

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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CONTINUANCE

John 21: 20-23

Joshua 14: 6-15; 15: 13-19

Daniel 1: 8-16; 1: 21; 12: 12-13

APG What I have been thinking about for this occasion is the feature of continuance. It is a feature that the Lord greatly values in His people. I think these three persons we have read of; John the apostle, Caleb, and Daniel, would help us as to our continuance. They continued over a long period in varied circumstances. The brethren here have been considering the dispensation of God referred to in 1 Timothy 1. The Lord would delight to see features that marked the early days of the dispensation being continued to the end of the dispensation. We, through God's sovereignty, are at the end of this wonderful dispensation and the Lord would look for some correspondence with what marked the beginning, accepting that we are in a day of small things publicly. I was confirmed since we came here that our brother suggested for the local readings the book of Acts. We read there of the Spirit's operations in the early days of the dispensation and the brightness and power that marked it. In the assembly at Philadelphia, which represents features that continue to the end, the Lord takes account of the "little power" (Rev 3: 8) that they had.

I wondered if we could get some encouragement from taking account of what marked these persons we have read about. The Lord's word regarding John is, "If I will that he abide until I come". John's ministry is particularly for the present day. His writings were the last of the Holy Scriptures, written for our encouragement at the present time. John himself displayed continuance. He was with the Lord when the Lord was here on the earth, he was supporting Peter in the early chapters of Acts when things were so bright, and he is available to the Lord after the public breakdown. He is often described as the Lord's reserve man.

Caleb, who is marked by wholly following Jehovah, is another example for us of continuance. He came out of Egypt and was with the people through the forty years in the wilderness. He was one of the ten spies who searched out the land, and was with the people crossing the Jordan into the land of Canaan. He is maintained in life, as we read in Joshua 14: "Jehovah has kept me alive". In the previous chapter it says that "Joshua was old, advanced in age, and Jehovah said to him, Thou art old, advanced in age, and there remaineth yet very much land to take possession of", Josh 13: 1. Joshua would represent the early days

of the dispensation, the days of the apostles, but Caleb would represent what continues, the life that continues through to the end. We can get help to consider the features that mark Caleb.

And then we read the section regarding Othniel and Achsah, Caleb's family. It seems that Achsah is a type of the assembly and I think that the Lord would value these assembly features that marked Achsah being seen at the end of the dispensation. Achsah represents the assembly as coming into the heavenly inheritance and she desires "springs of water". If things are to be continued rightly, we need the refreshment of the Spirit in view of being maintained in life and continuing in power.

We read of Daniel too, as it says in chapter 1, "Daniel continued unto the first year of king Cyrus". Where we read in chapter 1 Daniel was a young man. This would be an encouragement to the young here. We have the account of the food that he and his companions ate. Like John, he continued into old age and was a special object of divine love, "one greatly beloved", chap 9: 23. And then we have, in Daniel 12, the particular blessing for those who continue to the end: "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and thirty-five days!". These are prophetic references to Israel, but there is particular blessing associated with going on and continuing to the end: "go thy way until the end; and thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days". Daniel represents the Jewish remnant, but I think there is a current bearing for us too, encouraging us to continue.

KDD I think it is very good what you have suggested because it is a word for all of us, is it not? It is not just left up to the old or to the young. The Lord's word in John is, "Follow thou me"; it is an individual commitment, is it not? But as you go on further, as Caleb and Joshua are speaking he says, "concerning me and thee". So, then there is what comes in to encourage and strengthen one another. And in Joshua, where Achsah comes in, you referred to the assembly; and then in Daniel there are those who are with him; there is committal from each one. So, I think it is good what you have said; it is open to each one of us, but in having the commitment then the collective side comes in for blessing, does it not?

APG I think that is good. As you say, it is for each one to make a commitment. Peter was distracted by looking at John, but the Lord's word to him was, "Follow thou me". John was following; he was a follower of the Lord from chapter 1 of this gospel. Caleb too, was marked by wholly following Jehovah. I think that is a feature of those

who continue now, that Christ is their object. The first thing that is said as to John where we read is important, "Peter, turning round, sees the disciple whom Jesus loved following". The main characteristic of John is that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved. I think it means that he was enjoying the Lord's love, and I think that one of the secrets of continuing faithfully is that we are maintained in the sense of the Lord's love.

MTH I think each one needs to come to, "the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me", Gal 2: 20. I was thinking as you were speaking the words of Paul speaking of himself in that way; we should be able to speak of ourselves in a certain sense similarly, "the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me".

APG Yes, Paul certainly continued, having Christ as his object. Paul was a follower. I think what you say is helpful; the Lord loves us individually. He loved Mary and Martha and Lazarus; He loved each one. John speaks of love a great deal in his writings.

PWH Do you think that John got the benefit of the Lord's word to Peter, "Follow thou me"? If you go to John's epistle you get, "That which was from the beginning" (1 John 1: 1), which of course refers to Christ, and then he leads on to "if we walk in the light as *he* is in the light, we have fellowship with one another", v 7. I think that John got the benefit of what the Lord said to Peter; he took it to himself. It is not that he left it for Peter to contemplate, So, it is good to see that we need to get the benefit of the Lord speaking and take it to ourselves.

APG Yes, I think so. Peter and John were very much together in the early chapters of Acts; chapters 3 and 4 have been called the 'Peter and John chapters'. Peter was mainly the one who spoke, but John was there supporting him.

PWH Well, that helps us in the matter of continuance, going on together, does it not?

APG I think that is very important. As our brother said, Daniel had companions, and I think that the company we keep is extremely important. I think firstly we have to be kept individually in the sense of the Lord's love. I think John "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was enjoying the Lord's love, but I think there is another side to it that John was marked by features that drew out the Lord's love. So, I think we can think of that in both ways.

Although John was one of the apostles, I do not think that he refers to himself as an apostle. He refers to himself as a brother, an

elder and as a father, features that are particularly important for the saints as seeking to continue in the pathway of the will of God.

KDD You just mentioned the companions, and it says, “For we are become companions of the Christ if indeed we hold the beginning of the assurance firm to the end”, Heb 3: 14. That is involved in continuance, is it not?

APG That is a helpful word in Hebrews which encourages the saints to enjoy their heavenly blessing and continue to the end.

EJH Continuing really involves both working and waiting, including combat and conflict.

APG That is good. Caleb was able for the conflict, even at eighty five years old. Peter was given an occupation earlier in this chapter; he was to feed and shepherd the Lord's sheep. The word to Timothy is, “Occupy thyself with these things; be wholly in them”, 1 Tim 4: 15. Timothy is another example of one who was available to the Lord in the last days.

EJH We really get the indication in scripture too that God does not take a life away until continuance is assured. I was thinking about Simeon in Luke; he was told he would not see death until he saw the Saviour, chap 2: 26. It sounded like he was ready to go but he took the Babe in his arms, v 28.

APG Simeon and Anna (v 36) are interesting because they were maintaining what was for the pleasure of God right at the end of their dispensation.

