

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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AUTHORITY AND LOVE

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DAB There was a comment made recently in one of our meetings as to the blessedness of the environment in which we live. Christianity, as we have it, is a system, if I can use that word, of authority and love. In other organisations, you do not have authority and love together. You either have one or the other but not both. But in spiritual things it is very wonderful that we have the matter of authority and love together or, as we have in John 1, “grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ”. A young sister came to me not long ago and said how wonderful it was when she realised how divine Persons work in harmony with one another, and how we come into the benefit of these operations. As these two comments have been in my mind I sought the Lord's help and the Spirit's guidance as to where to read and trust that the brethren will help, and the Holy Spirit will be free to fill out what is in mind.

First of all we read in John 1 verses 14 to 18, but I have verse 17 in particular in mind, “For the law was given by Moses: grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ”. It did not subsist by Moses, but “grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ”, so the two things are brought together. I wondered if we could enquire what that actually means, “subsists through Jesus Christ”. As we have often been reminded, it is an unusual expression. “Jesus Christ” does not occur much in the gospels, but I think what it means is that what is in God Himself is subsisting through Jesus Christ to us, so “grace and truth” is an operative principle in Jesus Christ, and it comes through Him to us. It is not exactly 'grace and truth subsists *in* Jesus Christ' but “through” Him. Earlier in the passage we get Him as One who is “full of grace and truth”, but I wondered if we could get some impression of the way that grace and truth are in activity towards us through Jesus Christ.

In John 8 we get this comment by the Lord - and I read verses 21-29 just to get the connection, but it is verse 25 I have in mind: “Who art thou? And Jesus said to them, Altogether that which I also say to you”. The Lord was the same inwardly as He was outwardly. There was no difference: a holy, sinless, perfect Man, and as He says here, “Altogether that which I also say to you”. He was what He spoke. He did not say something different from what He was. The note is very

interesting: "in the principle and universality of what I am;" i.e. his speech presented himself, being the truth'. My mind went to the red heifer. It is not referred to in the offerings in Leviticus but comes in later in the wilderness setting as being "without blemish, wherein is no defect, and upon which never came yoke", Num 19: 2. In considering the passage in Numbers, I wonder if we could bathe our souls in the glorious perfection of the manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ in how He answers the Jews in John 8 and the words He spoke. It says later in this chapter, "but now ye seek to kill me, a man who has spoken the truth to you", v 40.

Well, how do we come in? I read in Colossians 1 because it speaks there of "the kingdom of the Son of his love". We have been translated from an arbitrary system, the power of darkness, and been brought "into the kingdom of the Son of his love". That is how we come into it. You do not normally have a kingdom described in this way, "the kingdom of the Son of his love". I think this is a kingdom that we enjoy, and that leads on to eternity. And this kingdom is a rule of affection and love and what we get is the Father's operations here which come out in the Son and are towards us.

In Ephesians it is a matter of "holding the truth in love". What accord there is in divine things! We see extremes all the time in the world, but divine Persons work beautifully in harmony together and we are brought into the enjoyment of that, and there is an effect in our hearts and affections.

WMP Just before where you read in Ephesians, we get the reference to "the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ", v 13. It is very wonderful to think about that, the kind of Man that was here. Do you think that these two things, grace and truth, would contribute to our understanding of what His stature is?

DAB Yes; it is God's desire that we might grow and develop in these features that we see in the Lord Jesus Christ. There are young people here, and we do not expect one another to know everything, but what we would desire is that they might grow in divine grace and in the understanding of the truth. I do not think we can have grace without truth and truth without grace, but when we have both there are normal conditions for growth. It helps us in arriving at "the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ". As we had recently elsewhere, God has in mind that we might be full of the Holy Spirit so that there is entire

consonance in the saints with Christ Himself.

WMP There is a reference to “supply” in the passage you read in Ephesians; so where does that “supply” come from?

DAB It comes from what we sang in our hymn (No 199), from our blessed Head in heaven, and it is the supply of grace: “grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ”. It is the avenue through which grace and truth comes. The Father being the source of grace, the truth being in God, coming to us through Jesus Christ. It is a very blessed matter.

NJH I was thinking the Sun of righteousness will change the world (Mal 4: 2), but here it is God developing in His family, the children of God. Of such a One it says, “for of his fulness we all have received, and grace upon grace”; it is immense privilege to be part of that. We are born of God so that we can take in what is in Christ.

DAB It is a very blessed matter to become part of the family of God and to enjoy these wonderful things, and that involves relationships, the Father operating through the Son in order that we might be brought into the enjoyment of that wonderful family that takes its character from Christ. The Father has a glorious activity in all of this. We often do not think of that, but the Father is intensely interested in what Christ is doing, which we have in John 8, and intensely interested in what we are doing. The Father’s love is “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom 5: 5) in order that we might be here for the pleasure of divine Persons.

NJH It is God’s will that all that is in this blessed Person will be available to impress everyone that has been born of God, is it not?

DAB Exactly.

JL In your introductory remarks you began by speaking about the environment, which we have been taught involves rule, atmosphere and light. And all these things have come in through Christ and subsist and will subsist because of Him, do they not?

DAB Yes, they do.

JL The thought of the kingdom, the atmosphere, love that He has revealed, and the light that shines in Him, everything is centred in Him and flows through Him, does it?

DAB It brings in the great mediatorship of the Lord Jesus that divine

things operate through Him. I was thinking of this matter of “grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ”. It is the Father in His operations in grace coming to us through Jesus Christ, and the truth of God and all that it expressed in God is revealed through Jesus Christ. Do you feel that that is all to maintain us in the enjoyment of this environment? It is not some ethereal thing. We are sitting in the environment of “grace and truth” right now. It is operative.

JL We prove in our experience that that is wherein we live, and enjoy what is proper to the heavenly sphere, do we not?

DAB Exactly, and that was why I read in Ephesians because it says, “we may grow up to him in all things, who is the head, the Christ”. I feel, as an older brother now, that we need to provide the environment and the conditions for the normal growth of our young people in spiritual matters.

JTB Does Psalm 45 help? “Grace is poured into thy lips” (v 2), and then, “a sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom”, v 6. The two blend together to produce this wonderful atmosphere, the environment you are alluding to.

DAB Yes. These Psalms that you refer to are very wonderful. “Grace is poured into thy lips”. I was thinking about the Psalms and in particular Psalm 85 – “Of the sons of Korah”, and just to link on with what you have referred to in Psalm 45:

Loving-kindness and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other:

Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from the heavens, v 10, 11.

It brings these two things together. What do you think?

JTB Grace is poured into His lips as if, when you come to the New Testament, it is in Christ the expression of everything that was in the heart of God.

DAB Yes, His heart is made known, is it not? God looked forward to that day: “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son”, Gal 4: 4. What delight must have been in the heart of God because His heart then could be expressed in its fulness and persons come into the appreciation of it by coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

NJH There is no development or growth in Christ according to this account. It says, “the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, *he* hath declared him”. It is from that standpoint that everything is towards us in view of reaching results. Is that right?

DAB Yes, that is what I thought. Verse 18 is what is towards God, what is for God, in the Son, but what we have in verse 17 is what is towards us through Christ, from God the Father. And that is how grace and truth operate, is it not?

