

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

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LORD OF ALL

Romans 1: 1-4; 10: 8-13

Philippians 2: 1-11

PAG The hymn we began with confirmed my exercise for these meetings; namely that our subject should be, 'Jesus is Lord':

Thou wast there in all Thy glory -
Blessed Lord, we bow the knee (Hymn 117).

In this reading we should think of Him as Lord of all, and then in our subsequent reading today we can consider Him as Lord of glory. Tomorrow if it be His will we can think of Him as Lord and Teacher, that is to say, Lord in relation to the truth, and finally, Lord in relation to the fellowship, the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

I want to begin with a real and living impression of the Person, God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. And then we need to come to the fact that if He is Lord of all, He must first be Lord to me; it must be something personal. I cannot say, 'Jesus Christ *our* Lord', if I am not able to say, 'Jesus Christ *my* Lord'. Our present salvation lies in the confession of Jesus as Lord, and then we come to Philippians where we see that every knee will bow. There will be a universal acknowledgement that Jesus is Lord, to God the Father's glory. But is He Lord to me now? The exercise was expressed that what was said in these meetings should be clear and understandable, and we will count on the Lord and the help of the Spirit for that, but I would humbly ask the brethren that we proceed in a spirit of enquiry and make room for one another in order that the Lord's mind might come to us. The purpose of our being together is for the Lord to speak to us. I do not propose to give a long outline, but can we get help together.

NJH He has been made Lord; what do you see in that?

PAG I suppose that He came into something. Peter says to the Jews, "God has made him, this Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2: 36), but he says, "Let the whole house of Israel therefore know assuredly". We should be assured that God has given Him this place as Man. He was with God eternally; indeed He was God and remains so, but He has this place of Lord of all. It covers, as we see in Philippians, what is heavenly, and earthly; it even covers what is infernal; that Lordship is extensive and complete! And God has made it so; so it comes with divine authority; we can know it "assuredly".

NJH It was God's way to recover man under Christ as Lord. God was meeting every assertion of will in man, the will of man and the will of the enemy, Satan. In establishing Christ as Lord, God recovers man for Himself.

PAG Yes, so believing that He is raised from the dead, and then owning Him as Lord, takes us out of the scene of death and brings us into the scene of life. The scene of life is in view; what is for God is in view. This is for our protection, but it is also for God's glory.

WMP As to what our brother said about recovery, in Genesis 1 we have the great light to rule, v 16. It includes what God has for Himself in this glorious Person.

PAG There are two great lights; one is greater and one is lesser, but they are both great; Christ is great and the assembly is great. We will not recognise Him as Head of the assembly if we do not recognise Him as Lord. Or the positive way to put that is, if we do recognise Him as Lord, we will recognise Him as Head of the assembly. He has been made both Lord and Christ, but lordship comes first.

JTB Paul said, "Who art thou, Lord?" (Acts 9: 5); that was his first encounter with the Lord Jesus, and that governed his life thereafter, did it not? In Timothy he says, "Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord" (2 Tim 1: 8); he fulfilled it in its entirety.

PAG That is very helpful. Do you think that one thing that Paul needed was deliverance from himself? Owning Jesus as Lord delivers us from our sins, but it delivers us from ourselves; we cease to do our own will and are subject to the will of Another.

JTB So he became a prisoner of Jesus Christ (Philemon 9); he was captivated by his Lord.

PAG So he experienced the cords of love and the bands of a man, Hos 11: 4. He was captured not simply by the Lord's authority but by His love. Think of the love that spoke to Saul of Tarsus on that Damascus road; up to then, Saul was a defiant person! He speaks of himself as "an insolent overbearing man" (1 Tim 1: 13), the first of sinners (v 15), and yet love reached out to him and brought him into subjection.

JL I suppose Saul at that time did not have much knowledge of the Lord's official position as having been made Lord and Christ, but he clearly recognised that he had come into contact with Somebody of

superior authority and greatness. In that connection can you help us about the difference between His official appointment as Lord and His personal greatness as Lord? I was thinking that He was declared to be Lord on the day of His birth, coming into condition of flesh and blood.

PAG The Lord is personally greater than any title conferred upon Him. He is not made great by being made Lord: He is great because of who He is! And we may not immediately come into the understanding of the fact that He has been made Lord, but we subject ourselves to His authority because of the greatness of His Person. Say more.

JL I was reflecting over the wonderful declaration at the moment of His birth, “a Saviour has been born to you in David's city, who is Christ the Lord”, Luke 2: 11. That is clearly a reference to His supreme greatness because of who He is, in addition to His official appointment by God, so that He should be honoured universally.

PAG It was said by William Johnson (Addresses and Other Ministry p35 etc) that He never ceased to be what He was by virtue of what He became. What I understand by that is He was always God; He was never less than that! And although He came into a position in which it was possible for Him to die, and to which subjection attached, His personal greatness remained. His personal greatness remained although as Man He did not assert it.

GBG This is to be laid hold of in faith; His being made Lord and Christ. At the very first gospel preaching, those that heard laid hold of that in faith; then they repented.

PAG That is important. So the question was asked “What shall we do?”. If there is a question in anyone's mind, “What shall we do?”, the scripture gives the answer, “Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved”, Acts 16: 31. You lay hold of that by faith. The Lord is not here personally, not here corporeally; He is in glory; He is here for us by faith, and if you lay hold of Him by faith then God desires to give you the gift of the Spirit so that you might have a living link with Him. And by the gift of the Spirit you will come into the understanding that He has been made both Lord and Christ.

GBG That scripture in Romans, “Jesus Christ our Lord” goes on to “by resurrection of the dead”; that is presented as something to be laid hold of in faith in that Person because He was able to raise people from the dead. So it is not an ordinary person we are dealing with; “Son of God”, that is so great that it lays hold of you!

PAG It does! He was able; He had the power to raise the dead. We were reading locally about the time when the Lord was at the city of Nain and there was a widow there; her son was dead, and he was being carried out on a bier. A bier is a pallet on which the dead were carried, and it says of the Lord that “he touched the bier, and the bearers stopped”, Luke 7: 14. No-one but Jesus can stop the procession of death; but *He* has power over it. Death is a creature; He made it and therefore He has power over it, and that distinguishes Him from anyone else.

QAP Mary says at the tomb, “they have taken away my Lord” (John 20: 13), and she was weeping; does that show the bond in affection that He is “my Lord”?

PAG That stresses the importance of the personal link, and subjection to Him in every circumstance, including circumstances that might appear impossible. Mary was proposing to do something impossible. If she could find the Lord's body, she said that she would bear it away. She could not really have done that physically, but the Lord came into that impossible situation and showed her that it was not a question of Him remaining in death but that He had power over it! He had conquered it and He was now in life, and it was life indissoluble!

RHB You said you wanted to encourage enquiry; the question might arise in some minds, if He is Lord of all, why are public conditions as they are? What would you say as to that?

PAG The public conditions are the evidence of what happens if man rejects Christ as Lord of all. God is demonstrating what takes place if the Lord is rejected, and this is the time of His rejection. The question for all believers is, 'Do we recognise Him as Lord now, in the time of His rejection, and are we willing to stand by Him in the place where He is dishonoured and disowned?'. He will be recognised publicly; God will be vindicated; that is what we see in our last scripture this morning, but at the present time the Lord is rejected.

