 'I want to speak about the Lord', and the person replied that he did not want to hear it. He said, 'I will tell you: hell will be full of persons who did not want to hear it'. Then the man listened to what he had to say. People want to close their ears: “they ... held their ears”, Acts 7: 27. They did that when Stephen was martyred; they did not want to hear him, Stephen and his faithful message to them. Man is fixed and savaged by his lost condition. God in His mercy gave man a conscience. You might ask how men can do things like that. God appeals to the conscience of men. Instead of anything the world might call great and mighty, it is the blessed One who stood up saying, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor”: poor in spirit, poor in mind. How cheap things seem to satisfy men, you wonder at it. We are speaking about the most exalted things from God to satisfy men, and loving them; and yet man is satisfied with poor quality.

Even that younger son in Luke 15, craving the husks: even the

pigs had something better. Everything here is poor; that is what men live on. They would appear to be satisfied. There is only one chink God could use; the younger son came to himself. Instead of looking out, he came to himself; and he remembered what he had left. Oh, that men might come to that today through the gospel, they might come to themselves. What a poor diet he was having, what a change to come into the father's house where he was invited, brought there by the father. The Father is active today in the preaching; I do not doubt it for a minute. The Spirit of God is working in the testimony, but also presenting Christ. The Father is calling out; He wants to bring you into blessing; He wants to fill your heart. What a God He is: the supreme God taking the name of Father; the greatest in the economy of love, taking that name Father. Is it not enough to touch our hearts? We are dealing with the most feeling and remarkable features of divine Persons; both the Son and the Spirit are referred to as Comforters. He is a feeling God. He knew what Saul of Tarsus went through: "it is hard for thee to kick against goads", Acts 26: 14. He knew of the things that would come in through divine grace, to try and steer the animal in the right direction. Saul was hard work. It was easy work for the Lord because He was greater, a light above the brightness of the sun shone round about him, Acts 9: 3. He was the one who was to be blessed and he was brought down by heavenly light from the most glorious Person who preached in the synagogue in Luke 4. What a Deliverer! What a Person! "He has sent me to preach to captives deliverance, and to the blind sight, to send forth the crushed delivered, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord". Each state of soul can be met by this blessed Saviour; there is none like Him.

Jesus is a glorious Saviour. A psalm speaks of opening the gates of righteousness and entering in, Ps 118: 19. God would encourage persons to come into righteousness. There is an abundance of righteousness; righteousness is by faith. It is all provided in the gospel; enter it. You say, 'I am embarrassed; I am frightened to do it; I am cowardly to do it'; no, the gates are open. Go through the gates of righteousness and enter in. You will come into blessing. Men need to come to themselves, instead of living with the unclean, day and night, but finding the gates of righteousness are open and there is a way in. Those persons that need it so much are brought in; God gives us strength to walk, and He will take you by the hand. He will help you through. It must be the gates of righteousness; you must come in rightly. Righteousness was established at the cross. It has been rightfully established and now all those persons who are prisoners to

sin, captives to sin, impoverished, living in debauchery, poor, living on what is provided for animals and not what is provided by God, can enter through the gates of righteousness.

Here, Jesus sits down: “and having rolled up the book ...he began to say to them, To-day this scripture is fulfilled in your ears”. What a message! I know, of course, He had to go down into death, but He was after their hearts. The message is to go into the heart. They “wondered at the words of grace that were coming out of his mouth”. This is the opposite to the lawless one; he aspired to sit in the seat of God; that is what he wanted to do. Here the Lord Jesus is speaking in grace; He took a lowly place to serve. If a disciple needed a little help, He washes his feet: how beautiful! If you go to the Middle East, it is dry sandy ground that is coarse on the soles of the feet: He washed their feet, the same Person who made the worlds.

We turn to the last scripture. I feel we need more confessions; confessions show where you stand with God. It says here, “prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves”. I think that is true confession. You have stated where you stand with God. The person is encouraged to shew themselves. God will meet you in His grace; what a God He is. He knows where you are; He knows if the word is having an effect. You could be in the middle of millions of persons as they have had on the streets of London in the past week, and God knows the state of every soul. Who is going to break through and get salvation, get deliverance, and cease to be prisoners? The younger son was no longer a prisoner, neither was Saul of Tarsus still a prisoner; they received deliverance. Wonderful, those who are delivered are told, “Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves”. God knows who is in darkness. Show you have been delivered from the moral darkness of the world. That is true confession. We confess where we are with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ. “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from among the dead, thou shalt be saved”, Rom 10: 9.

I trust what I have said may be for blessing for all our hearts, so that we know more and more the value of having such a God to speak about and such a Saviour to trust.

May it be so for His Name's sake.