JSS Is this environment to result in life that is pleasing to God? Earlier in John 1 we have, “In him was life” (v 4) and how delightful that life was, but do you think in this atmosphere, there can be life in believers that is pleasing to God as this activity of grace and truth is towards them?

DAB Is it to affect us deeply as it affected the woman in John 4? Grace and truth operated towards her and what came out of that was life according to God. She displayed truth when she went to the men of the city. She told them what Christ had done for her and she laid it out very plainly. What was shown to her by the Lord at that well was surely grace, but truth was there in her heart. It was implanted there and she was able to confess. It says in Romans, “if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord ... thou shalt be saved”, Rom 10: 9. It does not say confessing 'the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour', but it says, “as Lord ... thou shalt be saved” as if the blessedness of who that Man is, and His love and regulation in your life, causes this. It is practical salvation.

DS It was grace and truth to lead us back to the Father. He has come out from the Father, His “only begotten”; He dwells in His bosom; He is displaying something that has come from that environment and He is showing grace and truth in order to bring us back in sonship and liberty, in the true dignity and in the true reality of what God is Himself.

DAB Yes, exactly. Everything of God, everything seen in God, is in Christ. He has displayed every characteristic and every feature. In fact, the divine nature is seen and brought to us. It is all in view of what there is for a return to God. There is nothing missed or nothing lost. In John's gospel, as we were reminded recently, the sheep never go astray. They were guarded, and indeed something is added as in the lines of the hymn:

For, added to the riches that were then,

Thou hast secured vast myriads of men
Thy house to fill. (Hymn 5)

TJC At the beginning of Acts Luke tells us why he wrote his gospel, “concerning all things which Jesus began both to do and to teach”, Acts 1: 1. I wondered whether that was grace and truth, and Luke tells us in chapter 4 about the Lord standing up in the synagogue and at the end they “wondered at the words of grace which were coming out of his mouth”, v 22. I wondered whether grace and truth were really present there, available to all if they would have it.

DAB I was thinking of that scripture that you refer to in the Acts, and it links with what we are saying. It is the activity of divine grace towards persons, and then the teaching that comes in to help us. It is wonderful. What I have in mind is to see the blessedness or the consonance there is in every divine feature that is displayed in the Lord Jesus. We have heard so often about the evenness which there was in the Lord Jesus Christ, and if there was a characteristic that was always in evidence, it was grace. I do think every divine feature was in evidence in all its glory and blessedness in Christ as a man here, and the glory of God shone out in that blessed Man. He was the true Nazarite of God, the One in whom every thought of God was fully met and fulfilled and honoured.

PAG You had a particular impression about “through Jesus Christ”. Say more about that.

DAB My impression is that it was the way that God has operated, and the term “Jesus Christ” is God operating towards us in the glory of the economy. I think the Spirit comes into this as well. Would it be right to say that references to “Christ Jesus” may have more in mind what is for God; but references to “Jesus Christ” show the way that divine Persons operate towards us, and so we come into the benefit of the blessing and goodness that they have in mind for us?

PAG It is very helpful. References to “Jesus Christ” give us the Man who does things for God, as you have said. “In Christ Jesus” is the place that the believer has before God so, in that sense, “whatever promises of God there are, in him is the yea, and in him the amen, for glory to God by us”, 2 Cor 1: 20. But do you think what you are bringing before us, “grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ”, shows that what God makes operational, we might say, “through Jesus Christ”, He also makes effective? It is one thing to make things operational, but there is a question of whether they are effective but, if I may use the

word, everything God operates in Christ or does by Jesus Christ, is always effective. Grace is the means by which the truth becomes effective.

DAB Yes, that is good. I suppose that is what happened in the early part of John 8 with that woman. The Lord wrote on the ground. But it was grace towards that woman that made the truth effective. He cast others out but retained the woman. That is what operated in her soul.

PAG This is the time when grace reigns “through righteousness to eternal life”, Rom 5: 21.

DAB Yes, it is not exactly said that mercy reigns or that love reigns; it is grace reigning. Mercy is sovereign, and grace is operative and goes on to the end. It links with the matter of subsisting. It does not suddenly come to a stop somewhere. Grace is subsisting to the end of the dispensation, is it not? That is a great comfort that we have this resource available to us “through Jesus Christ”.

DCB Was there an opening up of it in the Lord's present position? He was here, and grace and truth were clearly there, but we come to the benefit of it because He is ascended. The atmosphere that you speak of, the environment, depends on the Holy Spirit as having come from where He is ascended. I had my attention drawn recently to how seldom grace is mentioned in the gospels as such. We have just about quoted them all already in this reading. But it expands. When you come to the Acts, you find grace is coming out, and in the epistles, Romans especially, there is an expansion of the knowledge of grace, and that is because of the ascended position that the Lord Jesus has. Previously, there were limitations in the fact that He was a Man accepting limitations within the confines of Israel.

DAB That is interesting. I think it has been said that grace is not mentioned expressly in Matthew or Mark. It is mentioned in Luke, and obviously we have it in John, but what you have said would be one reason why we say that we approach the gospels through the epistles. Paul's ministry gives us an understanding of divine grace. It has also been said that grace is not often expressly referred to in the gospels as the apostles had the Lord with them and that grace was exhibited in that One. Paul's ministry really opens the whole matter of grace operating from on high. And it is still the same supply as it was when Christ was here, after He was raised and during the forty days and now on high; He is still dispensing blessing, and the fulness of the glory of that Man is

towards us.

TJH So Paul found grace in a very abundant way in how he was converted; so I wondered if it was of note that all of the letters that he wrote end with a reference to grace.

DAB He was a man who appreciated divine grace. I have often thought of a comment that Paul makes, "I am what I am", 1 Cor 15: 10. He was not what he was not, and he did not put himself out to be what he was not, "But by God's grace I am what I am". At one point he said that he had been "an insolent overbearing man" (1 Tim 1: 13), but then he says, "But by God's grace I am what I am" as if he had been broken down by the greatness of that grace, and he was living in the present and current enjoyment of it. We can all be thankful for the sovereign mercy of God that has met us in our need, but divine grace takes us where we can enjoy these wonderful blessings that we are speaking about.

JTB There is a reference in Ephesians to "Jesus Christ himself being the corner-stone, in whom all the building fitted together", and so on, chap 2: 20, 21. Do you think these two elements are necessary for our integration into the building, and it is effective operationally and effectively through Jesus Christ?

DAB Yes, "through Jesus Christ". Are you thinking of that Name particularly? Go on, just open that up for us please.

JTB Yes; it comes in there in relation to the construction of the house, the building of the house, and He is the corner-stone of it. I wonder if these two elements, grace and truth, are peculiar to that.

DAB That is helpful; so that the construction is fully established. The foundation, cornerstone and headstone are all in Christ, but, as you say, it is Jesus Christ. It is how we come into things, through God's anointed Man, we come in through Jesus. I find that so attractive. We need to have our sights lifted, do we not, to see what God is doing in Christ?

WMP It is "fulness". What is your impression of that? I was thinking of what you said earlier about how everything, every blessed moral feature, would come out in demonstration in the Lord; so why "fulness"?