RHB I was thinking of what we get in Ephesians as to the mystery of God's will “to head up all things in the Christ”, chap 1: 9, 10. It has been God's purpose, and believers are in the secret of that; God is going to head up everything in Christ. But there is a mystery attaching to that at the present time.

PAG Yes! But the great thing about things that are spoken about in scripture as a mystery is that they are not a mystery to believers. They

are a mystery to the world. It is a mystery to the world; persons in the world ask how it is that God is good if all these things happen; it is a mystery. But the fact is God remains good and He is good to all who trust in Him, and He is waiting for those who do not trust in Him to turn to Him. So, we have “the mystery of his will”; that is the great thing about God's will; it can control the future. Man's will can barely control the present; God's will relates to the past - that is the good pleasure of His will; it relates to the future - that is the mystery of His will; and it relates to the present - that is the counsel of His will. God's will covers the past, the present, and the future, and it all centres in Christ.

RDP That scripture in Acts says, “God has made him, this Jesus”, Acts 2: 36. He had lived in the outward circumstances of chaos and brokenness and political intrigue. He had lived here, the only Man who ever drew nothing from this scene in which He walked, but drew everything from God, “this Jesus”. That is the One whom God has made Lord and Christ.

PAG Is it not a wonderful thing to know “this Jesus”? There is no-one to be compared with Him. We sometimes say there is no-one like Him, and that is in a way true, but the fact is that believers should be like Him! But there is no-one to compare with Him; there is no-one who could live in this scene completely untarnished by it, untouched by it. He could handle a leper; He could touch the bier with a dead man on it, and not be personally affected, although power went out from Him when He healed persons. But He was never corrupted by the scene. It was a glory that attached to Him and Him alone, “this Jesus”.

RDP We were reading in the week of the Nazarite, Samson, Nazarite of God from his mother's womb (Judg 16: 17), and we were noting how remarkable his birth was; it is similar up to a point to what came in in Christ, but the only One who ever really was truly a Nazarite was the Lord Jesus Himself. He lived here entirely apart from every earthly resource, every influence, although the devil made great efforts to try to suck Him into it. It is a very wonderful contemplation, “this Jesus”.

PAG Samson had to be recovered, and he was recovered at the end; he slew more in his death than he did in his life, Judg 16: 30. The Lord recovers all for God, and He Himself never had to be recovered because He was and is perfect.

DCB Is there something of that in that it is “Jesus Christ our Lord”? Along with that, it is “his Son”. We see the One who is our Lord as the

One who has been so much the subject of divine approval that He has been given the name of Jesus Christ, and that moral excellence leads to Him being our Lord.

PAG And it is a matter of affection. It is His Son. We have been delivered from the authority of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love, Col 1: 13. The lordship of Christ relates to the kingdom but what lies behind the kingdom is love. It is a place of affection, and it begins with God's affection for Christ.

JW The hymn 181 sets it out beautifully:

Thou art greater, glorious Saviour,
Than the glory Thou hast won;
Thee - the great "I AM" - we worship,
Mighty God, Eternal One!

PAG That is certainly true. Greater than every glory He has won, greater than every glory conferred upon Him, greater than every name that He has, and yet pleased to come into a condition where it is said, "and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for *he* shall save his people from their sins", Matt 1: 21. That is the Lord we have! The One who is so great that we cannot measure His greatness, and yet who came into manhood in order to set us free and in order to bring glory to God, where God's glory had been denied. What a Saviour we have!

JAB You are using the word Lord, and you have said you want to think of that as a theme for the meetings. I am very glad of that, but when the scriptures were written and when they were first translated into English, the thought of someone being a lord was distinctive, there were lords of this and that, and they all demanded reverence and subjection from their subjects. But nowadays, the way society thinks is that everyone is the same, everyone is equal. Would you say a little more about the basic meaning and character of what it is that He is Lord? From our infancy we hear our parents and our brethren saying, 'Lord Jesus', and it could become a phrase. Would you say more about the meaning of that word to believers?

PAG It involves the recognition of the supremacy of His authority and the supremacy of His Person. Naturally we do not like people who might be superior to us or have authority over us, but God has set authority where it is least irksome. God has set authority in a Man who died for us, who loves us. That is what John says: "To him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom,

priests to his God and Father”, Rev 1: 5-6. The recognition of God's ordering in the relationships which He has established is for our blessing: the recognition that Christ's head is God and that Christ is the Head of every man, and that the man is the head of the woman, that marriage is an ordinance of God and that the family is something that God works in. He worked in Genesis in families and He works in the last day in John's ministry in families. These are all part of God's ordering for our blessing, and therefore recognising that Christ is Lord is for our blessing. It is for God's glory because it recognises what He has done and acknowledges it, but it protects and preserves us. There is a time in scripture at the end of Judges where it says every man did what was right in his own eyes, chap 21: 25. The recognition of lordship had been diminished and that led to disaster; it led ultimately to captivity. The recognition of Christ as Lord sets you free, but just not in the way that the world thinks about liberty.

PJW I thought as to our brother's question that we need to give place to the Holy Spirit because “no one can say, Lord Jesus unless in the power of the Holy Spirit”, 1 Cor 12: 3. To preserve it from becoming just a term with us, do we need to be sensitive as to the Holy Spirit who would always glorify Him?

PAG It is essential. If anyone is not sure if they have the Spirit, then ask, because I am sure that God will give you the Spirit if you have trusted in the Lord Jesus as Saviour. God gives His Spirit to those who obey Him; so you obey Him by trusting in the Lord Jesus as Saviour; because God enjoins, or asks, all everywhere that they should repent, Acts 17: 30. So if you are obedient, God desires to give you the Spirit, and if you are not sure then ask. It is possible that you might have the Spirit without really realising it. The other thing is you can speak directly to the Holy Spirit, you can ask Him what it means for Jesus to be Lord, and He will help you to understand it.

PJW Yes, and the other thing I was thinking with respect to what our brother said as to Jesus Christ, Peter when he was preaching to the Gentiles says that he came “preaching peace by Jesus Christ (*he is Lord of all things.*)” (Acts 10: 36); now that connects in my mind with your suggestion as to death being a creature. He is “Lord of all things”, which is very embracing, is it not?

PAG I wondered about reading that scripture too, so I am glad you have brought it in, “*he is Lord of all things*”; so we might apply Lord of all as just relating to persons, but Lord of all things goes further; it means

that He is Lord of everything.

TRC The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 8 is speaking of the confusion that is in the world and notes that “there are gods many, and lords many”, but then he says, “yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom all things, and we for him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him”, v 6. There is no comparison is there!

PAG No indeed, and it is helpful for us to understand that Jesus Christ is the One who did things for God, “by him”. Christ Jesus has more to do with His anointing and His place, and our place is in Christ Jesus, but Jesus Christ is the One who did things for God. So Jesus Christ our Lord; if we need to see how something should be done we can look to Jesus Christ our Lord, the One who did things for God.

NJH When you spoke about the Holy Spirit being given on the basis of obedience, that would be the obedience to Christ as Lord, would it not?