I think the Philadelphians particularly show what we are speaking of. The Philadelphian assembly represents features that go on to the end and these features we are considering marked them. It says in Revelation 3: 9, “and shall know that I have loved thee”; they were enjoying the love of Christ as John was. They were going on in patience too, “thou hast kept the word of my patience”, v 10. They were marked by these features that were seen in John, Caleb and Daniel.

EJH I was just looking at that and the footnote to “patience” is ‘endurance’ (note i); so waiting and working.

APG The next thing that is said about John is, “who also leaned at supper on his breast”; it is a very precious touch. John keeps himself very near to the Lord, a safe place for us to be. We should seek to keep near to the Lord in our affections.

PWH Do you think that it is really set out in the beginning of Acts? It

says, “they persevered in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in breaking of bread and prayers”, Acts 2: 42. The features at the beginning of the dispensation will really sustain us through, including nearness to Christ. The prayers of the saints enter into that.

APG That is a helpful reference. It is remarkable that the feature of perseverance comes in so early in the history in Acts 2. The Lord's supper is to be maintained to the end: we “announce the death of the Lord, until he come”, 1 Cor 11: 26. The Lord's supper engages our hearts with His love. Each week we are collectively occupied with the love of Christ, helping to keep us fresh in our appreciation of His love.

VLH The book of Daniel looks on to the end: God spoke to Daniel about “the end of the days”. Is it important for us to have an objective in that way?

APG Yes, the end is very glorious. It is a great encouragement for us. Paul says, “thus we shall be always with the Lord” (1 Thess 4: 17); that is what is before us. So that is a great encouragement to continue. Daniel was marked by prayer throughout his life; he persevered in prayer.

LJG What has been said is good as to when there is strength given. I was thinking as to waiting too: “but they that wait upon Jehovah shall renew their strength”, Isa 40: 31. That waiting would involve prayer and supplication as has been brought in so that it is in view of strength. It is not waiting as in being idle but there is exercise involved in that. I was thinking as to Caleb; he was given that strength because he was devoted to Jehovah in that way. I wondered if that would enter into this waiting.

APG Yes, I think that is good. We need strength; the word to Timothy was, “be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus”, 2 Tim 2: 1. There is a continual supply of grace to strengthen us. It is an evidence of life too. Caleb was kept alive and his strength was maintained.

LJG I was thinking too regarding Caleb, in those words in verse 11, “I am still this day strong, as in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out and to come in”. I was thinking as to, “both to go out and to come in”; there is really liberty and blessing as a result of it.

APG He is quite assured I suppose in going out in conflict but returning in victory, he is assured of the victory. The book of Joshua is full of victories.

This expression that he “wholly followed Jehovah”, I think

comes in five or six times in the scripture, several times in this passage we read. The Lord particularly appreciates wholehearted committal. It came from his heart, "I brought him word again as it was in my heart". Caleb's heart was affected by divine grace and love, divine blessing. I think that is important for us, that our heart is in divine things. Laodicea was a half-hearted condition, but the Philadelphians' hearts were fully engaged with Christ.

DCD I was wondering about the supply that is available from heaven. I think for ourselves John being near to the Lord, leaning on Him, is perhaps the best example; but what we have commented as to Caleb and Daniel, the strength, and the upper and lower springs - the Holy Spirit and then the food that is provided; so the supply is always available. What you say as to having our hearts wholly in the matter is good; if we are to continue, we are not to lean on our own strength, but it is to be supplied from the Lord in heaven, and that is always readily available to those who are willing to work and wait on the Lord; the supply will always be provided.

APG We can be assured that there is an infinite supply of divine resources. Paul refers to "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:19), in the epistle to Philippians, who were a company that continued. Paul refers to their "fellowship with the gospel, from the first day until now" (Phil 1: 5); they continued. The Corinthians and the Galatians were diverted but the Philippians were a local company that continued; they proved the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ. We were reminded during the past week of divine grace; there is an infinite supply of grace for every circumstance.

EJH It pleased Jehovah when Solomon asked for a wise and understanding heart. He says, "I know not to go out and to come in", 1 Kings 3: 7. It is a feature of a little child but Caleb shows features of a full-grown man.

APG That is good; he was mature. He is not described as being old. Barzillai was old, he did not have the strength to go over, but Caleb is a remarkable example. We have many examples amongst us too, older brethren in their nineties who have continued through many different times. When they were young, things were very different to what they are now, both publicly and amongst the saints, but they have continued.

PWH Do you think in that way that Caleb knew that it was not always going to be the wilderness? He had the land in his heart; that is really the basis of continuance, is it not, in a certain sense? We have the land in our hearts. He knew the value of what was there, and we should

keep that before us. Our brother spoke about the objective at the end of the journey; well, Caleb knew about that.

APG He had been there with Joshua. The other spies were marked by unbelief but Caleb and Joshua seemed to grasp the divine thought as to the land, "If Jehovah delight in us, he will bring us into this land", Num 14: 8. They had a sense of the divine pleasure in having the saints enjoying the heavenly inheritance.

MTH We mentioned earlier about the supply of the Spirit in response. I think it is a good enquiry because we get that in John's gospel. When the Lord speaks about going away in chapter 14, He immediately comes to another Comforter, v 16. And with Caleb in Numbers, it tells us that he had "another spirit in him", Num 14: 24. Jehovah says, "and hath followed me fully"; so I just wondered if you might say more about that. The Lord has left us everything needed for continuance in the scene in which we are, the Spirit here, the Head in heaven. I think more could be said about that; it seems to mark all of these ones that you have touched upon.

APG The Spirit indwelling the assembly is a particular feature of this dispensation. We speak about this dispensation as the Spirit's day, "for he abides with you, and shall be in you" (John 14: 17); what an assurance that is. The Spirit helps those who are subject to the truth; we need to make way for the Spirit. The lower springs and the upper springs suggest the Spirit's service, the Spirit's refreshment. What you say as to Caleb being a man of another spirit is helpful. It suggests that there was formation in him; it is a small 's'; it was what was formed of Christ in Caleb through making way for the Holy Spirit.

VLH The inheritance is there for us in purpose, is it not? But here it is clear that Caleb reminds Joshua of Moses's words, "land whereon thy feet have trodden shall assuredly be thine inheritance". So, we cannot just sit down and stop and wait for it to come to us. They had to tread on the land to get into it, did they not?

APG That is good; that is how this book begins. From one point of view, God gave them the inheritance but it says, "Every place whereon the sole of your foot shall tread have I given to you", Josh 1: 3. That involves spiritual exercise and overcoming, overcoming enemies, and also involves desire. Caleb was marked by that; he was rightly claiming what was his. It is really what is ours; the heavenly inheritance belongs to us. But it needs exercise and overcoming to come into the enjoyment of it, and there is divine power and strength available to help us.

PDB You were mentioning about Caleb's desire, and this specific act of asking; he says, "And now give me this mountain"; and then later where we read about Achsah, she asked, "give me also the springs of water". What would you say as to this matter of asking?

APG I am sure it links with what was said earlier regarding prayer, persevering "in breaking of bread and prayers". The Lord encourages the disciples to ask for the Spirit (Luke 11:13) which would show desire from their side and the feeling of the need of the Spirit's help. God gives the Spirit to those who obey Him, but there is also our side of asking. Recognising the divine resources that God has available is a feature of faith.