DAB My own impression about "for of his fulness we all have received", is that if we have not received it, we have nothing. We have

everything in that blessed Man. "Of his fulness" means it is there, and we need to receive it; we need to receive Christ. There is a difference between believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and receiving Him. I think the Spirit helps us to receive Christ, the glory and blessedness of who that Man is in His fulness. "For of his fulness we all have received", and then it says, "and grace upon grace". Grace would make it effective and operative in our souls.

JRW I was wondering in connection with your second scripture, the question raised is, "Who art thou?". The more we appreciate the answer to that, the more we will appreciate what you are bringing before us as to authority and love. He says, "Altogether that which I also say to you"; these things were demonstrated in Him. The more we are able to appreciate that, the more we will enjoy the benefit of your exercise. I was thinking of the Psalm. It says -

Lift up your heads, ye gates; yea, lift up, ye everlasting doors,
and the King of glory shall come in".

And the question is raised:

Who is he, this King of glory? Jehovah of hosts, he is the King
of glory, Ps 24: 9, 10.

That is what we see set out in the Lord Jesus.

DAB Yes, exactly. It is an interesting point you raise as to the King of glory, So one of the blessed moral qualities and features and offices that the Lord has is as King. But would it be in order to worship the Lord as King in the service of God?

JRW Well, that is quite a question. I suppose in the sense as we appreciate the greatness of who is there, yes we do. Hearts will be filled with worship as we appreciate that.

DAB In one sense the display of that office awaits a coming day in the millennium when He will fill out His kingship on this earth through the saints, but there is that in His glory as King that we can appreciate now, do you think? We sometimes sing hymn 75:

Yet wider praise in Zion waits for Thee,
Her Lord and King;

Christ's kingship really brings out the greatness of who He is in His own Person.

JRW Yes, I was thinking that what you are speaking of is demonstrated when the Lord is in the presence of Pilate. There He demonstrates authority and love, such that Pilate asks the question, “Thou art then a king?” chap 18: 37. And then the Lord says to Pilate, “Thou hadst no authority whatever against me if it were not given to thee from above”, John 19: 11. The One that was there had the authority, and His love was carrying Him through all that He faced.

DAB Pilate says, “I find no fault whatever in him” (chap 18: 38), and then it says, “Then Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged him”, chap 19: 1. There was no consistency with Pilate. The greatest travesty of justice there has ever been in this world was witnessed in that prætorium. In chapter 18 “Pilate says to him, What is truth? And having said this he went out again to the Jews, and says to them, I find no fault whatever in him”. So, as we have in John 8, the Lord's words were what He was inwardly.

CJMCK John tells us that the Lord's “body-coat was seamless, woven through the whole from the top”, chap 19: 23. Is that suggestive of something of “altogether that which I also say to you”?

DAB Very good. “Not a bone of him shall be broken” (chap 19: 36) and the body-coat was “woven through the whole from the top”. The blessedness of all that we see in the Lord Jesus is the fulness of Him and what God had in that blessed Man was not to be broken. Although that body was laid in death, so that condition was laid down, the order of man goes through.

CJMCK In Matthew's gospel, “he taught them as having authority, and not as their scribes”, chap 7: 29. His moral authority came from what He was and the entire consistency of what He said.

DAB They wondered at Him because He spoke with authority. And yet what was in the heart of the Lord Jesus for all of these persons was His love.

ASP One of His titles was “the Word”: “In the beginning was the Word”, John 1: 1. That would link with your thought as to the authority of the Word in the consistency with what He said.

DAB Yes, I was thinking of that. We often just refer to John, but Luke refers to Him as the Word as well: “those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses of and attendants on the Word have delivered them to us”, chap 1: 2. So these persons, John and Luke, must have had some

impression of the Lord as the Word in what He said. When He says, “altogether that which I also say to you”, it is the glory of His manhood. What we have in the previous verse, “for unless ye shall believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” is the glory and greatness of His Person.

ASP Yes, “unless ye shall believe that I am he,” - that He is God - “ye shall die in your sins”. That is a fundamental truth, is it not? Also in John 1, dwelling “in the bosom of the Father”; it is from that position that this environment really comes, do you think? It is from that place of affection that authority and love and grace come out.

DAB Yes. As we are often reminded that that passage has in mind the place into which He has come as Man, the bosom of the Father, and John could write as one who had knowledge and experience of such a place, do you think?

ASP Yes, it is unique to Him, though, is it not? That blessed relationship is unique to the Lord, and it is the love there that is shared with us, do you think?

DAB I wondered that. That is why I referred to divine Persons working in harmony with one another, the blessedness of who the Father is fully expressed in Christ but, by extension, it comes down to each one of us. We can learn that as we read the gospels. If we are going to develop spiritually and deepen in our knowledge, intelligence and understanding of the truth we need to keep near not only to divine Persons but to follow up divine speaking.

JL Is that illustrated in the response that comes out in the Song of Songs? The Lord could say of Himself, “Altogether that which I also say to you”, and the spouse, when contemplating, says “altogether lovely”, Song of Songs 5: 16. That is the answer in love and correspondence with the perfection of His manhood, is it?

DAB Very good. “Yea, he is altogether lovely”. I was thinking of that, the Lord speaking, 'altogether what I am, I speak'. Does it not say in the Song as to His lips, “His lips lilies, dropping liquid myrrh”, chap 5: 13? You think of the preciousness of the Lord's words being as “liquid myrrh”!

JL “His lips lilies, dropping liquid myrrh”.

DAB What is your impression of that?

JL Well, it conveys to me the preciousness of the communications of the Lord in love to his spouse. She said, at one point - and it stands as an isolated sentence in the Song of Songs, "The voice of my beloved!", chap 2: 8. It made such an appeal to her heart! That is just like what comes from His lips. It made such an impression that she just exclaimed, "The voice of my beloved!"

DAB It raises a question as to what response I have made to the voice of Christ. Do I listen to the voices of this world or do I seek to listen to the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ?

PAG What was your impression about the red heifer in Numbers 19?

DAB The red heifer is referred to in Numbers 19 but is not mentioned in relation to the offerings in Leviticus. It is an unusual reference to Christ because it is feminine. It has been linked to the state of the saints, but it also seems to me that it brings out the preciousness of the suffering love of the Lord Jesus. The scripture says, "that they bring thee a red heifer without blemish, wherein is no defect". I linked that in my mind with how the Lord spoke from within. Not only was there no blemish - we speak about the lamb "without blemish" (Exod 12: 5) - but "**wherein** is no defect", the inwards of the Lord Jesus being perfectly in accord with everything that He was outwardly. What do you think?

PAG I think that is very helpful. These three features, "without blemish", "wherein is no defect" and "upon which never came yoke" (Num 19: 2) mean that the Lord's actions, His heart and His mind, were in perfect consonance with one another and in perfect consonance with His God. "Without blemish", His actions, "who did no sin" (1 Pet 2: 22); "wherein is no defect" - His heart, "in him sin is not" (1 John 3: 5); His mind, "who knew not sin", 2 Cor 5: 21. His actions were perfect; His heart was perfect; and His mind was perfect; and it was all for God. And it was the water of separation that came out of that. A perfect Man separates us from man's will and separates us for God.