PAG It would be the obedience of faith.

NJH I was thinking of Cornelius. The Holy Spirit fell on him in Acts 10; then it says they were “baptised in the name of the Lord”, v 48. The Holy Spirit has to do with our maintenance of subjection to Christ as Lord; is that right?

PAG Yes. When the Lord was here He said of the Holy Spirit, “but ye know him, for he abides with you”, John 14: 17. He was with them because Christ was there and the Lord says that the Spirit “shall be in you”. Why would He be in us? As the Lord says, “for he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you”, John 16: 14. But it is very interesting that the Spirit comes in immediately after we get deliverance in Romans 7; “who shall deliver me out of this body of death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord” (v 24, 25), but then immediately you come to the fact that “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death”, chap 8: 2. So the Spirit of life is beginning to operate in us, but it is when we have acknowledged Jesus Christ our Lord, and it is when we have been set free by that acknowledgment that we are beginning to give place to the activity of the Spirit, and we need Him! There is no point in being set free from death if you do not have the power to live.

AMB So “the mind of the Spirit” is “life and peace”, Rom 8: 6. The contrast to that is the mind of the flesh, which we have to judge,

because the mind of the flesh would certainly not acknowledge Christ as Lord. But the mind of the Spirit does, working in the believer, and the result of that is life and peace. Do you think that the willing and glad acknowledgement of the lordship of Christ brings life and peace into the soul and spirit of the believer?

PAG It does, because if you look at the turmoil in the world, and our enquiry is not about that, but things change very quickly and sometimes very unpredictably. Jesus Christ is Lord is never going to change. It says in Isaiah, "he shall be the stability of thy times", chap 33: 6. How could the prophet Isaiah know that this Person would be the stability of our times when he knew nothing about our times? But by faith, and by the Spirit, he was given to say of Jesus "he shall be the stability of thy times". That is because of one of the things about His lordship is that it is unchangeable.

AMB It is a tremendously stabilising thing! Part of what you are bringing before us is to remind us of the great importance of our individual Christian experience of gladly acknowledging Christ as Lord. What we have to learn, and we do, and it can be a bitter experience sometimes, is that what God has put in place for the blessing of man, to subject ourselves to Christ, is far and away the best for us.

PAG There are no better arrangements than God has made, and neither are there any that are nearly as good. The only arrangements that will work for us are the arrangements that God has made. Everything else will ultimately fail. But nothing that is centred in Christ will fail; that is the great thing. It should not be a difficult choice; the choice to own Jesus as Lord is for your present and eternal blessing.

JL I was enjoying the thought as we have been proceeding of two different aspects to the lordship of Christ. We acknowledge Him as Lord; He is worthy of that place. But the apostle says, "if we should live then, and if we should die, we are the Lord's" (Rom 14: 8); that is the other side. He possesses us; you were speaking about His place of influence over all: we are secure and immensely blessed because we are the Lord's; we are in safe keeping because He has us as His own possession.

PAG So the Lord has just recently taken a brother to be with Himself, and that brother is still the Lord's. The fact is that we are the Lord's. As soon as we acknowledge Him as Lord, as soon as we accept Him as our Saviour, we are His forever! Not only for time, but forever, and that

again brings life and peace. We have nothing to regret; everything is secure in that blessed Man.

RDP The scripture you referred to, that “he shall be the stability of thy times” goes on to say, “the riches of salvation”. We live in such tumultuous times, but it refers not just to salvation, but the riches of it! It is beyond even the initial matter of our sins forgiven, but God's salvation is so great and “he shall be the stability of thy times”.

PAG Yes, “he shall be the stability of thy times, the riches of salvation, wisdom and knowledge; the fear of Jehovah shall be your treasure”. Mr Darby writes in his hymn:

'Tis the treasure we've found in His love
That has made us now pilgrims below (Hymn 139).

I come back to this, the lordship of Christ involves His affection, and it should involve my affection for Him.

AGM Could you say something as to the place the Lord's supper has regarding the Lord's place with us?

PAG I think even the reference to it as the Lord's supper is important. The fact is that the Lord spoke with authority from heaven to Paul; he says, “For I received from the Lord, that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, in the night in which he was delivered up, took bread” (1 Cor 11: 23); then Paul sets out the matter of the supper. So, the supper proceeds under the Lord's authority. Sometimes we ask, why is it not announced? Well, the Lord announced it, and He put His authority on it, and so we respond in love to His love, but we are also doing it on account of His authority.

AGM In the midst of a scene of confusion it has been placed every Lord's day. So we are never far from the Lord's supper and our affections are towards Him. But I think what you say as to His authority is important.

PAG Every week the Supper is there as a regular source of stability and refreshment to our souls, and it is also there as a regular opportunity to respond to divine love. Divine Persons value the fact that believers take the Supper; it means a great deal to them.

NCMcK Is the Lord's supper more than an expression of His lordship to *us*? Does it not involve more: is it a wider thought that we recognise the Lord as Lord of all things at the Supper? We hold all the ground, all

the earth, everything, for the Lord in His absence.

PAG That is right; we are recognising His rights in the scene where they have been denied. My thought in emphasising the matter of authority is that, while it is a request of love, but it carries His authority with it. That means we are bound by it; it is not an optional matter; “this do”, He says. It would be very unusual for a believer not to take the Supper. It is a matter of the Lord's authority. What you say is right. It involves the whole scope of His rights, and it leads us into the service of praise, but as we gather we are showing forth “the death of the Lord until he comes” (v 26); we are owning our allegiance to Him in the scene where His rights have been denied.

TJH Luke 6: 46 says, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?”. This scripture arrested us on Lord's day. You may say it connects mostly with what is in the chapter from verse 27 on but I wonder also if it links with what you are saying now, “this do”. It is the things that we do in connection with His lordship.

PAG Yes, and the things that He said were things He said when He was here. But the Lord is still speaking to us, and we should do the things that He says. We may come to that in our next enquiry about the Lord and Teacher, that the truth has authority over us because it comes from Him, and it is embodied in Him. It is helpful to emphasise that what we do is evidence of our recognition of Christ as Lord.

GBG As we mentioned, He is Lord of all things, that is an encouragement to believers, is it not?

PAG Now please say why.

GBG The gospel is coming to these Gentiles and there might be a tremendous change in their lives. They may have asked, 'Is it worth believing this because it is going to alter so much?'. But He is Lord of all things; He works in the favour of believers.

PAG Exactly so. If we look at what is said in 1 Peter 2: 3, “if indeed ye have tasted that the Lord is good. To whom coming, a living stone, cast away indeed as worthless by men, but with God chosen, precious, yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Because it is contained in the scripture: Behold, I lay in Zion a corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believes on him shall not be put to shame”. I know that was written first of all to Jewish believers,

and you were speaking about Gentiles, but believers are brought into a system of things where the Lord is the Corner Stone, and “he that believes on him shall not be put to shame”. That spiritual house has no dependence on the world at all; it depends only on Christ as Corner Stone. So, if we come into divine arrangements we lose our dependence on the world, because divine arrangements are not dependent on the world.