EJH Does Hebron represent what God's original thoughts were? There is a lot of history there and it is ancient. It existed before a lot of other places, and there is the cave of Machpelah there (Gen 23); it would be like the cloud of witnesses to us, would it?

APG It was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt (Numbers 13: 22), suggesting what was before the world and belonging to God's purpose. Does Hebron mean 'company' too? It is a place where the company of the saints can be enjoyed. We have "the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron" (Gen 13: 18); Abraham dwelt there. The oaks suggest the stability of divine purpose, what can never be overthrown.

MTH You refer to the stability of the purposes of God in the oaks of Mamre; they are more stable than the great fortified cities that are spoken of in chapter 14 here, greater than the Anakim. If we follow them through, the giants, we might see the greatest opposition and yet what is of God is greater; and there is the assurance of the power of faith to overcome these things. We spoke about that a little earlier in the week and it is wonderful to see both those aspects overcome fortified cities and giants.

APG That is good. These hindrances became very large in the eyes of the spies who were unbelieving, but Caleb was an overcomer like the overcomers in Revelation 2 and 3, a feature particularly needed at the end of the dispensation.

MTH We spoke of the "little power" earlier, and I was thinking that is great enough to overcome both of these things.

APG It says, "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4: 4), we can be assured of that. It says, "If so be Jehovah shall be with me, then I shall dispossess them", these are words of faith, one trusting in God.

In chapter 15 Achsah can be thought of as a type of the assembly, and this clearly had a place in Caleb's affections. The Lord would seek that these assembly features that so please Him, true assembly affection for Christ, are maintained right through to the end. We are assured it will be and would seek to have our part in it.

KDD Do you think as to what Caleb gave to Othniel and his wife, having continuance practically is a good spouse with right desires? It is a great benefit, is it not, and we see that from this section?

APG Yes. Othniel and Achsah were one in their desire for the inheritance.

KDD That is what I was thinking; in conversation last night you mentioned Priscilla and Aquilla; this is really a type of two that were continuing on the same path.

APG It is remarkable that this section as to Othniel and Achsah also comes into Judges (Judg 1:12-15), which refers to a day of public breakdown, like the present time. Joshua refers more to the early days of the dispensation. In Judges there is failure, but Othniel, the first of the Judges, was an overcomer. Achsah was fully with him in that. It suggests that what is precious to Christ can be known and enjoyed in a day of public breakdown.

LJG I was noticing when we were reading it that it says, "it came to pass as she came, that she urged him to ask of her father a field". I was just thinking of the divine blessing in the Lord, in what He has given for the assembly, and what He gives to the assembly. She got more than even what she asked for - "give me also springs of water"; it became more than just a field; do you think it is important to see that?

APG Yes, I think that is good. Divine giving is always greater than what we ask. It is good to ask but God would always give us more. There is great need for the springs, sources of refreshment. John 4 brings in the living spring within us; the Lord would give the woman living water, involving inward satisfaction. The lower springs are often connected with Romans and the upper springs with Ephesians. Achsah suggests someone who would have the full enjoyment of the inheritance as Paul brings before the Ephesians. Paul's prayers in the epistle to Ephesians are very helpful. Paul prayed for power, strengthening in the inner man, chap 3: 16.

We should go on to Daniel. I thought Daniel too was an encouragement for us. He is often linked with John. Three times in the book it says he is "one greatly beloved" (Dan 9: 23), or, "man greatly

beloved" (Dan 10: 11, 10: 19); he was the object of heaven's interest. We read in chapter 1 at the time he was a young man where it says that "Daniel continued". This section raises the question of what we feed on. In John's gospel there is a long chapter, chapter 6, about food. Christ is our food. He is the one who is the Administrator of the food supply, and He is our food too. I think that is what Daniel and his companions proved. That would be the secret of the strength we were referring to.

EJH Delicate food and wine does not sound too bad, but it would be what is unclean, I suppose.

APG It was the food of the world. There is a bountiful supply of food in the world of various kinds, but the young especially need to be preserved from it. The food Daniel and his companions ate would be a reference to Christ, and the Scriptures too. The Scriptures and spiritual ministry might not seem attractive to young persons, but it is what sustains life and gives us strength to continue.

StWD This first part of verse 8, "And Daniel purposed in his heart", is a really important part of continuance, is it not? We need to be purposed in our hearts.

APG Yes, he was a young man who purposed in his heart. It says in Proverbs, "My son, give me thy heart" (chap 23: 26), and of the heart also in Proverbs it says, "out of it are the issues of life", chap 4: 23. We spoke earlier of Caleb's heart which was secured by the Lord. Purpose of heart is a definite committal to the Lord's things. Daniel had the power to say, 'No'. We need to have that strength to say, 'No' at times.

EJH There is a reference to Ruth too who was "stedfastly minded" (Ruth 1: 18), two very important things, our minds and our hearts.

APG Yes, they go together.

LJG I was thinking about what has been said about countenance because what we take in gives expression. If we feed on the wrong things it is not going to help us inwardly and it affects our countenance, because here they proved the matter and it says, "he hearkened unto them in this matter, and proved them ten days. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and were fatter in flesh than all the youths that ate of the king's delicate food". So, I was thinking what is spiritual is not only that which really sustains us, but we see it in one another. We see the expression of what they are feeding on and what they are taking in and how it comes out outwardly.

APG So if we feed on Christ, we will become like Him. It will be seen

in our countenances, and I think that is an encouragement. If we feed on the world's things, we will become worldly. I think what you say is good. An expression we hear sometimes is, 'We are what we eat'.

So, it is remarkable that it says in chapter 1 that "Daniel continued unto the first year of king Cyrus". There are several kings and monarchies in that period, but Daniel continued and was not turned aside.

PWH Daniel, as well as all these other persons you have read about today, is real. You will remember a brother very fond of reminding the brethren, quoting from Mr Raven, that 'continuance is the proof of reality'. These persons that we have read about today were real in their affections for Christ.

APG Yes, I think that is good. I was thinking of that reference from Mr Raven (vol 5 p315). Mr Raven could express the truth in a way that we can easily remember. Continuance is also an evidence of life. I think Mr Raven said that it needs life in Christ to continue, vol 4 p97. Life cannot be imitated.

PDB I was just thinking that Paul says in Corinthians, "Wherefore we faint not" (2 Cor 4: 16); I suppose that is another way of saying, 'gaining strength'. But then he goes on to say, "but if indeed our outward man is consumed, yet the inward is renewed day by day". I was thinking how renewing day by day is necessary for continuance; you cannot look too far ahead. We have what we hope for and what we anticipate in that coming day in one sense, but in the present time we need divine help day by day, do you think?

APG Yes, so is that what is involved at the end of Daniel? "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and thirty-five days!" The emphasis on the number of days confirms what you say; we need fresh help every day. Earlier in the chapter it refers to a period, "it is for a time, times, and a half", v 7. That seems to be a short time but the number of days given suggests that endurance is required. I think what you say is helpful; we need daily divine resource. We need prayer every day and a fresh supply of food every day. The manna was provided daily.