DAB That is very helpful. The red heifer was burnt completely and all that was left were the ashes. The water of separation and what we have in the red heifer is to maintain us in our state such that we might appreciate and be able to take in what the Lord Jesus would say to us. The heart and the mind and, we might say, our inwards, are all in keeping with what Christ would have, do you think?

PAG Yes, "if we are become identified with him in the likeness of his

death, so also we shall be of his resurrection”, Rom 6: 5. And that is how we come to “walk in newness of life”, v 4. Later we come to “serve in newness of spirit,” (chap 7: 6), but first we must “walk in newness of life”. The red heifer really relates to that in Romans 6, the brazen serpent, Romans 7, and the springing well, Romans 8. You have a whole system of teaching that is leading you out of the wilderness and into the land, and it is all in a Man.

DAB Exactly.

NJH The ashes were put in water and kept in a clean place so that was maintained right through their journey; that was the intent. And really for us, the only way to maintain assembly status is to maintain the water of separation.

DAB Yes, I do believe that. We recently had the reference to “there came out blood and water”, John 19: 34. Not only blood, but water: the water for cleansing, and we need to know that. In the temple system the lavers were portable and therefore available for cleansing where it was needed, 1 Kings 7: 30. We need to apply the water so that our spiritual state both individually and collectively is maintained.

NJH The red heifer was not a common animal. But it represented that Christ's death was the only way to reach the required moral standard, is that right?

DAB Yes, so Christ is unique. He is also distinctive. It was a *red* heifer.

JL The blood was also sprinkled seven times before the tent of meeting to begin with. Was that to indicate that the whole process had liberty of approach to God in mind?

DAB Yes, I think so. If you go through to the next section where we read in John 8, it says, “and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free”, v 32. And then later, “If therefore the Son shall set you free, ye shall be really free”, v 36. It is the Person that can set us “really free”, and it relates to what you are saying as to sprinkling before the altar seven times.

NJH I would like to make a difference between the law and the truth you referred to just now. The Pharisees were referring to Moses as to this woman, but the speaker now is governed by the truth in the words of Christ. Go on and help us as to your own thought. They tried to bring

up what the law demanded, which came through Moses.

DAB Yes, you mean the Jews in the section before in John 8. Help us as to that.

NJH I am just thinking you have come to the ultimate now in the One that was altogether in keeping with what He said. That was not Moses, however great he was as a servant.

DAB That is true. It says, “For the law was given by Moses”. It does not say, ‘The law subsisted in Moses’; therefore it did not continue in Moses. He could not continue the law because he was a creature and failure was there. Would it be right to say that the Lord Jesus fulfilled the law and as making it honourable we cannot exactly dismiss the law as we find it in Christ?

NJH We are not told what He wrote, but Christ wrote in John 8; so it supersedes the whole letter of the law.

DAB That is interesting. As to the woman taken in adultery, the Lord came into the situation graciously. The Pharisees say, “Teacher, this woman has been taken in the very act, committing adultery. Now in the law Moses has commanded us to stone such; thou therefore, what sayest thou?”, v 4, 5. Then what does Jesus do? He “having stooped down, wrote with his finger on the ground”, v 6. I have heard it said that the stooping down, and writing on the ground, was really the teaching of the Lord. It necessitated the writing to make it permanent; teaching is to be permanent. Do you not think that the writing here really is the bringing in of the truth, but what you get later on when the Lord says in verse 11, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more”, is grace and truth coming in together?

JL The law was said to have “a shadow of the coming good things”, Heb 10: 1. Grace and truth are the presentation of the reality of them.

DAB That is good, “a shadow”; so it was not wrong: it was “a shadow”. So we might say, everything has come forward in Christ. He was the embodiment of every thought of God and therefore nothing is lost. It is all there in a blessed Man, in the Lord Jesus, but never in any other great personage, like Moses, Samuel, David or Solomon.

JTB The law demanded righteousness, which could never be exercised by man, and the link with grace and truth is that the utilisation of grace, so to speak, enables us to uphold the truth. We need both, do

we, in that sense?

DAB I fully believe that, and to hold both. It gives us the resource to uphold the truth and to apply the truth rightly. Persons can apply wrong things or they apply what might be right in a wrong way, but I think grace enables you to apply the truth in a way to maintain and retain. This woman in John 8 was retained.

The Lord lifted Himself up. It has been said the first writing was to put the men out and the second writing was to retain the woman. The Lord knew how to apply the truth and retain persons through these gracious acts.

DS We can keep the law and we can keep grace and truth. Is that what you have in mind in the epistles?

DAB Yes, you can help us as to that.

DS In Colossians the Father has “delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love”. That is where grace and truth subsists. It is where we can come in and take hold of something in a substantial way. This is something now that not only is seen in divine Persons in all its beauty, but it is something now that the saints come into by the power of the Spirit.

DAB That is what I had in mind here. We are “giving thanks to the Father, who has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light, who has delivered us from the authority of darkness”. So that anything that is not of God is darkness and has its origin in Satan. That is an arbitrary thing, “the authority of darkness”, but we are brought into this kingdom,” the kingdom of the Son of his love”. I am not repelled by this kingdom. We are often reminded that it is Solomonic. Solomon was the only child apart from the Lord Jesus Christ who was called 'beloved of Jehovah' when he was born, 2 Sam 13: 25, note. So if we turn to Proverbs 4: 3 the words of Solomon, “For I was a son unto my father, tender and an only one in the sight of my mother”, that was something of the love side. And then in verse 4 we get, “And he taught me, and said unto me, Let thy heart retain my words; keep my commandments and live”, something of the side of truth. I thought that was a description of “the kingdom of the Son of his love”.

ABB You mentioned earlier the activities of divine Persons in harmony. You get “sharing” here; that is a good word. In the divine system divine Persons have shared things with us and it comes early

on, in John 8. Everything that has been shared has come from “above”, and has the stamp and atmosphere of that kingdom and area, do you think?

DAB Yes, I do. That is good. “The portion of the saints in light” is our inheritance. It has come from above, it is enjoyed now, and the glory of it is that it is the Father who has done it. He has done it for our blessing, but He has done it in relation to His Son. He has “translated us into the kingdom of the son of his love”. Think of what transpired between Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, and indeed David and Solomon; because that is the reference that we have here. I am primarily thinking of the communication between *the* Father and *the* Son and we had that in John 8 although we did not refer to it: “I do nothing of myself, but as the Father has taught me I speak these things”. His ear opened “morning by morning ... to hear as the instructed”, Isa 50: 4. Do we have opened ears to hear these divine communications, and are we affected by them, and are they governing our lives here? That is my exercise. What do you think?

ABB Just after where we read in John 8, Jesus says, “If ye abide in my word”, v 31. It is characteristic of John, but that links with your thought of atmosphere. We have often been taught about that in the kingdom. If there is unrest or difficulty, it is difficult to learn, but abiding in His word is a prime area for learning from that One, do you think?

DAB Yes. At the end of John 7, “every one went to his home” (v 53), “But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives”, chap 8: 1. It was from that area of rest that all of this speaking took place. He was really guided by the Spirit in everything that He did and taught.