TWL Is that what the man in John 9 came to? When the Lord comes to him He says, “Thou, dost thou believe on the Son of God?” He says, “And who is he, Lord”, v 35-36. And then he goes on from that “I believe, Lord”, v 37. He comes into the power of the Son of God by the acceptance of Christ as Lord, and subsequently overcomes the world.

PAG And the man thus loses his dependence on the religious system that was around. They wanted to ask him questions and he said, “One thing I know”, v 25. He knew Jesus as Lord and that was sufficient to carry him through. What you say is important because the man is asked, “Thou, dost thou believe on the Son of God?”. If we acknowledge Christ as Lord, He brings us into greater things, He brings us into the blessing of knowing Him as Son of God, to know the Person, to know the relationships that He enters into so that we sang in our hymn:

That Thy Father was their Father,
And His love they now might share. (Hymn 117)

He brings us into these blessed relationships, but He begins with acknowledging Him as Lord.

RHB Is your second scripture a public matter, confessing with the mouth?

PAG We know the scripture says “The name of Jehovah is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe”, Prov 18: 10. So there is safety in confessing the name of the Lord. I found that not long after I started work. One of the things that you were asked, when you joined the civil service, was if you would join the trade union, and the man who was responsible for asking me sat directly opposite me; so it was not easy to escape from him! Eventually I told him why I would not join, and I said it was because I was a believer in the Lord Jesus, and I wrote him a letter and explained why. He never asked me again. That was not because of something I had done, that was something the Lord did for me. It took me weeks to confess His Name.

TRC The writer to the Hebrews says, “So that, taking courage, we may say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid: what will man do unto me?”, chap 13: 6. Is that the experience you had?

PAG Well, the thing is to take courage. It might not feel very easy to confess Jesus as Lord but remember Who it is you are bringing into the matter, the One who is Lord of all. It says in the Old Testament,

There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun,
Who rideth upon the heavens to thy help,
And in his majesty, upon the clouds., Deut 33: 26.

You are bringing to your help the greatest Person there is, and that is Christ our Lord. And you might not feel up to it, but that is not the point: He is always able for every situation for He is Lord of all.

BWL You mentioned in your outline that this involved present salvation; would it link with being “saved in the power of his life”, Rom 5: 10? The Lord is on high, He is living, He is Lord of all, but I prove that as an individual.

PAG That is very helpful. Paul can speak of “according to promise of life, the life which is in Christ Jesus”, 2 Tim 1: 1. The promise of life is not a future promise, it is a present promise, “the life which is in Christ Jesus”. Say more for our help about what it involves to “be saved in the power of his life”.

BWL It is a living link with the Lord where He is. I think the example you have used is a real encouragement for each one of us, particularly younger ones, that are feeling their way in these things.

PAG Well, the thing is to grasp that scripture that you have brought before us; it does not say 'saved because He lives', although that is actually true, because the scripture says, “if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins” (1 Cor 15: 17); so the fact that He has been raised is an essential element of our salvation. We are saved because He lives, but it says, “saved in the power of his life”. That is power that we as believers can access; that means it is available, “saved in the power of his life”. And what this scripture in Romans 10 is telling us is that one way to access that power, to get the advantage of it, is to confess His Name.

JL Are there two thoughts in the section? The one is the confession of His name as Lord, but the other is calling on the name of the Lord and being saved.

PAG Yes there are. You say more for our help.

JL It is right that we should honour Him and confess His Name, and we rejoice to do so because of the wonderful Saviour we have, and we own as Christ as Lord; but then calling upon that Name brings in the gain and the advantage of all the authority and power that is resident in Him. Such a person doing so is saved.

PAG So if a situation arises that cannot be met, do not be hesitant to say, 'Lord, what should I do?'. I would say this also; there are times when I have asked the Lord to help me, and I should have asked Him long before. So do not wait until it gets to disaster before you speak to Him. But even if it does come to a point when you think there is disaster looming, do not be hesitant to ask Him.

AB Does the Lord Jesus make confessing conditional? In His own words He says, "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, /also will confess him before my Father who is in the heavens", Matt 10: 32. Could you say something about that?

PAG Well, that comes into Matthew; there would be the aspect there of man's responsibility. What I would say in addition to that, is that He is always living to intercede for us, so one thing I would say is, I should not let Him down, but even if I do He carries on interceding for me, such is the Lord that we have. But you are right to draw attention to the fact that we should confess His Name; that is what the scripture says.

PJW He intercedes for me before I let Him down because He knows I am going to! As to Peter He says, "but / have besought for thee that thy faith fail not", Luke 22: 31.

PAG How gracious He is, that even before we have identified the need He has already been interceding for us; so, "No one believing on him shall be ashamed". That is a wonderful thing, that the Lord is always available to us.

DAB Paul, in writing to Timothy, says, "But the Lord stood with me, and gave me power" (2 Tim 4: 17); it must have been a tremendous encouragement to a timid man like Timothy to have these words written to him by Paul.

PAG That is a fine thing! Some of the days of Timothy were quite gloomy, the days spoken of in 2 Timothy, the days of the great house. We may come to that if the Lord will, but Paul said, "the Lord stood with me", chap 4: 17. Even at a time when Paul had deviated a little, and I

speak very cautiously of such a great servant, the word still says, “the Lord stood by him”, Acts 23: 11. But in the consciousness that he was going on in what the Lord would have him to do he says in 2 Timothy, “the Lord stood with me, and gave me power”. Paul acknowledged that he did not have the power in himself, but the Lord gave it to him.

TWL He goes on in that scripture, “The Lord shall deliver me from every wicked work, and shall preserve me for his heavenly kingdom; to whom be glory for the ages of ages. Amen”, v 18. He was sure in whose hands he was.

PAG He was absolutely certain; “I know whom I have believed”, 2 Tim 1: 12. Well, that is a question for us all; do we know who we have believed? Do we know who He is? He is Lord of all.

Your reference moves us on to Philippians because I do want to come to this point that, “Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father's glory”. There is glory to God in what we are speaking about. It is not merely abstract.

NJH From experience we find that if we do not confess at the moment and try and go back afterwards and correct it, it does not have the same power. The world's system is very powerful, but we have a greater in Jesus Christ our Lord; we should confess right away.

PAG We should. We were speaking earlier about the gift of the Spirit, “greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world”, 1 John 4: 4. We can ask the Spirit to help us to confess the Lord's name. We may not feel up to this, but ask the Spirit to help and then you have two divine Persons on your side. And when you find that, then you find that the Father is looking after you as well. There is no other system in the world that puts divine Persons on your side.

JBI I was thinking over what it is to experience true salvation, not just salvation from our sins, but to be delivered from this awful world.

PAG That is certainly part of my exercise. To refer back to the scripture in Romans, I was struck recently that the order is, “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”; that is the divine order. But then verse 10 of chapter 10 says, “For with the heart is believed to righteousness”; now often that is what we come to first, we believe that Jesus died for us, and it touches our affections and righteousness is therefore conferred upon us: we are reckoned

righteous in believing. But then it says, "and with the mouth confession made to salvation"; it maybe takes us a little longer to see that present salvation lies in confessing the Lord's name.

JB There is need of it; we need courage and to resort to the Holy Spirit.