MTH What you are speaking of really sets before us and reminds us that we need not go outside of Christ for anything. Pulse to eat and water to drink: we find food in Him and water to drink, living waters from Him. In John chapter 6 he speaks of course of eating and at one point Mr Darby's note says, 'It is characteristic: he is the 'eater' of this divine food', v 54, note *d*. So, it is an ongoing thing, and I think what we are

saying as to the time period is helpful in that way. It is a characteristic of a person, reliance on Christ for everything, food or water; and I think it is current and practical for us today that we have no need to go outside of Him for anything.

APG John 6 is the food chapter, and then John 7 brings in the drink, “If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink” (John 7: 37), and that was related to the Spirit, “this he said concerning the Spirit, which they that believed on him were about to receive”, John 7: 39. I think what you say is good, that there is a full supply for the dispensation of food and refreshment in Christ and in the Spirit. We need to learn to rely on that resource. We are easily distracted to be engaged with other things.

DCD I was wondering if the thought of faith comes into this. I was thinking about Daniel; it says, “Prove thy servants”, and then later on he “proved them ten days”. I wondered if Daniel really made a move in faith that Jehovah would bless him in that work. I was thinking James reminds us that “the proving of your faith works endurance”, James 1: 3. We continue on in faith so we can be thankful that, “if we are unfaithful, *he* abides faithful”, 2 Tim 2: 13. So, we are to be strengthened in our faith, do you think, to continue?

APG Daniel is a remarkable example of faith and faithfulness too. He is referred to in one of the prophets as a standard of righteousness and faithfulness, Ezek 14: 14, 20. He trusted God. This book speaks of “the God of the heavens”; what resources there are with the God of the heavens.

I thought that these examples would be an encouragement for us. At the end of Daniel, it is “go thy way until the end; and thou shalt rest”; that is the prospect. It says, “and stand in thy lot at the end of the days”. Daniel's lot related to Israel, but our lot is particularly related to the light we have been given as to Christ and the assembly that we have in Paul's ministry; that is the lot that we have been given to enjoy. I trust we are all encouraged to continue in this and prove divine resources.

Calgary

8th October 2022

List of initials (local in Calgary unless otherwise shown)

P D Brien; D C Drever; K D Drever; Steve W Drever; AP Grant, Dundee;
L J Gray; V L Harvey, Vancouver; E J Hibbert; M T Holland; P W Howie,
Edmonton

THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRISTIANITY

Allan P Grant

John 16: 33 (from “be of good courage); 17: 15-16

1 John 2: 14 (from “I have written to you, young men”)-17

Mark 10: 35-45

John 14: 27

Deuteronomy 11: 10-15

I would like to speak of how superior Christianity is to the world. These scriptures speak of the contrast between the world and Christianity.

Christianity takes its character from the Lord Jesus Christ. John speaks much of the world, and it is a system of things where Christ has no place. That is what characterises the world, man's independence, seeking to be independent from divine resources, independent of God. As the word says in John 17, we are left in the world; and these chapters are written to encourage the Lord's own. He was going away, and they were being left here: “I do not demand that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them out of evil. They are not of the world, as I am not of the world”. What an encouragement that is for us that we do not belong to this scene: we belong to heaven. Christianity is a heavenly system; it is very different to what we find in the world. Christendom is a mixture of Christianity and the world, spoiling what is for God's pleasure. I thought these scriptures we read would help us to see the superiority of Christianity; it is superior to everything that has gone before. The epistle to the Hebrews, as we often say, is a book of better things, greater and better than what had gone before in Judaism. The epistle is written to encourage the Jews to see the superiority of the new heavenly system that they were having a part in. It is a great encouragement to us too to see the greatness of what we have a part in in Christianity.

The hymn we sang at the beginning expresses our position well - 'Not of the world', (Hymn 284); and it speaks of the words of Christ drawing us to the Father's world. The Father has His own world. The Scriptures often contrast the Father with the world. The Holy Spirit is contrasted with the flesh, but the Father has His own world. Christ is the Centre of that world; the Son of God is the Centre of the Father's world and that is where we belong. I would encourage us all to find our life there. Think of the Lord Jesus giving Himself, as Paul says, to

“deliver us out of the present evil world”, Gal. 1: 4. We know what marks the world, what decline there is, even where Christianity has been known, what decline there has been over the last years, even in our lifetime; each generation declining further.

The Scriptures set out various types of the world, and they all involve men seeking to be independent, having their own thoughts apart from God. The first one was the tower of Babel, speaking of the glory of man, “let us make ourselves a name” (Gen 11: 4), that is what marks the world. Egypt too, “My river is mine own, and I made it for myself”, (Ezek 29: 3); it is selfishness and independence from God. Moab too speaks of the pride of the world, Sodom the immoral character of the world, all written for our education so that we keep ourselves apart from it, as the Lord says, we are to be kept out of evil, we are in the world but not of it.

The Lord is speaking to His own in chapters 13 to 16 of John's gospel and His final word there is a word of encouragement, “be of good courage: I have overcome the world”. What power there is with Christ to overcome. John's epistles involve what is worked out in ourselves, and the saints are to be overcomers, having victory over the world. He that believes that Jesus is the Son of God has victory over the world, 1 John 5: 4-5. He is not drawn into it but victorious over it. The Son of God is the Centre of God's world. As believers move through this scene as overcomers, they are not drawn into the world or taking on its features. The Lord's word would encourage us in our pathway here, “I have overcome the world”.

We read in John's first epistle. John is writing to young men; he takes account of the various stages of growth, little children, young men and fathers. He writes to the little children about the wrong teachings that might come in, that they might be preserved; but to the young men he says, “Love not the world, nor the things in the world”. I think it has been said as to “love not the world” that it is the Egyptian world, but the “things in the world” is the world of Jericho, man's learning and all that kind of thing, refined learning of the world. Jericho was a hindrance to the enjoyment of the land. But he says here, “Love not the world, nor the things in the world. If any one love the world, the love of the Father is not in him”. Think of the Father's love; it is centred on the Lord Jesus and our safety is to keep our eye and our affections towards Christ and to love the One that the Father loves. John describes the character of the world here and it is written to the young men. We might have thought

this would be written to the little children, but it is written to the young men. Mr A J Gardiner once said that a great many of us are in that stage of growth; most of us would not claim to be fathers, The Substantiality of Christianity p57. There is less danger with the fathers who are satisfied with Christ, knowing Him that is from the beginning.

But with young men there is still a danger, even those who are, as it says, “strong” and the word of God abiding in them; there is still a danger of some feature of the world attracting them. But what John says here is important to take account of too, that “the world is passing”. The Lord has overcome the world. The walls of Jericho fell flat when the people shouted, the people following the ark; there was no good foundation there, but what the Lord is building up will stand for eternity. It says here, “the world is passing, and its lust”. That covers all these different features of the world. All that men are building up at the present time, very impressive to the natural mind, but it is all passing, “but he that does the will of God abides for eternity”. The Father's world is eternal. It is worthwhile going in for these things, the things that belong to the Father's world. John is encouraging the young men, not to be attracted by anything in the world, or any feature of the world. It is like Colossians, where Paul speaks of philosophy and vain deceit and these things that were a danger to the saints, things that would distract from the glory of Christ. Anything that belongs to the first man finds its place in the world but think of the Lord Jesus, the Object of the Father's love, He is the Centre of God's world. The heavenly city is established on a sound foundation. So, it is worthwhile going in for these things because everything in the world and what men have built up is going to come to an end.