JSS Can you help as to the word “translated”, please? “Delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom”. It might have said, ‘and brought us into the kingdom’, but could you help with the thought of translation? Does it suggest a change with the persons in the kingdom?

DAB I think it means a permanent change, translation, “translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love”. There is no going back; it is like a one-way street, is it not? “Delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love”. How wonderful it is to live in this: we are in it in our own homes; we are in it in the assembly; we are in it in our relations together, the enjoyment of this kingdom.

JSS Solomon's men were "happy" before him, 1 Kings 10: 8. Those initially who came to David were "of embittered spirit" (1 Sam 22: 2) and so on, but Solomon's men were "happy".

DAB Yes, Solomon was a man of peace and building; David was a man of war. In 1 Kings 10: 5, and referring as you have done to the queen of Sheba, she took account of "the order of service of his attendants". In this kingdom, activities are not out of orbit. Everything is centred in the Son. Men used to think the solar system centred in the earth way back in the early days, but they quickly realised that that could not work so they concluded it centred around the sun. And so it is for us: the moral universe centres in the Son and there is an order to it, and yet with that order there is joy and there is love and there is life. That cannot be experienced in the world; it is impossible because of man's will.

MBG Why does "redemption, the forgiveness of sins" come in here?

DAB You have been thinking about it, so please give us your impression.

MBG Well, we were just speaking about the distinction between the law and the truth. Man had to keep the law. It was given to be kept, but man was not able to keep the law, but the glory of what we have been speaking about is that we have a relationship with the Person who has laid the moral basis for our liberty and enjoyment. So we have "redemption, the forgiveness of sins". And then later on it speaks about "having made peace by the blood of his cross", and also it is "by him to reconcile all things to itself", v 20. That is the Godhead; so everything has been done by Him and established by Him for us to be actually in liberty because if we, in our minds, start to think about keeping the law, we will just be brought back into bondage, will we not? So, we need this to be kept before us, the redemption, what Christ has done, and it has been done by Him, and now we are free to enjoy it.

DAB Exactly, and I think what Paul really is doing is opening up another world here of which Christ is the centre and it is on the basis of His finished work. It is on the basis of the forgiveness of sins: so we can be free; that is an exercise I have. In the enjoyment of these things, we are free in our affections; we are free in the service of God. Now this is not just for brothers but sisters as well because it is remarkable what sisters say in conversation. The young sister who came to me and said she was beginning to understand how divine Persons work in harmony

with one another was in liberty in her relations with divine Persons.

MBG So we can be free with divine Persons and with each other. Colossians brings out the fact He has made peace between God and man, and Ephesians brings out the fact there is peace between one and another. Again, what a contrast to the world.

DAB Just to link on with what you have said, Romans is really separating from, but Colossians is separating to. It is where we are moving. What is our gravitational pull? We will say something on that in the address but is it upward or is it downward because the world has only got one way and that is down!

WMP “Holding the truth in love”: do you think if we have an appreciation of being in “the kingdom of the Son of his love” we will be helped in that matter of “holding the truth in love”? You have a thought about it.

DAB I have an impression from our local reading. “But, holding the truth in love, we may grow up to him in all things, who is the head, the Christ”. I think in Ephesians everything really has its centre in Christ, so it says, “from whom the whole body, fitted together, and connected by every joint of supply”. I think it has been said that in Ephesians it is the Lord in His supremacy, and “every joint of supply” is really engaged with that blessed Man. It is not exactly the Spirit, but the Head and the living character of that glorious Man.

Glasgow

26th April 2025

List of Initials:-

AB Brown, Linlithgow; DA Brown, Bo'ness; D C Brown, Edinburgh;
J T Brown, Edinburgh; T J Campbell, Glasgow; M B Grant,
Grangemouth; PA Gray, Linlithgow; T J Harvey, East Finchley;
N J Henry, Glasgow; J Laurie, Brechin; C J McKay, Glasgow;
W M Patterson, Glasgow; A S Pittman, Grangemouth; J S Speirs,
Grangemouth; D Spinks, Bo'ness; J R Walkinshaw, Maidstone

THE WILL OF GOD

John S Speirs

Romans 12: 1-2

Mark 3: 19 “And they” -20; 31-35

Matthew 6: 6-13

1 John 2: 17

We were occupied in the earlier meeting with the Lord Jesus as the One who did the will of God. He did it in perfection, He completed it, He glorified God in doing it; and in doing it He accomplished what is for God's eternal satisfaction. But God's will applies to us too; that is why I read these passages. The Lord Jesus is a beautiful Model for us, and we can look at Him and see how He did God's will in perfection, and these features that we saw in Him - dependence, obedience, God's will being His food - we might learn from these things ourselves.

I began in Romans, because it says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the compassions of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your intelligent service”. How important it is that we seek to do the will of God, because it pleases God, it gives God something that He can delight in at the present time. His delight is in Christ, and He has glorified Him. He is now at His right hand in glory. But He also takes delight in persons who are like Him on the earth, who in their measure are doing His will. It is “your intelligent service”. We ought to know what God's will is, and know why it is important that we should do it. This reference is in the setting of the world, “be not conformed to this world”. As we were reminded in the earlier reading meeting, this is the world where persons pursue their own will. It has been said, has it not, that there are as many wills in the world as there are people, FER vol 18 p98? Everyone has their own will, and they wish to pursue it, and I am no different. And yet the blessing is not in doing *my* will, but in doing *God's* will; God helps us in it as we seek to do it: “be not conformed to this world”. Do not be like the world where each one has their own will and they are pursuing it for their own interests. Let us be in measure like Jesus who pursued God's will for His pleasure. It is “by the renewing of your mind”: it does not come to us naturally; it is not agreeable to us naturally to do someone else's will. Naturally I want to do my own will, but God would help us to think in a different way “by the renewing of your mind”, it is a spiritual matter. We need the Holy Spirit to do God's will. We cannot do it in natural power, natural strength; that will not do. We need power from God. Paul is

writing to the Romans here, and He is writing after the chapter where He speaks about receiving the Holy Spirit, walking in the Spirit; and he can speak to them about presenting their bodies a living sacrifice. The mind of the Spirit is "life and peace", not death and unrest. Everything that the Holy Spirit does must be acceptable to God; if He is working something in you it is acceptable to God. He gives you intelligence too, spiritual intelligence, "communicating spiritual things by spiritual means", 1 Cor 2: 13. You learn you are not just doing things because you have been told to do them but because you know why they are important; it is intelligent service. God loves intelligence, and He loves affection, both seen perfectly in Jesus; He was the instructed One, "and that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God". That is what the will of God is for you and it will always be what is good. Prove it to be acceptable. How do we prove it? I think we prove it by doing it. You do the will of God, in your measure; you seek to do it, and you find out what it is. You find out that it is acceptable; you find out that it is good. You find out that it is perfect. God will help you as you seek to do it. It is important, as I have said, that we do seek to do God's will because it pleases Him, it reminds Him of Christ.