PAG One thing I would say to younger brethren: you do not need the Lord less as you get older. I have believed in the Lord Jesus for over fifty years, and you do not need Him less as you go on. In fact you learn to trust Him more. You learn through experience that He never lets you down. You might know it as a fact. If I say the Lord will never let you down everyone here might agree with that, but I can also tell you that you will prove it; it will become real to you and there is no time to start like today.

What we have in Philipians is the fact that the Lord's universal greatness will be acknowledged. It will be a matter of righteousness for it to be so, but what we also learn about that coming day is that the Person who is before us in view of it; He helps us in our relations with one another; He helps us in every sphere.

RWMcC I was reminded of something I had read in Mr Raven that he speaks about what we believe is to govern us, vol 10 p465. I wondered if that links with your thought. If we believe as to the Lord and as to His death, that is to govern us. I think he goes on to say that is a test of faith. I would agree with you as to what you say as to needing the Lord more as we get older.

PAG So what we believe is to govern us. Again, I used to hear it said when I was young, and did not understand it, 'That which is light to me becomes law to me', see FER vol 9 p1-3. That is what that means: what we believe is to govern us, it is to regulate us. We speak about the kingdom; the kingdom is a place of regulation. The kingdom is a place where we come to be taught and to be fed. A local brother used to remind us of that often; we come to the kingdom to be taught and to be fed. Being regulated by the Lord, being governed by the Lord, brings you into blessing. It saves from trouble, but that is not the point of it; the point of it is it brings you into blessing; it brings you into the sphere in which divine rights are acknowledged and in which divine Persons are responded to.

RDP It is not just a question of order, and where I should go, but according to this scripture there is glory to God in it; His testimony that

He has at the present time is a testimony to Christ. If there is ever any confession to Christ, there is glory to God in that. I was thinking of what you said earlier about the cornerstone; the cornerstone not only sets the direction in two ways horizontally, but it sets the direction upward as well; so there is glory to God in that.

PAG In the analogy of building the Lord fulfils the place both of the cornerstone and the headstone. So, He gives character to the whole building, and He crowns the whole building. The whole building takes character from Christ, but He is at the head of it; “whose house are we” (Heb 3: 6), the scripture says. Being in something that divine Persons have designed and set on has enormous blessing connected with it, because it is never going to fail, but also because it all takes character from Christ.

AMB I was thinking of the comment that you made earlier as to the passage in Philippians, this One who every tongue will confess as Lord, and every knee will bow to Him, is available to us as our help, as our resource. I think part of what you had in mind is what comes in earlier in the passage, that Paul entreats the Philippians to “think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking one thing”, chap 1: 2. I wondered if that is a practical demonstration of the Lord held livingly as Head in the hearts and minds of His saints so that we will think the same thing, and there will be organic unity demonstrated in that. It is not only unity as to teaching, and that must be so, but an organic unity, and there is glory to God in that.

PAG “Thinking one thing” really means we have our minds and our hearts focussed on the Lord. Another thing I would say, if my thoughts are out of line with my brethren's thoughts as to any matter, whatever it might be, then I can ask the Lord to help me in that. He is not going to direct the brethren in one direction and me in another; that is not going to happen. These occasions are not the time to go into any detail about anything external to the enquiry but all I would say is this that the Lord directs us together. He says in John 10, “there shall be one flock, one shepherd” (v 16), and He brought together both Jew and Gentile, a unity that appeared impossible; but “thinking one thing”, how could Jew and Gentile be brought together? Well, they were brought together because they had one Object, and that Object was Christ.

AMB What you are saying reminds me of that scripture in 2 Corinthians 10 where the apostle enjoins the Corinthians to lead “captive every thought into the obedience of the Christ”, v 5. That is

practically owning Christ as Lord; even my thoughts are to be subject to Him.

PAG So if we are thinking something, and we are not sure if it is right, bring it into the Lord's presence and ask Him: 'Lord, what would You say to me about this?'.

JL I was reflecting over a comment that James the apostle makes; he says, "the tongue is a little member" (chap 3: 5), and, "the tongue can no one among men tame", v 8. It is a marvellous tribute to the superior authority of the Lord Jesus as Lord that every tongue is brought to confess Him; no wonder God is glorified in that. Something no man can do Christ in His power effects for the glory of God!

PAG And so we bring every thought in subjection to Him, but that would remind us too of the importance of ensuring that what we say is subject to Him, and how we say it. He will do something that no man could do, which is that every tongue will confess. Man cannot tame the tongue; people say things and sometimes regret them later; sometimes I have done that, but the Lord will bring everything into subjection to Him, and it will be to God the Father's glory because God has made Him both Lord and Christ.

DHMcF Is it necessary to have "let this mind be in you" in order to have "every tongue confess Jesus Christ is Lord"; you need the mind of the Lord first, do you think?

PAG In order to confess Him as Lord we need the mind to go down: "let this mind be in you". We were enquiring at the beginning of the reading, and our brother reminded us that the world despises lordship; it does not want authority. But the mind to go down: the Lord accepted that He was under the Father's authority as Man; He accepted that place. He came into a place to which obedience attached and He accepted it. The One who emptied Himself, the One who humbled Himself, recognised as Man His Father's authority and subjected Himself to it. That is the example for us.

KNP I wondered if the thought of confession brings us under authority; "every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" indicates we are under authority; do you think there is power in that that we do not recognise?

PAG I think there is power in recognising the Lord's authority, and as we do He exercises it. Think of that, the Lord exercising His authority

on our behalf in order to protect and preserve us.

EJM This epistle speaks much about the resources, God's riches and glory. The resources are to be understood and drawn from.

PAG That is another important word of scripture, "riches"; "riches in glory" (Phil 4: 19), "riches of his grace", Eph 1; 7. The supply that we have as drawing on the Lord is never going to be exhausted; indeed it is going to exceed everything that we may need.

EJM There are always exercises, and there are exercises in this epistle. It makes us realise the resources that are available to us.

PAG That is certainly part of my exercise, that recognising Jesus as Lord brings us where every need can be met. It is not that we are speaking about doing something because we must, although indeed we must, but when we come to the point that we are subject to the Lord because we love Him, and because He loved us first, that has a wonderfully liberating effect!

DCB I was wondering about "the name of the Lord" which is referred to in Romans. His name, the name of the Lord, is held in affection here. We are awaiting the event in Philippians 2 when publicly He is acknowledged as Lord, but the very fact that He is held in affection by the saints here is something that would give us our guidance.

PAG It would, and I believe it is honouring to God. If God has made Him both Lord and Christ, for us to recognise that name is honouring to God, and in honouring God we are giving pleasure to God. My exercise in reading this section in Philippians is to see that what we are speaking about is pleasing to God, and it is giving glory to God.

RHB The next chapter finishes with the reference to the power which He has to subdue all things to Himself, and that power being exercised in blessing in the change of our bodies, but it is a power that is exercised in grace now. The book of the Revelation brings out how that power will be exercised to deal with everything that has risen up against God. It is irresistible power.