We read in Mark's gospel. I was thinking especially of verse 42, where He speaks of what happens in the world, “Ye know that those who are esteemed to rule over the nations exercise lordship over them; and their great men exercise authority over them; but it is not thus among you”. In the Christian circle things are different from the world. We see how men in the world are aspiring to have the first place, but in the Christian circle there is no room for that feature. Christianity is different, “it is not thus among you; but whosoever would be great among you, shall be your minister”. Think of the lowliness that marked Christ, that is what belongs to Christianity, the opposite of what we see in the world. In Great Britain we have recently had a change of Prime Minister and what competition there was for the first place; that is what the Lord is speaking of here, men and women seeking place and power

over others. But the principle amongst the saints is entirely different; the Lord Jesus says, "I am meek and lowly in heart", Matt 11: 29. In Mark's gospel He is coming to minister, to serve; this is the servant's gospel. Think of the Lord taking that place as a bondman. A bondman has the lowest place in society. Think of the Lord coming in as a bondman, and He is the Model for us. The Lord is gentle and gracious with James and John, who do not exactly shine here, but they are rather bringing in something amongst the disciples that did not belong there, causing the disciples to be divided and bringing in an element of bad feeling. The Lord indicates here that the feature of lowliness is what belongs to the Christian circle.

Paul, I think, exemplified that very fully. How often he speaks of his own failure and also refers to himself as "less than the least of all saints" (Eph 3: 8), what a lowly place for such a distinguished servant to take. He was given such a place by the Lord, appointed to bring out these great ministries, the fulness of the glad tidings, but he says of himself that he was "the least of the apostles", 1 Cor 15: 9. The humble and lowly spirit that marked him is what belongs to Christianity and to the Christian circle. Paul says he was with the Ephesians, "serving the Lord with all lowliness", Acts 20: 19. Think of the distinction of our heavenly portion and of the place we have as sons before the Father. As enjoying the fulness of divine blessing, we will be marked by lowliness here.

We read in John 14, as to the character of Lord's giving. It says, "I leave peace with you; I give *my* peace to you: not as the world gives do I give to you". The greatness of divine giving often affects us. Mr Darby's hymn helps us understand this verse:

That love that gives not as the world, but shares
All it possesses with its loved co-heirs (Hymn 249).

I think that helps to give the sense of this scripture, the Lord sharing what He has, His things, what He possesses as Mr Darby says. Think of the greatness of divine giving. The world does give; there are those who give large sums of money to help others which I would not speak against, but often they have their own name attached to it, their own glory is before them. But the Lord says here, "not as the world gives do I give to you". God giving His Spirit to us, giving His Son for us: what could be compared with such divine giving? And as the Lord says here, He is sharing His peace with His own, "I give *my* peace to you", the peace which He Himself enjoys. How often this comes into this gospel,

twice He says in John 20 "Peace be to you", v 21, 26. Think of enjoying in your soul dear brethren, the peace which the Lord enjoys. "When he giveth quietness, who then will disturb", Job 34: 29. He gives peace that is lasting; He has "made peace by the blood of His cross" (Col 1: 20); He is giving peace. The word in the verse we read is, "Let not your heart be troubled"; what an encouragement to us in an adverse scene having this peace in our hearts. That is what the believer can enjoy.

Christ is sharing His peace, and later in this gospel (John 15: 11) He is sharing His joy too. Think of the Lord's joy, and that is shared with the saints. The Lord's joy is in being before the Father: we are brought to share His place. His place is our place, we say sometimes. Think of the Lord's love in sharing the greatest things with His own.

In John 17 too, the Lord says, "the glory which thou hast given me I have given them" (v 22), the glory of sonship, particularly the enjoyment of our place as sons. It is very wonderful that the Lord as Man shares these things with His own. We do not share in His deity; that is beyond us. But there are things that He has as Man that He shares with the objects of His affection. These things are for our encouragement and enjoyment. The world does not provide anything that can be compared with it. The world is looking for peace, looking for joy, but they seek it without Christ, they will never find these things outside of Christ. May we be encouraged to enjoy these things that the Lord gives and shares.

I think too that the principle works out amongst the saints, sharing what we have in a spiritual way with one another, "sharing the portion of the saints in light", Col 1: 12. Each one of us has some particular impression of Christ that no other one has, each one has been given grace that can be shared with others; that principle belongs to Christianity. All have a measure of faith, a measure of grace from the Lord, and sharing what we have is of spiritual benefit to others. There is no loss in sharing these spiritual impressions with one another.

We read lastly in Deuteronomy. Moses here is seeking to attract the saints, the people of God, into the land; they are about to move into the land of God's purpose. We were speaking in the reading of Caleb in this connection. Moses here is describing the land; he says first of all, "is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out". It is quite a contrast. The Egyptian system was very poor and impoverished, "and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs", involving human effort. But what a comparison, the heavenly land is watered with "the rain of

heaven", a bountiful supply. Our brother mentioned this in the reading, that there is a bountiful supply from heaven. Christianity is maintained from Christ in heaven. Malachi says, "if I open not to you the windows of the heavens, and pour you out a blessing, till there be no place for it", Mal 3: 10. This rain is a great blessing. Rain generally speaks of spiritual ministry from Christ as Head. That is how the saints are refreshed and the rain is necessary for growth and fruit to be formed. There is the "early rain and the latter rain", linking with what we spoke of in the reading as to the early part of the dispensation and also what is to mark the end of the dispensation. But the Lord would maintain that supply as He says, "hearken diligently unto my commandments". If we make room for the Lord and continue in subjection, I think we can rely on this supply of living heavenly rain, heavenly ministry. Moses says, "My doctrine shall drop as rain", Deut 32: 2. What a blessing to have this rain. Rain is refreshment from an uncontaminated source. The supply of water from an earthly source may be contaminated but rain particularly emphasises the purity of ministry from Christ. We would seek that that would be maintained amongst the saints.

As Moses says, how different it is from the Egyptian ways of refreshment. Egypt had its river. They had their irrigation system, but it involved human effort; and that principle has been brought into Christendom, human thoughts and human innovations, but there is a lack of spiritual refreshment. We would seek to be exercised that this rain of heaven is found amongst the saints, and I am sure it is. We had a period where we had very few fellowship meetings, but we are thankful that the Lord has opened up the way that these meetings can be arranged again, three-day meetings too. These are times of heavenly refreshment. We would seek that this would be maintained amongst the saints. "Water of the rain of heaven, a land which Jehovah thy God careth for; the eyes of Jehovah thy God are constantly upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year". The end of the year would be in view of fruit. The Lord would be looking for fruit as a result of the ministry that comes to us. Fruit that delights Him. He says, "I will give rain to your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain; and thou shalt gather in thy corn, and thy new wine, and thine oil". It suggests a state of richness and prosperity, spiritual prosperity as receiving what comes to us from Christ. "I will give grass in thy field for thy cattle; and thou shalt eat and be full" suggesting a realm of satisfaction and a bountiful supply of food and spiritual ministry bringing Christ to us. The Spirit would give us spiritual understanding and

maintain things in freshness.