So I read in Mark's gospel. First of all, we might ask what God's will is? Sometimes we over-complicate things and think about what all the details of God's will are. What are all the different things that I am going to have to do? In John 6: 27 the Lord Jesus says, "Work not for the food which perishes, but for the food which abides unto life eternal, which the Son of man shall give to you; for him has the Father sealed, even God. They said therefore to Him, What should we do that we may work the works of God?" And perhaps they were expecting the Lord Jesus to give them a list of good works that they should do. What is the answer? "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom *he* has sent". Believe on the Lord Jesus, how essentially simple! Come to Jesus and be attracted to Him, become attached to Him, and grow in your affection for Him. I think you can almost summarise what the will of God is for us like that; it is all relating to Jesus. I do not think there would be anything in God's will for us that was not in relation to the Lord Jesus.

So what a contrast these persons in Mark's gospel are to the Lord's natural relations. Think of them saying this; His relatives, His natural relatives, saying, "He is out of his mind". They went to lay hold of Him - think of that! They thought they knew better than the Lord Jesus, and they thought He was out of His mind. Think of how foreign the will of God is to the natural mind, it does not understand it. There is no natural

desire to do it. They speak disparagingly of Him in this way: "He is out of his mind". And then they come and they presume to be able to call Him. His brother and His mother come and standing without sent to Him - send to Jesus - calling Him, asking *Him* to obey *them*. They have got things round the wrong way. Beloved, *we* come to Jesus and obey *Him*. We do not call Him to us. We are called to Him. Persons have been attracted to Him. "Who is my mother or my brethren"; "looking around in a circuit at those that were sitting around him". Think of the pleasure that the Lord Jesus had that there were persons sitting around Him who had been attracted to Him and who were listening to Him. I think listening to Jesus is part of God's will for us. God says that on the mount of transfiguration, "*This* is my beloved Son: hear him", Luke 9: 35. It is God's will that we hear His Son. So these persons were doing God's will. They were listening to Jesus. "Behold my mother and my brethren: for whosoever ..." - whosoever! Brethren, it is open to any one of us; you do not have to be a certain age to be able to do the will of God. Have you believed on Him? If you have then you have done His will already! If you are seeking to place yourself like these persons were, sitting around Him, you are doing God's will. What a safe place, sitting around Jesus, sitting at His feet, listening to His word, with an opened ear. "Morning by morning", His ear was wakened to hear as the instructed (Isa 50: 4); have your ear open to hear what Jesus says. It is a spiritual matter. Ask the Holy Spirit for power to hear what Jesus is saying to you. "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies", Rev 2: 7. You might hear it on your own when you are reading the bible or praying; you might hear it in a meeting. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you to hear the voice of Jesus and understand what His will is. "Whosoever shall do the will of God, *he* is my brother, and sister, and mother". He does not say, 'they are my family'. He mentions these different relations: "my brother". Think of that: "brother"; "a brother is born for adversity", Prov 17: 17. Think of a brother, willing to stand in the testimony and to suffer for the will of God. Think of the "sister", one who is interested in the preservation of life. Moses' sister saved his life. And Paul's sister's son saved Paul's life. Think of that affectionate, protective nature seen in the sister; the Lord values these features. "And mother"; think of that: those who are interested in nurturing life. Think of what there is like that in this room. There are spiritual mothers here and we have benefited from them. They are doing the will of God. They are attracting us to Jesus. They are telling us to stay close to Him. Listen to them for your blessing.

In Matthew's gospel, we get the matter of prayer again. They are affected by the Lord Jesus and how He prayed. Doing the will of God requires dependence, because you cannot do it in any of your own strength, and it may lead to us facing suffering. But prayer is available, and I was struck by this passage where the Lord is teaching His own about prayer. "When thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door ...": we have all these details, why did the Lord Jesus say that? I think we can afford to be very practical in relation to prayer. Go to a place where you can truly be alone with Jesus; shut everything else out, even if it is only for a few moments, and you will get the benefit from it. This is the direct instruction of the Lord Jesus to His own, speaking about a door and a chamber. Subject yourself to what the Lord Jesus says, "use not vain repetitions". The Lord Jesus prayed "more intently". It was not vain repetition, the Lord Jesus was intelligently praying in relation to what was ahead of Him. I feel tested by this because it is easy, perhaps when you pray, perhaps to go over your family members, and so on; you can easily fall into a routine, but God would encourage us just to be real in our prayers and freshly exercised each time we pray. The Lord Jesus teaches them that our prayers should not necessarily be in relation to our needs first. He speaks first in relation to the Father: "Our Father who art in the heavens, let thy name be sanctified". That was first and foremost, in relation to the prayer, and "let thy kingdom come" and then - and this is what I was impressed by - "let thy will be done as in heaven". God's will *is* done in heaven. Angels are ministering servants, spirits; they do His will. You could say, heaven is where God's will is done characteristically. I know there are still elements of wickedness in the heavenlies (Eph 6: 12), and yet, characteristically, heaven is the place where God's will is done. And what is the Lord saying? That "thy will be done as in heaven so upon the earth". Well, it has been done on the earth already, it has already been done by Jesus, and one day it will be done actually and universally. God's will will be prevalent on this earth, and every knee will bow to Jesus. But, think of the privilege that the believer has at the present time of just simply doing God's will, in this world which is characterised by persons doing their own will. Take it as an exercise to do God's will here on this earth, as it is in heaven; it is done there characteristically. Those angels would do what God instructed them to do. Let us be dependent in prayer that we might be given strength to do God's will in our measure here on the earth. The matter of the bread comes in again, "give us to-day our needed bread", and as it came in

helpfully in the reading, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which goes out through God's mouth", Matt 4: 4. Let us look for opportunities to hear the word of God, as we have said, by reading, by listening to the ministry, by placing ourselves in the place where God may be pleased to speak and in the company of the saints. These occasions are precious, beloved. They are precious to heaven, and God looks on them. It tells us in Malachi about a time when people "spoke often one to another and Jehovah observed it, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared Jehovah, and that thought upon his name", Mal 3: 16. It was so precious to Him that He wrote it down in a book. God takes account of our gatherings; let us grow in our appreciation of them. Let us be there when we can to hear what the Lord would say to us and we will get what has the character of this bread. You find that it becomes something that satisfies you. You will find satisfaction in your heart having known that you have simply done something of God's will, even in a small measure, even without anyone else knowing.

I read lastly in John's epistle about the character of those who do the will of God. Again, the world is mentioned, the same world that Paul was writing to the Romans about that we should not be conformed to. It has its lusts; it has its pride. You can see that all around in this world, people lusting after possessions, lusting after power, people motivated by greed. I was struck in reading ministry which said that if you are greedy of gain, you are a murderer - see FER vol 14 p165 and Prov 1: 19. You might just say you are only collecting things for yourself, how is that murder? If that is what you are doing, enriching yourself at the expense of others, perhaps someone will not have enough to survive. These are practical matters. The world has this character of lust and pride, let us not be associated with it. Let us not have our part in it, or have our interests in it. It is passing. Do not be conformed to it. There is no pleasure in it. These matters of lust and pride, there is no pleasure for God in them. But "He that does the will of God": I think that is characteristic, if you follow the note for "does" through, it speaks about a course of action, something that is done characteristically. Let us simply seek daily, day by day, in prayer and with intelligence, to understand by the Spirit what God's will is for the day. Read the scriptures at the beginning of the day. They sustain you, they are like bread. Think of the manna as a daily food, it is like being occupied with Jesus, and day by day, it will sustain you to be able to do the will of God. The world is passing and its lust. That is all going; that is going to have

no effect, it will be of no effect in eternity. "But he that does the will of God abides for eternity". I think that not only means that every person who believes in the Lord Jesus abides for eternity in His presence. But, I think the things that that person does in relation to the will of God now will go into eternity too. Think of everything you might do, however simple or small or limited, for the will of God; maybe you help your fellow brother or sister in some little way, in a practical way. Think of the Lord Jesus speaking of, "a cup of cold water", Matt 10: 42. He takes account of it and He will reward it. These actions, done by those doing God's will, they would be like "the righteousnesses of the saints" (Rev 19: 8), they go into that garment which the Lamb's wife will be clothed in. Nothing is lost, and God sees it. God sees these actions that you take, seeking to do His will. And if it is His will, it is pleasing to Him, the result of it goes into eternity. It will be for God's eternal glory. Think of the holy city, its substantial character, "having the glory of God".