PAG It says of Him in Revelation 19 His name is, "King of kings, and Lord of lords", v 16. That power will then be universal and it will bring everything into subjection. Then in 1 Corinthians 15 we hear of the end when the kingdom is given to Him who is God and Father "that God may be all in all", v 28. The final result of the exercise of the lordship of Christ is that God will be all in all. The glory will be eternal, and the power will

be sustained eternally, and love will have its resting place eternally.

WMP In the centuries since Christ went on high, glory has been accumulating to God the Father. As generation after generation come into the testimony that glory has been accumulating.

PAG That is maybe a good point on which to close. The work of God is always cumulative; it never has to be repaired and none of it is ever lost. Every believer from Pentecost onwards will have that place in “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God” (Rev 21: 2), “having the glory of God”, v 10. That will be the accumulation of everything that has been secured in the Spirit's day, and through that God will tabernacle with men, “God himself shall be with them, their God”, v 3. Every family will be brought in and tabernacle through the holy city. Everything that has been accumulated throughout the whole expanse of time will give glory to God forever!

Glasgow

21 October 2022

List of initials -

DA Brown, Bo'ness; DC Brown, Edinburgh; JA Brown, Linlithgow;
JT Brown, Edinburgh; ABuchan, Kirkcaldy; PA Gray, Linlithgow;
GB Grant, Dundee; NJ Henry, Glasgow; TJ Harvey, E Finchley;
JB Ikin, Manchester; J Laurie, Brechin; TW Lock, Edinburgh;
BW Lovie, Aberdeen; NC McKay, Glasgow; DH McFarlane,
New York; AG Mair, Cullen; EJ Mair, Buckie; WM Patterson, Glasgow;
RD Plant, Birmingham; QAPoore, Swanage; KN Pye, New York;
PJ Walkinshaw, Strood; J Webster, Fraserburgh

THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE LORD'S WORK

James L Bedford

Exodus 12: 3-13

Numbers 19: 1-13

The work of the Lord Jesus is sufficient to save us and to keep us; and that is what I had in mind in these scriptures. Firstly, we need salvation, but then to be kept upright before God, in the sense of the value of the work of the Lord Jesus.

The need for a Saviour is because we have all sinned. Scripture says that, Rom 5: 12. God sets out His description of how we are to behave. Much of it is in the law in the Old Testament. Even the laws of the land we have to abide by come in many cases from the Scripture. We find that we are not able to do what God wants us to do. How early it is in our lives that we decide we want to do what we want to do. We know the children start to say, 'No'. We have all been that way, "Behold, in iniquity was I brought forth, and in sin did my mother conceive me", Ps 51: 5. How needful it is that there is a Saviour. If it were left to us, then judgment would be the answer; God would have to judge each one. The way was made open for the nation, for Israel; they were provided with the law and with the offerings that could keep them. Their continuing to sin meant that the offerings had to be offered repeatedly. As we have been reminded in Hebrews, there was never a way to resolve that sin in them completely; it kept cropping up. The offerings had to continue, to be repeated. So it is that left to ourselves we cannot address the question of our personal sin.

The Lord Jesus has come as a Saviour so that we might receive salvation. God has offered in Him a way of salvation. He came from the heights of glory. I have been impressed with the One who had equality with God. It says that he "did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God", Phil 2: 6. He was equal with God and would not be usurping what He had no right to. It says in Daniel, "there came with the clouds of heaven one like a son of man, and he came up even to the Ancient of days", chap 7: 13. How remarkable that is: here was One who could come up to God Himself. That One was the Lord Jesus; He could come up to the Ancient of days, come up to God and be equal with Him. It was not that He had a lower place. He is equal with God as one of the three divine Persons; and the Lord Jesus has that glory. That is His Person, who He is, One who is God in His own

Person. He came into manhood. As the hymn writer says,

No act of power could e'er atone,
No wonder-working word
Could, from the brightness of the throne,
Make love's sweet voice be heard. (Hymn 431)

The Lord Jesus had to come into manhood, and He came in a way in which He was approachable. He came in, in human infancy; and how glorious that was, the way that God chose. The Lord Jesus came into manhood as a Babe and was even in those conditions laid in a manger. He was brought in in such conditions of smallness and outward weakness; I think it would be right to say that. The Lord Jesus came in, in that condition of poverty. It was in order that we should know salvation. The Lord Jesus, having perfectly glorified God here upon the earth, could say, "I have completed the work which thou gavest me that I should do it", John 17: 4. The greatness of all that God was shone in Him.

If we take the parable of the good Samaritan, the Lord Jesus was the good Samaritan. No one else could do anything for the man who had fallen into the hands of robbers. It is the Lord Jesus who would have the resources to be able to resolve the man's need, to be able to provide everything that was needed. The love of God was seen fully in the Lord Jesus. We can be quite sure that God loves us because of the way the Lord Jesus showed God's love in the way that He came. They brought the woman who was taken in adultery (John 8), and they wanted Him to say one thing or the other. If He condemned the woman then there was no salvation. If He allowed the woman to go, they would say that He was not righteous. The Lord answered perfectly: He said to the woman, "go, and sin no more", v 11. The Lord Jesus had the wherewithal to deal with the question of sin. God's love can shine and yet God's righteousness can be upheld. It had to be that the Lord Jesus should give Himself as a ransom. Our sin and waywardness needed to be borne. If we were to be set free it needed that the Lord Jesus should be a sacrifice for us, that He should go that way instead of us. The Lord Jesus went that way in God's ordering upon the cross. The Lord Jesus was offered as a perfect offering for sin and sins. He gave Himself as a ransom. After bearing the sins of many upon the cross, He died and rose again the third day. After forty days, being seen with the apostles and those that were near to the Lord Jesus, those that believed on Him, He ascended to the right hand of the Father. That is the background to

these scriptures that I have read. I am sure we all know that truth very well, but I do not apologise for saying it again because it is the glory of the glad tidings. It is the centre of the history of the universe. Everything was looking forward to that time, and everything goes from it. How glorious it is; it is God's glad tidings concerning His Son.

The judgment that the Lord Jesus had to bear is brought out in these scriptures that I have read. Regarding the lamb that was slain, it says, "Ye shall eat none of it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roast with fire; its head with its legs and with its inwards". That expression means that the Lord Jesus had to bear the unmitigated wrath of God if we were going to be set free. How He bore that judgment upon the cross! It involved His suffering in the three hours of darkness; it involved that He had to die. The depth of that is beyond us really to understand, that the Lord Jesus had to go that way, and that the judgment had to be borne, so that there might be liberty. The blood had to be shed: "they shall take of the blood, and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it". Salvation for the house, salvation for the firstborn in each house, was in the power of that blood on the doorpost and on the lintel. They would have put that blood on there thoroughly, I am sure, because it meant salvation for the firstborn. The blood had to be shed for each of them. It has been said that it was a recognition that the same judgment was upon them as it was upon Egypt. The world's judgment was taking place. It was the same for them as it was for the world. We are just as deserving of judgment; it is just as much due to us as it is to the world. The blood is the answer to that. We can receive salvation by putting the blood on the doorpost and on the lintel. May our confidence be in the blood of the Lord Jesus. That blood has been shed; the blood that flowed from the side of the Lord Jesus on the cross is that which secures our salvation, so that we can be free from the judgment that is due. Salvation lies in having our confidence in the blood of the Lord Jesus.