West Norwood

18th September 2022

“GIVE ME MY PRICE”

William J House

Zechariah 11: 12-14

Hebrews 12: 14-17

1 Kings 21: 1-16

Luke 4: 1-13

(NB the King James Version was mainly used on this occasion)

I am sure, dear brethren, that the bearing of Scripture in its varied application to us is appreciated by all of us to some extent. None, I suppose, are strangers to the comfort and encouragement of the Scriptures. How the Spirit of God constantly brings the great element of comfort and encouragement to the hearts of the saints through the precious Scriptures! The apostle tells us that “All scripture ... is profitable for doctrine”, 2 Tim 3: 16. What should we do if we had not the authority of the Scriptures in relation to doctrine? What imaginations of man's mind would steal in but for the Scriptures as authoritative for doctrine! But he also says they are “for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”. With the Lord's help one would desire to use them in that way to-night; not that one is competent to reprove the brethren, but to use the Scriptures “for reproof ... for instruction in righteousness”.

Part of the Lord's service to His people is to reprove them. The psalmist says, “Let the righteous smite me, it is kindness; and let him reprove me, it is an excellent oil which my head shall not refuse”, Ps 141: 5. We would all prefer the oil of gladness, I am sure, naturally; but the psalmist says a divine reproof is an excellent oil which his head would not refuse. I would like to bring these scriptures before us at this time as a challenge. What many hearts are feeling throughout this city is the attempt being made to link righteousness with unrighteousness. The apostle makes clear in 2 Corinthians 6 that righteousness and unrighteousness cannot be combined. We may attempt it, but there cannot be any bond between righteousness and unrighteousness. He says, “what communion hath light with darkness?”, v 14. You cannot bring together light and darkness; it is impossible. “What concord hath Christ with Belial?”, v 15. Christ, dear brethren, is the blessed Man in whom everything that is precious to heaven and to God resides, and Belial means 'worthless'. What is infinitely precious and what is worthless cannot come together. “What concord hath Christ with Belial?” “What part for a believer along with an unbeliever?” How can

there be fellowship, sharing things together, between a believer and an unbeliever? It cannot be done; "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?". In the temple of God, God's glory is found - in His temple everything says glory.

We have been made to feel, dear brethren, and feel keenly, the attempts on the part of many - and the element of it is in all our hearts - to try and bring these things together; but the truth is, either we must have righteousness or unrighteousness; either we must have light or darkness; either we must have Christ or Belial; either we must pursue a path proper to a believer or we stand publicly as an unbeliever. Either we must be in accord with the temple of God, which is holy, or we are connected with idolatry. There is no possibility of bringing them together, and what I want with the Lord's help to say a few words as to, is the challenge which the Lord brings to us as to which we stand related to, as to what we are prepared to accept or to give up, to part with the one and embrace the other.

And so the Lord says, for it is the Lord really speaking through the prophet, "If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear". One would like to urge upon oneself and upon every one of us, that we put this as a sign upon our hands. That we put it as a frontlet to our eyes, that our outlook has this frontlet upon it, that we put it on the door of our houses, that we write it on our gates. In our coming in and our going out, in our households, in our occupations, in our secret movements, let the Lord's appeal come into every heart - "If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear". Oh, beloved brethren, let us forbear; let us never name a price that we will accept to part with our blessed Lord, to part with a pathway of righteousness, to part with Christ, to part with the company of believers, to part with the temple of God; let us forbear to give a price. The Lord calls upon us, He puts upon every heart this searching question, are we prepared to name a price?

First of all, in our personal private history as God alone sees us, away from the eyes of anyone, are we naming a price that we will accept to part with the blessed Lord and all that is His here on earth? In our households, in our relationships as husbands, let us who are husbands take it to our hearts: is there a price that we will name to leave the path of righteousness and light and holiness? I put it to the sisters in the same way, to the parents, to children, to masters, to servants; the Lord would say to all of us: "If ye think good, give me my price, and if not,

forbear". God grant, dear brethren, that we may forbear accepting in our souls and in our minds any price for which we will part with the blessed Lord, for which we will depart from the path of righteousness, for which we will depart from the temple of God, for which we will depart from that blessed One who is the Vessel of all preciousness - Christ. One would desire that the Spirit of God would write the appeal on every heart - burn it upon our souls - "If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear".