May we be encouraged to see the glory and distinctiveness of what belongs to Christianity as drawing from Christ, as He is the Source. It is often said that the land of God's purpose is a land of no imports, no need of anything outside of Christ and the Spirit, "ye are complete in him", Col 2: 10. Moses is a teacher in this book; he is teaching the people as to what belongs to the land, attracting them into the enjoyment of God's purpose. So, may we be freshly attracted and as we are enjoying our heavenly portion, we would seek that anything that belongs to this world is excluded. There is always a danger of bringing worldly principles in amongst the saints causing division and scattering but we would desire that the supply of pure rain is maintained bringing refreshment for the saints and fruit for the pleasure of God.

May we be encouraged in view of the glory of God and what is for His pleasure being maintained.

For His Name's sake.

Calgary

8th October 2022

“I AM COME THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE LIFE”

Andrew Martin

John 3: 14-16

John 4: 13-14

John 10: 10-11

There are many reasons why the Lord Jesus came; He gives many reasons Himself, and in the last verse that we read, He said that He came that we may have life. We are in a condition that is bounded by death, and we are in circumstances that are bounded by death. Everything around us is marked by death. The psalmist speaks of passing “through the valley of the shadow of death”, Ps 23: 4. Some might think that refers to when someone is very ill or really old, but we are all in the valley of the shadow of death, all the time. From the time we come into this world, we find ourselves in the valley of the shadow of death; that shadow is on everything, but Jesus came that we might have life.

When the Lord Jesus was speaking where we read in chapter 3, He referred back to an incident in the history of Israel. Remember how the children of Israel had come out of Egypt; they travelled through the wilderness for nearly forty years, but still they had a lesson to learn. There was something in the heart of man that was unchangeable. The children of Israel were murmuring against God after all that time they had been sustained in the wilderness; they had come out of Egypt; they had proved the shelter of the passover lamb; they knew that the destroying angel had not come near them. They had gone through the Red Sea; they had seen the whole power of Egypt destroyed in the Red Sea, and God had brought them through and He carried them in wonderful grace. He brought them to Himself and then He maintained them for forty years in the wilderness. You think of it - every weekday for forty years, He gave them manna to eat. There was never any failure in all that, and at the end of that time, they murmured against God. It just brought to light there is something in man's heart, man's nature, that is against God, which cannot be subject to God. “The mind of the flesh ... is not subject to the law of God, for neither can it be”, Rom 8: 7.

We read how they murmured against God: “your murmurings are not against us, but against Jehovah” (Exod 16: 8), and the result of that was God showed them a lesson; He sent serpents, Num 21: 6. Those who were bitten by the serpents were going to die. Think of the

awful state of the children of Israel at that time. But God's thought was, 'I have an answer. I have an answer in a Man of another order'. The instruction to Moses was to make a serpent of brass. The instruction was actually to make a fiery serpent; Moses knew that it had to be a serpent of brass because it was a matter of judgment. "Make thee a fiery serpent" (v 8), was what God had said. You see, God has to deal with each one of us. The flesh that is in us that murmurs against God is something that God will take issue with. It is a question of His righteous judgment. He said, "make thee a fiery serpent". The fire speaks of the test of God's holiness and His judgment. Moses realised that if he was to make a serpent, it had to be of something that would stand that test and he made the serpent of brass. God did not tell him to use brass, but brass is that which withstands the fire. Remember it was the brazen altar - it was that which could bear the judgment. So the serpent of brass was lifted up and the apostle Paul tells us that God has "sent his own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin", Rom 8: 3. That was what the brazen serpent represented. There was no bite in the serpent of brass. The serpent of brass suggests One who could bear the judgment of God. The serpents on the ground were spelling death to the children of Israel.

The Lord Jesus said, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, thus must the Son of man be lifted up". You think of Him as taking that place. In the midst of lawless men, He was lifted up - lifted up to die. As lifted up, beloved, He showed that there was One who was able to sustain the judgment of God and He bore that judgment, that judgment against sin in those terrible three hours on the cross. You think of the greatness of what Jesus did, the immensity of it. There was sin reaching its depths and being exposed as never before, when all was united against Jesus and He, as lifted up upon the cross, bore the judgment of God against sin. It could righteously have fallen on all who were around that cross, but it did not; it fell upon Him. Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, "thus must the Son of man be lifted up"; there was no other way in which God's righteous claims could be met. Nothing else could sustain the judgment of God. No one else could intervene on behalf of men before God.

It required the Son of man to be lifted up "that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal". The whole world is going on, not believing on the Son of man - that is the way to perish, the way of destruction. Death comes in on that line. The wise man in

Proverbs says, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man". People might think that they are doing what is right, that they are living a good life. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the ways of death", Prov 14: 12; 16: 25. It is death at the end of it. Think of how Solomon as a great observer of men could come to that conclusion, so much so that that verse is twice recorded in the Proverbs, as if to emphasise the fact. No matter how much a natural man may be doing that he thinks is right, the end of it all is death.

So the Lord goes on with this marvellous verse that we all have learned, "For God so loved the world" - that was what was behind it. The gospel message starts with God; it must start with God; God is behind it all. He is the Originator of it. And what we find is that what motivated God in what He did, was His love. "God **so** loved the world, that he gave" - love delights to give - and "he gave". He so loved the world that He *gave*, and what would He give? He gave His only begotten Son - what was most precious and dear to Him, He gave, in order that "whosoever believes on him". That is faith; that is what we were speaking about in the reading faith - that "whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal".

God desires, and indeed His thoughts for men, are that men should live and not die. And God has provided the means for men to live. It does not mean that these bodies are going to live forever; these bodies are going to be changed. I trust these bodies are going to be changed, because it is those who are alive whose bodies are changed. Those who have died, I think, arise with new spiritual bodies, but our bodies will be changed. If the Lord should leave us here, these bodies will go into death but there is that which goes through, which will never see death - that which is entirely God's work in the soul. So, God has provided a way in Christ in which we can have life. We can be relieved of that awful thing that lies before us, death, which men dread, because beyond it, as far as men are concerned, they want to believe it is the unknown. But, man's conscience knows, actually, that he does have to do with God. The Lord Jesus was lifted up in order that we should have life and not have fear, in that sense, of death.

But, we may be left here and we need life while we are here to sustain us in the pathway. And the Lord Jesus has the answer to that as well. He says that whatever you do, however you go to satisfy yourself in the pleasures of nature and what is around, you will not get lasting satisfaction. This was said to a woman who had sought to find lasting

satisfaction five times in her life, in the greatest possible way, and five times she had been disappointed. What a poor woman she was; your heart goes out to this woman. She must have felt the awfulness, the absolute poverty of nature. So much so, that she even gave up assuming an outward appearance of respectability at all. She might have said, 'Why do I bother, when everything ends in disappointment?'. But the Lord Jesus says to her, 'I have something for you that does not end in disappointment, something that sustains you, something that keeps you satisfied': "whosoever drinks of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst for ever, but the water which I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life"; it is something within the believer.