We may come to the Lord Jesus, but it is important that we are maintained in the sense of what the work of the Lord Jesus has done. In Numbers, the red heifer comes in towards the end of the wilderness journey. It is God's intention that we should be kept in the sense of what the Lord Jesus has done, kept in the sense of the value of His work even at the end of the journey. We are very much in those times today, when the end of the day of grace is near and the coming of the Lord Jesus is near. We may be well on in our pathway, in our Christian pathway,

having put our confidence in the Lord Jesus a long time ago. The Lord Jesus would have us to be maintained before Him in the sense of what He has done. In this scripture, the red heifer was to be burnt completely: "And one shall burn the heifer before his eyes" - that is the priest's eyes - "its skin and its flesh, and its blood, with its dung, shall he burn". It was a complete judgment that the Lord Jesus had to bear; it was unmitigated. The wrath of God had to be poured out upon Him, completely, so that there was no sparing, typified in that the heifer was to be burned. What we are is put into the burning as well. "The priest would take cedar-wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast them into the midst of the burning of the heifer". That speaks of what we are, what we take pride in. I am sure we are all like these things to some extent; there is always that in us which needs to go, which needs to go into that burning. The more we have an appreciation of what the Lord Jesus has done, what He has accomplished, what we are, what we take pride in will become less in our own eyes. They were to take these ashes; and they were to be kept for when they were needed. They would be put with the water when the need arose, when someone touched a dead person, the dead body of a man. The dead body of the man refers to what is within ourselves. For Israel, somebody else was dead, but for us the dead man is inside us. There is that flesh inside us which is unchanged even though we may have been believers on the Lord Jesus for a long time; that is the dead man that is referred to here. When it rises up, in God's mercy, and in His ordering, there is this water of purification, speaking of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the One that is able to bring to our remembrance the work that the Lord Jesus has accomplished; and thus the water is brought to bear. The Holy Spirit would bring to our remembrance these ashes, the completeness of what the Lord Jesus had borne. The result for us is to be maintained in the value of what the Lord Jesus has done. The Holy Spirit would cause us to remember the suffering that the Lord Jesus has borne, how much He had to bear for each one of our sins. The Holy Spirit would cause us to be repentant and to come to a value of what the Lord Jesus has done, afresh.

The younger son went out from the father's house. He had been in the father's house, like a believer that had been with God at one time. He had enjoyed the father's house, and then he went off and went his own way. He came back into the father's house. There was grace available to him to come into the real enjoyment of what the father's house was. In the glad tidings, it is God's desire that even if we have

gone away, even if we have been wayward, we might come back into His house and come into the enjoyment of what is there. The way that that occurs is by repentance. As we are told by Paul, the way in is repentance and faith: “repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ”, Acts 20: 21. The Holy Spirit is given to us. One of His services is to cause us to be mindful of the work of the Lord Jesus so that when we fail, we are brought back into the knowledge of what the Lord Jesus has had to bear so that our sins should be put away. How valuable that service of the Holy Spirit is, that we should be brought to repentance. May we be those who are readily repenting, for repenting sinners are what God has in mind. There is joy in heaven over repenting sinners. We each need to be continually repenting. May we be brought afresh to be remembering what the Lord Jesus has done. It may be that these things come out into the assembly: there is the priest and the clean man, these persons who are there. How thankful some of us can be that there have been those that have been able to help us at times when we have gone astray. The provision is there, in the scripture here, that there should be this water of purification for sin. How valuable it is that we can come afresh to the Lord Jesus, see what He has done, see the suffering that He had to bear that we might be maintained in liberty before God.

Those are my thoughts. May we come to the Lord Jesus initially. May we put our confidence in the blood of the Lord Jesus. How great that work was. May our confidence be in it. Then may the Holy Spirit bring us back if we go astray, so that there might be the water of purification put upon us and we might be brought back into the sense of what the Lord Jesus has borne, and brought into repentance, into confession of our sins, so that we are maintained before the Lord Jesus until He comes.

The Lord is at present sitting at the right hand of the Father. That is the glory that He has, the glory that He has won. He has come into other glories that He has won as a result of the way that He has been. The Lord Jesus is there at present sitting at the right hand of the Father, waiting for the Father to give the word so that He can rise up and come to take those who belong to Him to be with Himself. How near that time is. May we be looking for it, waiting for the Lord Jesus to come so that we may go to be with Him. May we be encouraged.

Dorking

9th April 2023

THE GOOD DEPOSIT ENTRUSTED

Sam C Lock

2 Timothy 4: 1-2, 5-8

I did not know our brother as long as some in this room, but the impression that I have of him is of one who was charged of the Lord to pass on to the next generation what the Lord had given to him. It is interesting that Paul here was conscious that his ministerial service was coming to an end, and there was someone who was to come after him that was to take his place that was being vacated. I felt that our brother was very keen that the generations that would follow him would take up the places that the Lord had in mind for them. Paul knew his place had been assigned to him by one with authority when he says, "I testify before God and Christ Jesus, who is about to judge living and dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom, proclaim the word". We have already heard about the importance of having a link with the Lord, and you could see that in our brother whom the Lord has taken. He had a real link which was developed over a lifetime through impartations as to the glories of Christ. They were collected up and he would bring them to the meeting occasions and share them with his brethren. And it has impressed me that it was the same with many of the older brethren that the Lord has taken to be with Himself. These are persons who could, as the type suggests, explain to the following generation what the stones meant, as Joshua says to Israel, "When your children hereafter ask their fathers, saying, What mean these stones?", Josh 4: 21. There was an exercise with those that have gone before to pass things on to the next generation.

I remember our brother gently correcting me in relation to something, and you could see the features of Christ in him. For the Lord's sake, and a young person's growth, he would seek to draw alongside in correction but also in encouragement. It is important to encourage; especially in the day in which we live, where there are tests and trials, it is important that there are those who seek to encourage, to build up and to stabilise. We see that feature in the generations that have gone before; they are stable persons.

So Paul says to Timothy here, "be sober in all things, bear evils, do the work of an evangelist, fill up the full measure of thy ministry". Paul had completed his ministry, and he encourages Timothy to take up the ministry the Lord has charged him with. It is important, dear hearer,

that each one feels convicted to serve the Lord in individual responsibility, with something to carry out, something to take forward, something to build up. It is not to be for our own aggrandisement or our own glory, but for the Lord's glory. What an encouragement it is to know that the testimony goes on from generation to generation. It is encouraging to think that the Lord works through every generation. Every generation has its tests to go through, as it says in the Old Testament, "Jehovah will have war with Amalek from generation to generation!", Exod 17: 16. But every generation will receive the blessings of the Lord Jesus Christ; every generation will be affected by the reality of His Person. Are you affected by the reality of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ?