Esau stands before us an abiding witness, an abiding warning, as one who would sell his birthright. There was a price that he would accept, for the birthright; it was his, and the birthright entitled him to the blessing. Oh, what a thing it is to be blessed of God. This is the blessing, the scripture says, "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee" - what will you give for that? "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee", putting a wall of fire round you and preserving you - that is part of the blessing. "The Lord make his face shine upon thee", Num 6: 24, 25. Think of what radiates from the face of God. Think of what God is, shining into the heart of a man; that is the blessing. "And be gracious unto thee". That is to say, you are in the favour of God. Is there anything more blessed than being in the favour of God? "And give thee peace", v 26. Moving through a world of turmoil and unrest and conflict, the blessing is that God gives peace to those who are blessed. Esau had a title to the birthright, the blessing. It says he sold it; a price was named to profane Esau that attracted him, a price was dangled before his eyes, so that he said, 'What profit is the birthright to me?'. He says, 'What gain is there in the birthright compared with what was offered to me?'. What was offered him? A morsel of bread; a moment's gratification. Oh, how many have had a lifetime of sorrow for a moment's self-gratification, the enemy having dangled before their eyes a morsel of bread. Esau sold his birthright and in bitter anguish, with bitter tears, he could not regain it. He says to his father, "bless me, even me also, O my father", Gen 27: 38. But though he sought the blessing earnestly with tears it was gone. Let us beware, dear brethren, of selling the birthright, for every believer has a birthright; he is one of the firstborn ones, he has a title to the blessing. 'Beware', the apostle says, "lest there be any ... profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright". If we do that for a step in the path of unrighteousness, for an action in the dark, for a movement that is unholy, for the acceptance in our hearts of what is worthless, it may be we shall search earnestly for the blessing and not find it. There may

come in the government of God a time when we shall long to get the blessing and not find it.

Judah is another man before whom a price was dangled. He, in company with his brethren, had known what it was to have the companionship of Joseph. What a man Joseph was! Loved of Jacob, fit to wear a coat of many colours, fit for heaven to communicate heaven's thoughts to, one who loved his brethren - "I seek my brethren", Gen 37: 16. There comes Joseph, and Judah says, "What profit is it if we slay our brother ... Come, and let us sell him", v 26, 27. The Midianites come forward with their twenty pieces of silver, and it is more to Judah than Joseph, v 28. He weighs the price. Judah is not Esau, Judah is one of the people of God, he is not apostate; but Judah from that day is in for discipline; years of discipline are ahead of Judah on account of that. First of all, he lives a life of deception. Oh, the misery of it, deceiving Jacob, and perpetuating the deception for long, long years. Famine must come, for God calls for a famine to reach Judah as well as others. Who has not known it in some measure, the absence of spiritual supply because of in some measure having accepted a price for Christ, some steps down the road of unrighteousness unjudged, some elements of unholiness allowed; who has not known a famine, alas? Years of famine are called for so that Judah may retrace his steps. In the infinite skill and wisdom of Joseph, a point is reached when Judah must give up his wife, must give up his children, must give up his father's house, must give up every possession he has on earth, and must be a bondman in Egypt, till he judges fully the price he had accepted: till Benjamin has become so precious - Christ in another way - so precious to his soul that he will give everything for Benjamin. He had accepted twenty pieces of silver for Joseph; but now by years of discipline he will give everything he has on earth, including himself, for Benjamin. He comes forward and speaks to Joseph. He says, 'I am surety for Benjamin, I stand prepared to meet every obligation that should ever come upon Benjamin; it comes out of my resources, indeed I take his place'. I mention that at this time to show how the selling of Joseph brought upon Judah long years of discipline till he judged deeply and fully in his soul that terrible principle of accepting a price for Christ typically.

Now I would like to speak of Naboth. One loves Naboth; God grant that we may be like him. Naboth had a bit of the inheritance, the inheritance of his fathers, what God gave. There is not any money that

can be weighed that he would accept. The king of Israel, wicked Ahab, proposes that he should accept money for his inheritance, that had come to him from his fathers, from God, a piece of heavenly territory, typically a bit of the heavenly land, part of the inheritance of the saints in light. Think of having an inheritance amongst the saints in light, beyond the dark, dark scene through which we are passing; God has given us an inheritance amongst the saints in light. He has made us, who were once aliens and strangers, no longer foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints; we have a portion in the city of God, the heavenly city, fellow citizens with the saints, of the household of God. Ahab came to Naboth and said, 'I will give you money, you give me your inheritance and I will give you money'. He does not name the sum, but he lays down the principle, that money would be given. I have no doubt to get his own way Ahab would have given largely, but Naboth says, 'I will not give thee my inheritance'. There was no sum that Ahab could name that interested Naboth to part with his inheritance. Oh, beloved brethren, one would long that we should be more like Naboth, that there is nothing that the king can name with all his resources, that would interest us to part with our inheritance, the inheritance of the saints in light. Think of having to go out into the darkness when once we have known something of the light. What must that man at Corinth have felt when he was in the darkness, having once known the marvellous light of God, to be out in the darkness, having lost his inheritance, lost his place in the city of God, having lost access to the river of God which is full of water, having lost access to the tree of life, sold it for self-gratification. Naboth said, "I will not"; twice he repeats, "I will not". Not for all the king's money. The king offers another thing, he offers an exchange, a more subtle thing even than the money. For something that is not his inheritance, something different, something on a lower platform. Christendom abounds with those who have exchanged their inheritance for something else, I do not say what. The people of God are entitled to know their place in the assembly of God, are entitled to enjoy the headship of Christ over the assembly, and they are entitled to hear the voice of the Spirit of God in the assembly. How many have made an exchange, have accepted other heads, are listening to other voices! I do not say exactly they have sold their inheritance, but they have exchanged it at the behest, maybe, of a king. You know what Jezebel does, and Jezebel is always ready to do this: she raises up false witnesses. You can be quite sure, if there is a brother or sister that will not sell their inheritance, it will not be long before there are false