The Lord Jesus was lifted up so that we should be saved from the consequences of what we are as sinners. He was lifted up upon the cross and bore the judgment of God. He went into death Himself and shed His precious blood in order that all our sins should be forgiven - this is what *He* has done. And our faith in Him makes that secure to us, but here is something that is in the believer. The believer has something - the gift of the Holy Spirit - you think of the greatness of that, as ensuring life down here. Faith in the Lord Jesus and His finished work gives me life in heaven, gives me life eternally. With the Holy Spirit there is a source of life down here. It means that I am no longer looking for satisfaction, for joy, for comfort, from the things around, but my source of refreshment is in a divine Person who links me with Christ in glory. The Lord Jesus is now in glory in heaven at God's right hand - the Holy Spirit links me with Him there. It is as having a link with the Lord Jesus there, having a link with a Man in the glory by the Holy Spirit, that we have that which is springing up in the heart. So a believer is a happy person; he does not need all the resources of this world to make him happy. The believer can be happy without anything like that - He can have Christ. He has Christ. How does he know he has Him? Because he has the gift of the Holy Spirit. What more would he want?

I suppose we have often been affected by that account of that woman in the heart of London city:

In the heart of London city,
'Mid the dwellings of the poor,
These bright golden words were uttered,
"I have Christ - what want I more?"

By a sick and dying woman,
Stretched upon a garret floor;
Having not one earthly comfort -
"I have Christ - what want I more?"

He who heard them ran to fetch her
Something from the world's great store;
It was needless, died she saying,
"I have Christ - what want I more?"

Mary Jane Walker, née Deck (1816-1878)

That woman had a link with a Man in heaven. She had a link with Him by the Holy Spirit here. The Holy Spirit is the Source by which we have life springing up. Even though we go through a hostile scene, the Holy Spirit is here, in this setting as given by Jesus. The Holy Spirit as given by Jesus is to enable us, to strengthen us as we go through this world. It is to provide a resource within as we go through this scene, in view of being here for Him, maintained for Him, not dependent on the things that men depend upon, but as being here in simple dependence upon Christ.

In chapter 10 there is something else. Jesus says, "I am come that they may have life, and might have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep"; the Lord Jesus has done that. We see how the Lord Jesus, in the laying down of His life and the work that He accomplished at Golgotha, accomplished that which addressed the whole matter of our sins and the whole question of sin. By simple faith in Him, we know our sins forgiven. We see in the giving of the Holy Spirit, He has given us a resource that is within ourselves - greater than ourselves - but within ourselves - wonderful thing, so that we can go through this scene, maintained in the freshness of our links with Him, with the Lord Jesus Himself.

But this chapter is emphasising something else and that is, there is a flock. We have one another; there is a sphere where life can be enjoyed. You cannot fully enjoy life on your own. There is what you can enjoy on your own, but you cannot enjoy life in its fullness and the Lord Jesus says, "I am come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly". The abundance of life involves that we are set together and we enjoy life together. "I am come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd". He brings that in

immediately. "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep". I often feel that we have occasions where we enjoy things together; I suppose the Lord's day morning is particularly such an occasion; we enter into things together, and we enjoy them and we find that there is that something that is springing up in such an occasion. Let us never forget the basis of it all: "have life, and might have it abundantly", and then He says, "The good shepherd lays down his life". The basis of it all, the basis of everything we enjoy is the fact that Jesus has laid down His life - He has laid down His life for the sheep. He saw us in our need; He saw us under the shadow of death and He, to whom death did not attach, laid down *His* life for us, in order that we should be secured for Him, saved and preserved for Him in relation to another world, a world where death does not attach, and it is our blessing that we should have part with Him where He is.

This was the simple thought I had, beloved. The Lord Jesus has come that we should have life. Life is in Him, life is in the Holy Spirit, life is enjoyed in the flock. It is a wonderful thing, the sphere of life. No man can produce life - it is God alone that can produce life; men cannot do it. The Lord Jesus has done it for us and it is for our pleasure and enjoyment until He comes, and then we will enter into it without any cessation. We will see His face. We will be in the enjoyment of life with Him, participating in His life in that world of which He is the centre where everything is for the glory of God, but until He comes may we just be preserved in life, for His Name's sake.

Buckhurst Hill

23rd October 2022

“HIS OWN GENERATION”

A John E Temple

Acts 13: 36

Esther 4: 14 (from “And who knows ...”)

Hebrews 13: 8

My impression began with the reading here last Thursday in which we spoke of generations in the fifth chapter of Genesis. We felt that God added something further in each generation; in each, God will work out something. At this time, I would like to continue in that line, not so much the side of addition, although that would be still there - God would still be adding from one generation to another; but the way that there is a working in generations.

This verse, in Acts 13, about David, when Paul was speaking at Antioch of Pisidia, says, “having in his own generation ministered to the will of God, fell asleep”: “having in his own generation”. Well, naturally speaking, he could not minister other than at the time of his own generation. However, the Spirit brings it out; so what we were saying is emphasised. God acts constructively. He had David here and had something to work out through him, and David was a man who was working “in his own generation”. I am not suggesting that David was thinking it would have been better if he had lived in Abraham's time or the time of Joshua or anyone else, but he was one who was here, serving God, ministering to the will of God, and content to do so where God had put him and when God had put him there. I know there is far more than that to the history of David because David was one of the great men that we read of in the Scriptures. He was one who we may see, especially in his early life, as a type of Christ. He was a man who went through many experiences. However, I think we could put the life of David together in this way, “having in his own generation ministered to the will of God”. I think if David had read this, he would have been thankful to see that his life had been seen in that way; that was what he was doing. He was going on, ministering to what God would have him to do.

Beloved, is that not something that we would all appeal to one another about? That is what is looked for from each one of us, none of us here having a prominent part like David did of old, king for all those years. God places us in our locality and would have us minister in however simple a way to His will. David was ministering to the will of

God. Note that: it does not say 'ministering to God' although David did that, for you can see from the Psalms and elsewhere that he was a priestly man who could approach God, ministering to God. However, it says, "ministered to the will of God", a man here who was furthering the will of God in his lifetime, not trying to usurp the place of another to do that, but doing what God had given him to do. I believe there is something for us each to learn from this.

I turn to Esther. I have not chosen these two because one was a king and one was a queen, but to give us an illustration as we have here in this well-known little section when Esther had become doubtful about things and what the reaction would be if she went into the king. But Mordecai sent in this word to Esther, "And who knows whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?". Well, this is simply a time. We have spoken of the generation of David, "in his own generation", but within a lifetime there may come something which a person is particularly called upon to do, and we should be ready for that. This was a momentous thing she had to do, and, of course, God used it. It may be something much smaller, unknown generally, but God can still act in this way as Mordecai speaks of here, "And who knows whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?". God has someone to do some particular thing, and we can read in Scripture about persons who come in to do something, which would help the testimony on, and then they are not mentioned again in the pages of Scripture. Similarly, there are persons who are not even named. But, beloved, may we be ready for a touch like this! Maybe this occurs to someone more than once. "And who knows whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" We should be alert in this way at any time for what the Lord might indicate for us to do.