Beloved, now is the time that we can do the will of God. If you rely on the Holy Spirit, if you listen to Jesus, if you have Him as your Model, these things that you do God takes account of, and it is built up in you, spiritual substance, an eternal weight of glory, even though it may involve suffering. Pray about it. Think of the Lord Jesus, how He was strengthened - an angel appearing from heaven, strengthening Him. Those same angels, same divine helpers, are available to strengthen us. We can know what it is to have the assurance that we can abide for eternity and go through and be there for God's eternal pleasure. I feel limited in how much I know these things, because it is so foreign to what comes to us naturally, to do the will of the Lord is greatly testing. But God would encourage us to go in for it. The divine provision is perfect. He gives you the perfect Model in Jesus, He gives you the perfect power in the Spirit, and gives you the perfect love of the Father, everything you need for the present time! He gives you a company of brethren, who we are thankful for, to work things out together with. Let us be occupied in doing the will of God that we might know what it is to be part of that family, to enjoy these relations that the Lord Jesus values. He values us as His brethren, and as those that abide for eternity.

May the Lord bless the word.

Peterhead

9th November 2024

SALVATION

Ron D Plant

2 Corinthians 6: 1, 2

Acts 4: 10-12

Luke 15: 11-24

I want to speak about salvation. Salvation is an immense subject that is referred to over a hundred and fifty times in the Scriptures, right from the beginning of the Scriptures to the end. The young ones here can search that out and find out how many times exactly salvation is mentioned, over one hundred and fifty times anyway.

I was struck with this reference in Corinthians that says, "I have listened to thee in an accepted time, and I have helped thee in a day of salvation: behold, now the well-accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation": now. We live in a very changing world. It is full of woes, problems and difficulties and things that need solutions; some are very urgent at the present time. Men are seeking answers. The difficulties of doing that, and bringing about things equitably and meeting expectations occupy the world all the time and have done for the whole of the world's existence. I thought of this scripture, "now the day of salvation". You may say it is a day of trouble, when the latest episodes of the world's crises and problems and difficulties and dangers are testing the world's governments with how to resolve these things. So, you may say now is the day of trouble, it is a day of perplexity, but scripture says today is "the day of salvation".

I had to read the scripture in the Acts for it says, "salvation is in none other, for neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved". God's salvation has not had to be adjusted for the changing times or the nuances of the political world and all the things that man has done in his efforts that are all around us. God's salvation has never changed and God's salvation is presented now. I was struck with that, "now". You may say, 'Now is a critical time in the history of the world'. Scripture says, "now the day of salvation"; and, "salvation is in none other".

We read about the death of that glorious Man, our Lord Jesus Christ. In that death God resolved the great matter of His salvation in all the aspects that it contains. He resolved it all in the death of the One He loved the most, our Lord Jesus Christ. God presents His salvation, as

He has done all our lives here and far, far longer and before. It is in a changing world. It just strikes me that it is a very topical thing. The world needs solutions, and has done in all its history. Somehow this is attempted to be brought about and yet God's salvation - in all its fulness and completeness, with every aspect of what that salvation is, because it is such a vast subject - that salvation has been secured and secured forever in the death and resurrection of Christ. It is presented to mankind in the fulness of God's love for the acceptance of faith and the settlement of your life and your eternal salvation forever. How wonderful these things are.

There is a very interesting book in the scriptures, the book of Ecclesiastes. You have to read it carefully because Solomon was given wisdom such as no king had possessed. He was the king after David and he asked God for wisdom, and He gave him this gift to judge the people wisely. He could have asked for wealth but he asked for wisdom, and he became very wise. You can find his proverbs, the Proverbs of Solomon, in the Scriptures. He went an interesting way in that he sought grace from God to look at the whole of the world's system and to look at everything that took place "under the sun"; to look at its good things, and its evils and all the things in it. The book of Ecclesiastes is an account of Solomon looking into everything. God gave him special grace to look into everything that the world was, and all its content and everything about it. If you read it, it is interesting, but remember to read it for what it is. It is not exactly a book that gives heaven's view. It is a view of man's work and man's efforts to achieve his own happiness and solutions in this world, everything that is "under the sun", Eccles 1: 3. You go through it; and you will see he tried them all.

When we were younger perhaps, we tried various things, but Solomon tried them all. You can read it for yourself. I do not propose to go through the whole thing. Solomon looked at everything that was under the sun. He looked at all the work that was done. He looked at everything that was attempted to be done. He looked at wisdom and knowledge, all the clever things about men, He had a look at that. He looked at pleasure as a thing; he looked at mirth and pleasure. He looked at it and tried it. He looked at great works that were built. He looked at gardens, big gardens and parks and buildings and all these things. He looked at possessions, possessions of cattle and possessions of money and possessions of gold; he had a look at that.

He looked to see where he could find lasting happiness, contentment, solutions, and the answers to life's quest. At the end of it, he says of the pursuit of everything that is in this world "all was vanity and pursuit of the wind", Eccles 2: 11. Have you ever tried to chase the wind? All is vanity and pursuit of the wind. He expands upon that. There is a lot more detail than I have given you. There is one section that is usually quoted from Ecclesiastes. It says, "To everything there is a season" (Eccles 3: 1), then he lists out all the things that apply to the world, and he commences with perhaps the most solemn, and that was that there is -

A time to be born, and a time to die.

That is something that limits and covers everything that happens in this world's system - everything. There is -

A time to be born, and a time to die;
A time to plant, and a time to pluck up ...
A time to mourn, and a time to dance.

If you think about it, we see that during life's journey. We see a lot of these things:

A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to seek, and a time to lose ...
A time to love, and a time to hate;
A time of war, and a time of peace.

Somebody observed once that there is one thing it does not say in that comprehensive list, and that is, there is no mention of a time for salvation. There is nothing in this world's system that is there for salvation. God at this time presents His salvation. This is the day: His salvation. The world is such a complicated place, the world in which we live, and the environment in which we live and the things that occupy it, the enemy is using it to interfere in a certain sense with men's minds and set glittering things before them. What Solomon says is that he had had a look at it all and at the end it is all vanity. The one crucial thing that proves that is that there is

A time to be born, and a time to die.