And so there is an encouragement for us to become responsible, to take up the charge that the Lord would leave for each and every one of us. Perhaps sometimes we might feel discouraged, and lay our responsibilities down for a time; well, the Lord has established everything in perfection, and He has made it possible for you to take them back up again. Those who have gone before have experience in this also and they would encourage you to take up your responsibilities again; you would feel the blessing of the Lord in doing so. And as you face the trials and testing, you can go to the Lord and He will give you strength to keep going. It is quite a thing to take up responsibility wondering if you are able. That was what Timothy was worried about, whether he was able for the service that was laid before him. Well, it takes someone who has also known these feelings to encourage and strengthen those currently going through them; as we had in our reading this week, "Stretch out thy hand", Matt 12: 13. The Lord would charge us to take up our responsibilities for the duration of our wilderness pathway. And so Paul says, "For I am already being poured out, and the time of my release is come. I have combated the good combat, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith". What a testimony! That is the testimony that can be said of many of our dear brethren. I do not mean to aggrandise our brother but I think it is something that can be said of him, that he kept the faith.

And if there are dear older brethren in advancing years who are wondering why they are not now able to participate in occasions like they did, as a young brother I can say that it is a most stabilising influence to see somebody committed to the Lord regardless of their situation; they serve in what capacity they are able for, a stable influence in the locality. It stabilises you in times of turmoil, chaos and

discomfort. As a result Paul says, "Henceforth the crown of righteousness is laid up for me". What a thought to be occupied with the blessings of Christ.

Towards the latter days of our brother's life, when he was practically blind and quite weak, on Lord's day morning he would slowly walk into the room, often helped by his family, and sometimes helped into his chair by one of the brethren. And as the occasion began, he would use what strength he had to sing his heart out in the hymns. Then when we came to the end of the occasion, this aged brother would get to his feet with a smile on his face and you could see the reality of his experience with the Lord that morning. We often talk about the blind man in the gospels, and I do not mean to sound fanciful, but it often struck me that in the present day in which we live there was a blind man who saw the Lord. To see the Lord is a real experience, beloved brethren. Our brother always sought to impress that upon all that were there, that it should be real experience, and it can be for you too. So take up your responsibilities; the Lord is ever faithful to us; what a wonderful Saviour and Person He is. May we be faithful to Him!

For the Lord's Name's sake.

Edinburgh

24th April 2023

At the burial meeting for Mr David J Hutson

THE RED HEIFER

John N Darby

Numbers 19

A great principle which recurs all the time in the Old Testament is to know the effect of the presence of God in the midst of His people. This principle assumes grace. The Lord can only abide in the midst of His people by grace, for it is by grace that He has acquired them to belong to Him and to assemble them, Exod 19: 43-46. It is the same with the church; God would bless it by His presence in the midst of it, not in heaven, but manifested down here, taking knowledge of all that His people do, and being the source of every blessing for them. Israel were only happy and blessed in surrounding the tabernacle.

The thought presented to us in Exodus 29 is that the power and grace of God have been at work to bring the people from Egypt, to have them for Himself and dwell in their midst, according to the holiness which He has manifested and according to which He always acts in the midst of His people. He is their God, but their God is holy. When He acts in grace, it is not the law which becomes the rule of our conduct, but it is His presence in the midst of us; and He acts according to what His presence demands. A natural man can be gay and joyful, because he completely ignores God, and the levity of his heart in some sense appeases his conscience. But the presence of God can only really rejoice the soul when God reveals Himself in grace. Israel had been delivered from Egypt and the sorrows of sin which obliged them to make bricks without straw. God had led them in the wilderness to the abode of His holiness, and from then on, He acted in the midst of His people according to the holiness of His presence. It is the same for us. God leads us in the wilderness, with Him alone, and puts out there what is for us. In His goodness, He often makes us feel the holiness of His presence by sufferings and anxieties, and nevertheless He always acts in grace; He thinks of His people and has delivered them to have them for Himself alone, and He dwells with them to teach and instruct them.

It is of all importance that we understand the difference between our eternal relationship with God and the effect of His presence in our midst. Christians find themselves in "the great day of atonement", which only had value for one year in Israel, and is eternal for us; and we are placed in the presence of God for ever. These things are not apparent and tangible in our midst as with Israel, but they are all much

more real for, by the death of Christ, the holiness of God has been manifested to us in a much deeper way. We are placed in the presence of God with a flesh of sin and among things which act on our covetousness. An unconverted soul cannot bear this presence; it wants to be happy without holiness. But if we have tasted that the Lord is good, we will have the love of holiness. Psalm 139: 1-12 expresses the feeling of the heart which is not under grace and meets the presence of God. When it has felt that God would save it, that He has saved it, it wants God to weigh him again, as one can see at the end of this same Psalm. The soul has understood that God would lead us to the glory and desires that He would weigh and purify it, so that nothing might hinder the blessing. Under grace, it is a joy for us that God takes knowledge of everything. He would not leave in us things which hinder us from enjoying His eternal communion. What a joy for the heart! Do your hearts understand that?

Defilement is something for those who surround the tabernacle of Jehovah, although it is nothing for the world. In the world, provided that society is not scandalised, sin is honourable and tolerated. But defilement hindered an Israelite from approaching the tabernacle of Jehovah. Defilement spread. The tent of Jehovah was there and Jehovah would support nothing that could defile it. If Jehovah had not been there, these defilements would not even have been mentioned. He had loved His people with an eternal love and had redeemed them for Himself. But God wants us to realise fully the effect of His presence in our consciences. He has put us in such a relation with Himself that He wants our consciences to feel sin as He feels it, so that they do not find ease in sin.

The red heifer was an offering for sin. It represented Christ made sin for us. It is a pure offering, but supposedly defiled because it bore our sins. The Holy Spirit having led us to God by the blood of Christ, we are in His presence according to the efficacy of this blood. They burned the heifer, and kept the ashes, and the defiled man was sprinkled with living water which was poured over him. It was not the sprinkling of blood done once for all, for it is once and for always that we are justified in the presence of God. To enjoy communion with God, the power of the Holy Spirit must apply the death of Christ to the conscience and the heart. When this communion exists, it is as if sin did not exist; nothing remains between us and God, and He fills our hearts so that we do not have any conscience of sins. Such is the normal state of the Christian. But if he is in contact with sin, he loses the communion for a

moment. God cannot be indifferent to our indifference to Him. All that which, in the presence of God, is not communion with Him is a sin and interrupts this communion. We are always His children, but to approach the tabernacle, one must be pure and feel the effect of the presence of God on his conscience. It is not possible that Satan could prevail against us, but He makes us feel, by the Holy Spirit, that sin separates us from the presence of God. Nothing can make us understand better what distance there is between sin and God than the fact that He has given His Son. Yes, when I see all that Jesus has suffered under the curse, and His love in going through everything, when I see that He has been rejected by God as a defiled thing, I understand what sin is and I can judge myself according to the holiness of God's presence before whom I am introduced. I see with horror where the old man has led me. These are the ashes of the heifer. When communion is lost, a little time is needed to recover it, and for the soul to be fully restored. The heart must be weighed and empty of evil, then, like the sun, the presence of God can shine as before.

God allows nothing evil in us, for He wants to make us fully enjoy Himself and His goodness. Only those who have their souls restored by this grace can know all the love of Christ. May we not seek to avoid God weighing us; let us let Him do it. God is always love. This ends with a soul humbled and broken, but a heart which joys in God. If the application of the ashes of the victim is painful to us and makes us understand sin, it is that there is something in us to remove and restore.

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