I move on to Hebrews 13 where we come to the Lord Himself: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and to the ages to come". I am not taking this up to speak of the three things said of Him, of the times, "yesterday, and to-day, and to the ages to come"; but the words I would call attention to are "Jesus Christ is the same"; He is unchanging. I want to relate that to the generations. David was "in his own generation". While that was before the Lord became Man, it is an illustration of Scripture. Now from the time that the Lord has gone on high, and the Holy Spirit has come, it is that He is the same. He has been the same towards every generation. We might think we are in a fragmented generation because of the public breakdown, not in the

pristine days of the church; but in every generation for those who would seek to be on this line of ministering to the will of God, the Lord Jesus is there in support. Do we not get the way He is in support as High Priest earlier in this book? He is in support of those who are here to do the will of God and, of course, whilst the Holy Spirit is not mentioned here, His service, too, has been constant. Think of the glory of His Person, for, although His service may be lowly, He also remains the same.

Well, beloved, if we have any desire, may our desires be increased for what we have spoken of in the first two scriptures. What divine support there is for us, the support of the Lord Jesus and of the Holy Spirit as has been known in every generation; and that remains the same.

I just commit these thoughts to the brethren that the Lord may be able to use them in some little way for His Name's sake.

Word in a ministry meeting, Sunbury

26th October 2022

THE POWER IN THE GLAD TIDINGS

Kevin Grant

Romans 1: 16

Matthew 8: 23-27

Luke 23: 39-49

Romans 5: 8-10

I seek help to say something as to divine power, the power in the glad tidings. I have been attracted to this verse in Romans about the glad tidings being “God's power to salvation”; it is a wonderful thing. We see power in this world, and it is often used in a corrupt way; men try to get more power. Things are very different in God's ways. This is a power that can save us, a power that is towards us, and it is available to everyone. The power is available for your salvation, dear friend.

Paul is speaking about the glad tidings in this first chapter of Romans. He says at the start it is “God's glad tidings ... concerning his Son ... marked out Son of God in power”, v 1, 3, 4. He is the subject of the glad tidings; He is the subject of the message tonight; He is the One that God would direct your attention towards. We see power in Him. I have read some passages which show the power in Jesus. It is available for you tonight, that power that you can be saved by tonight if you are still in that condition of being a sinner. God is towards you; He is always towards you He “desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth”, 1 Tim 2: 4. Well, may you do that tonight if you have not done it before, and be attracted to Jesus, His work, His Person and all that He has done for you and for me!

I was attracted to this passage in Matthew where we see the power of the Lord to rebuke the winds and seas. “What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?”; there is none other that could do this. We could have read any part of this chapter to show the power of the Lord Jesus; He is able to meet every circumstance here. At the start of the chapter He heals a leper; then He heals a paralytic; He casts out demons; and so on. What power is seen in Him! He is able to meet every situation; He is able to meet your need. He is God Himself, God manifest in flesh. He came here to serve and to secure souls for God. He came here on your account, on my account, that we might be saved.

As well as the power of the Lord in this chapter, we see how men are powerless. We see these men in the ship; they were unable to do

anything about this situation they were in, with the waves coming over the ship. There was nothing that they could do; they could only turn to Christ. That is like us in our condition of being sinners. There is nothing we can do about that; we can only turn to Jesus and ask Him to save us, and that is a good, a safe, an essential thing to do. If you have not done it, I trust that you do it tonight; there is an opportunity for you. The day of grace has extended till now, and there is another chance to hear about Jesus and to turn to Him.

As we go on in the gospels, we see how the pathway of Jesus takes Him to the cross, and how men hang Him on the cross, crucify Him. What a terrible thing that such a One who had done no sin, "in him sin is not" (1 John 3: 5), was rejected by men. That was the world's judgment of Him. It was essential that He went this way. He was a Man and He really died. He went into death, defeated the power of death here; we have the power of death being overcome in the work of the Lord Jesus. This is a real scene of power here. The Lord Jesus went into death, but He went into it in power: He "cried with a loud voice", and He laid down His life. The Lord Jesus says, "I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it again", John 10: 18. None other could do that. He gave His life there for you and for me, He gave Himself as a sacrifice, bearing our sins, bearing the judgment of our sins in our stead. That is true for me because I have put my faith in Him. Is it true for you, dear friend? Have you put your faith in Jesus here and His work? Love is shown in this section here. It was said yesterday there is no greater power than divine love, and this is the ultimate expression of love here in Jesus laying down His life. He says earlier in this chapter, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do", v 34. Think of Him saying this whilst men were crucifying Him! What love shown! His love is towards you, and I trust you will put your faith in Him. There are two malefactors, "one on the right hand, the other on the left" (v 33), but one of them is saved in the last minutes of his life. He is given a blessing. God does not delay to save; if you ask to be saved, it is immediate. This malefactor is saved immediately, and he has this wonderful outlook of being with Jesus. That is the portion of each one who puts their faith in Him.

So, we see in the scripture in Romans 5 these two powers, "the power of his blood" and "the power of his life". These are both essential things. The Lord Jesus shed His blood. It was a matter of sacrifice; there He died and He shed His blood for us. Think of the children of Israel when they were brought out of Egypt - God said as to the blood,

“when I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Exod 12: 13) - being spared from judgment on account of the sacrifice of another! I was thinking too of the hymn that speaks of the 'power in the blood', the 'wonder-working power' in that blood. That sacrifice is able to save us, save us from wrath, as we have here. It is an essential matter. Jesus has borne the judgment and we, by believing on Him, have an eternal salvation. God is satisfied with that sacrifice. We had reference to that this morning, God being satisfied with the blood of Jesus. You can put your faith in that blood.

We have this matter of being “saved in the power of his life” too. I am impressed that it is “his life”. Jesus is living; He has broken the power of death and He is risen, alive for evermore. He “has been raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father” (Rom 6: 4), and He is alive, living in heaven, waiting to save. This being “saved in the power of his life”, I think, speaks to our present salvation; He is available for that too. He is One who sympathises with us; He sustains us in our pathway here. We can enjoy communion with Him as we did this morning in the breaking of bread. He is available, living to intercede for us (Heb 7: 25), and that is the joy of our Christianity.

I was thinking too in relation to that, that we have not only the comfort of the Lord, but we have “another Comforter” (John 14: 16), the Holy Spirit. How many passages there are in which we could have read of the power of the Holy Spirit, another power, another gift that is towards us in the glad tidings, another help for us in this scene. We can have the help of an indwelling, holy, divine Person to keep us in our pathway, help us to enjoy our pathway, our Christianity here, make these relationships living and vibrant for us.

I had this simple impression about the power there is for salvation, “God's power to salvation”. May each one avail themselves of it for His Name's sake!

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