It is an interesting book to read. It ends up with an appeal to youth mainly, but to all of us, "remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come" (chap 12: 1) - before time takes its toll. In the face of all of it, a world that is in turmoil, it goes this way - it goes that way, God presents His salvation; and His salvation is centred in the

work of One glorious Man. We all know the answer to that. The answer is that God's salvation is centred in the work and the preciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ who was here on this earth in which we are. He was not in a privileged position; He was in lowliness and meekness and in suffering. He went right into death to meet the whole question of sin and everything that stood in the way. God's salvation is founded and established on the work that Jesus did. We read about one of the aspects of it in our reading today. How great these things are; I am not able to present the whole of God's salvation: it is too vast. You think about it, the gospel is preached and we preach about forgiveness; that is a part of God's salvation. The forgiveness of sins; it is part of God's salvation. We often speak about mercy: that is a part of God's salvation. You may say these are blessings you have often heard of. These are part of the vastness of what was secured by Christ, mercy extended to men on the basis of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and His completed work, the forgiveness of sins and offences which stood out against us and the mercy of God towards men. That is often the line which we follow in the preaching. What preaching would be complete without that reference?

Yet there are other references to God's salvation. We could speak about justification and about reconciliation; these are wonderful features of God's salvation. It is as if every corner is covered; everything is covered in the preaching of the glad tidings. It is a very wonderful thing to contemplate that. God's salvation includes an outlook and a hope that is beyond the sphere of time and this world: Romans 8: 24 tells us that. We all have a short time relatively here upon this earth. God's salvation includes the blessedness of a hope that is beyond, beyond the grave and beyond all that is here; and there is more. What precious things these are.

I wanted to leave an impression of one aspect of God's salvation that we perhaps do not often speak about, which is redemption. Do you know what redemption means? If you look in one dictionary, it speaks about the recovery of an encumbered right. In other words, something that belonged to someone that has become lost and denied access to them, and redemption is the securing of it back. This is, I think, one of the sweetest aspects of the gospel. I am basing what I say upon Scripture: it speaks of "redemption through his blood", Eph 1: 7. Redemption is through His blood. You may have thought the shedding of His blood was the means of the forgiveness of

sins, and so it is. The scripture also says that we have been redeemed, by His blood, 1 Pet 1: 18, 19. I am going on what the scripture says, and redemption is the recovery of a right - not man's right but God's right. To me it is a very beautiful thing. Much could be said about the blessedness and filling out of all these other wonderful aspects of salvation that we have referred to. God sets out His salvation in our Lord Jesus and presents it in the glad tidings to you for your acceptance and the obedience of faith in the midst of a world that is troubled and broken and wrecked by man's sin and man's endeavours and pride.

What I wanted to say was that redemption involved that God has got something back which He lost and which He loved. He loves to have it back. That is a part of the glad tidings. Through that work that secured salvation and secured mercy for me, that secured an outlook and a hope and all these things, God has secured something for Himself, and revealed His never-failing love. That is redemption. God has always loved man. Remember that, especially the young ones here. Remember this, whatever people say, that God has never ceased His love for you, whatever your condition; never. Man made God the enemy in Genesis where they went and hid when He was coming (Gen 3: 8): having sinned they were afraid of Him. God never made Himself man's enemy, because He loved them. He made man; He made man for His own pleasure and for His own joy. It says that: "God so loved ..." in John 3: 16 and other scriptures "For thy will they were, and they have been created", Rev 4: 11. How short a time elapsed in the garden of Eden before sin and Satan intervened and brought about a distance between God and His creature that He had made for His pleasure, for His own joy, because He loved them. He loved what He made; and one aspect of God's salvation is that He has secured man back for Himself.

I will tell you a little story which illustrates it a bit. There was a boy who built himself a model boat as carefully as he could. He set it to sail, but the wind caught it and unfortunately he lost control of it and it sailed away. He had lost his boat that he had spent so much love and care and interest in. But one day he saw his boat in a shop window, and he went in hoping to claim it, but the shopkeeper said if he wanted it he would have to pay for it. So, he paid the price and he got his boat back. He had made it and bought it. He redeemed it.

God speaks in the glad tidings of what He thinks about you and me. It is not only that you might be relieved of your burden, your weight

of guilt and sin, but it is that God might bring back to Himself that which He loved from the outset and never lost the love for - you and me, sinners saved by grace. Sin in the garden of Eden brought in distance; we were lost to God in that sense. The death of the Lord Jesus and the work that He did involved securing a way of redemption, so that God may receive back what He made; He bought it at what cost - the life of His Son. That is redemption; that is part of the gospel. The most blessed thing is that redemption not only clears you of your indebtedness, but it reveals the heart of a God. He did not come in for you in the forgiveness of your sins just because He pitied you, because He was sorry for you, or something merely on that level. He came in in the work of Jesus because He loved you and because He wanted you, and He never ceased to want you whatever your sinful history has been. Everything for the repenting sinner is secured through the work of our Lord Jesus, not only for your salvation, but for God's joy and pleasure. That is a wonderful part of the gospel, I think; that is redemption.

I refer briefly to the well-known parable spoken by the Lord in Luke 15, speaking of the course of the life of the younger son of his father. The younger son went away from his father's house, his home; he went away from all that he knew and took with him everything he thought he was entitled to, money and property. And he lived a life that he wanted and in the course of time lost it all in a debauched life until he came to a point where he was in want. He remembered his father's house and he remembered the time he had there; it leads to repentance. He remembered the time that he had everything and he said, "How many hired servants of my father's have abundance of bread, and I perish here by famine. I will rise up and go to my father". You may wonder how he can go back from that far country. How can he go back? How may the sinner repenting expect to be received? You may think that the father might take him back with reluctance, but he goes back. "I will rise up and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned". That is about all we hear about this man's sin and the details of his debauchery and all these things. When the father saw him, he "ran, and fell upon his neck, and covered him with kisses". You think of God's reception; think of God's reception of the sinner that comes back, that once was lost. The father said that here: he "was dead and has come to life, was lost and has been found". I think that is the gospel. That is an aspect of the gospel which is particularly in the heart of God and something that we can enjoy. God not only made

provision for me, but He loved me with a love that never changed. What blessed things these are. God's salvation, how vast it is.

Today is the day of salvation. May we all know what it is, young and old, to turn our hearts in relation to God's salvation. It is presented only in a Man, our Lord Jesus Christ. That scripture in the Acts said, it is "in none other, for neither is there another name". Peter refers to the "stone which has been set at nought by you the builders": the world had and has no place for Christ. We were reading about that in the reading today, how they mocked Him, they derided Him, the One who was carrying in His heart and His spirit and His body everything that was for the heart of God and for the blessing of man. He says, "the stone which has been set at nought by you the builders, which is become the corner stone". For the believer He becomes the Corner Stone. For those of you who are not builders and even those of us who have tried to be, the corner stone is where every part of the building was built from, built from the corner. It was straight and level, in every dimension horizontally and vertically it is always very important. Technology may have changed that now, but "salvation is in none other, for neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved". May we each one of us know what it is to embrace the fulness of God's salvation today.

For His Name's sake.

Dorking

16th March 2025