witnesses under the influence of Jezebel to destroy them. Let us beware that we do not allow ourselves to be instruments of Jezebel to destroy one who will not sell his inheritance, but who will hold it at all costs. Naboth only had to say a word that the king could have had his inheritance, and all would have been over; but he died. God grant we may be prepared to die rather than give up our inheritance.

Now I would say just a word about the blessed Lord. He stands out in supreme contrast to Esau. We are not told how long Esau was in the field; he came from the field, and in order to gratify his hunger, he sold his birthright. Look at Jesus, our blessed Lord, forty days in the wilderness and ate nothing. Scripture says He ate nothing and afterwards He hungered. The Spirit of God says, "he ... hungered". The tempter comes and suggests bread. Will He yield to gratify His hunger? Never for a moment, not after forty days; every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God is more to Him than His hunger as Man. Oh, what a gulf lies between Esau and Jesus, between Judah and our Lord. "It is written", says the Lord, "man shall not live by bread alone". How many things are done for bread alone, for some present gratification! But the Lord says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God". The enemy goes to the other extreme, and He presents to the Lord on an exceeding high mountain all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. He says, 'That is the price I offer, if you will yield; if you will not yield for bread, yield for all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, all shall be thine'. "Get thee behind me, Satan", says the Lord. Not all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them would induce the Son of God to yield. Oh, dear brethren, where do we stand? Wrapped up in these temptations is every principle of evil. It says, "when the devil had ended all the temptation". He finds the true Naboth, oh, more than Naboth, One who would die rather than yield, rather than move one step in the path of unrighteousness, rather than give place for one moment to what is worthless, rather than be out of accord for an instant with the temple of God, which He was Himself. You find in Him the One from whom Naboth drew in anticipation, the blessed One who in the language of Naboth could say, "I will not". One commends that blessed Saviour to us all on this line as One who would not give any place to a suggestion of weighing a price; He would forbear; there was no price that He would name, and there was no price that He would accept to move out of the path of righteousness, out of the path of holiness, out of the path of what was precious according to God, out of the pathway of light. "The path of the just is as the shining

light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day”, Prov 4: 18.

The Lord help us to come under His own blessed influence as Head, that we may be maintained on this line, that we will forbear indicating a price for which we shall accept a path that is different from His, that is out of accord with Him, marked by unrighteousness, unholiness, darkness, and what is characteristically Belial. May the Lord help us to say in the language of Naboth, “I will not”. Jezebel had him slain, and handed the inheritance to Ahab, which she says, “he refused to give thee for money”. If things are taken from us, dear brethren, on that line, may it be said that we would not sell it for money. Jezebel speaks her own condemnation, ‘The vineyard which Naboth would not sell thee for money’. May that be the decision of our souls as we move on under the blessed hand of the One who would not, though hungry, turn the stones into bread, and who was not for a moment prepared to entertain all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, to usurp the place of God, but who moved on in every sphere with confidence in God, and would not tempt Him. Satan says, “cast thyself down”, prove what God is to you, but He says, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God”. That is to say, His confidence was in God and He would not prove Him. May this be true of us all in some little measure to the end.

From *Words of Truth* 1937 page 85

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ROMANS, COLOSSIANS AND EPHESIANS

J. Edmondson

Romans is largely individual, and the believer is privileged to reckon himself to be as Christ is. To have died to sin and to be alive to God in Him, though still on the wilderness side of Jordan. When we come to Colossians and Ephesians and the thought is collective, the saints are *taken account of as Christ is* (not their reckoning themselves so), and this involves the unfailing purpose of God, as they will actually be this when His purpose is fulfilled. Otherwise no two of us are alike all in different states of growth.

Colossians is *condition* and Ephesians is *position*. Ascension has added nothing to Christ. What is true of Him now was true of Him before, but it is now true of Him in His exalted position at God's right hand. Risen with Christ is our present *condition* according to God's thought of us as His people, and this must be apprehended before we take possession of the land, which expresses the triumphant *position* of those who have learned the truth of Joshua 21: 43-45.

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