

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

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GETHSEMANE

Mark 14: 32-52

Isaiah 63: 1-4

KRC I thought it would be good, brethren, if we could have an enquiry together into these great events that took place in Gethsemane, and what Gethsemane itself represents. It is a significant moment in the movements of the Lord Jesus, significant in the sense of the subject that we are taking up in relation to the true Servant. We see there is a certain reality behind it all and it should touch our affections in relation to the events that come before us in this section of Scripture. I understand that Gethsemane means 'winepress'. Where we have read in Isaiah refers to a day of judgment to come, and that is not what is before us in Gethsemane. If we see the greatness of the events that unfold in Gethsemane, and if we are humbled in our affections in relation to them; if as believers we have an appreciation in our hearts of all that Christ is, then what is coming in judgment is not something that is to be feared; but it is a reality that will unfold. I am a bit hesitant to draw a connection between what we read in Mark and in Isaiah. Someone asked Mr C A Coates about the winepress in Isaiah 63, and he made quite a distinct separation. He said that, in Isaiah, His garments are red there with the blood of His enemies, but in Gethsemane we see 'the personal cost to the holy Sufferer', Outline of Mark's Gospel p187. That comment drew me in my affections to what Gethsemane really shows us, we should each be subdued and humbled in relation to the sorrows of Christ and what He feels. So, He says at this point that His soul is troubled, John 12: 27. How much have I pondered the fact that this great One who represented God here was troubled in His soul? Do you think these things have been recaptured here for us to move us in our affections?

JTB Yes, it is very affecting to think of the One who was the Originator of life anticipating that He would die, Satan is bringing before His holy soul here the terror of death, the awfulness of death. The Lord Jesus actually died. He "became dead", Rev 1: 18. It is very affecting to think of that, His death too involving all the judgment of God as He suffered there. Satan has returned here having been defeated earlier on at the outset of the Lord's pathway; he returns with full designs on seeking to deflect the Lord Jesus from His pathway of dedication and devotion to God His Father's will, which meant that He should die.

This scripture in Isaiah portends judgment. It has in mind that

the Lord Jesus will come back and bring judgment on the nations, those who have rejected Christ. He says prophetically, "I have trodden the winepress alone"; it is a fine passage of scripture. There is a very affecting note, 'superbly raising the head', v 1 note 'b'. He comes back in triumph, but, as you say, Gethsemane suggests pressure. Maybe you had something further in mind? It says, "of which the name is Gethsemane". It is the place to which the Lord had recourse and Satan met Him there in all his power.

KRC Gethsemane is in the vicinity of the Mount of Olives, which is where we might say that the Lord enjoyed a place near to heaven, did He not? It was an area of comfort for Him. Does it just draw out the greatness of Him and His service, that He was in accord with the will of His Father? He was doing the will of God. He was in accord with heaven in the greatest moments of pressure, but it was fully in accord with a Servant here before God, do you think?

JTB I was struck when it was read when it says, "Sit here while I shall pray". It is very affecting, anticipating all that lay before Him, but still in absolute dependence.

TWL I was wondering whether Psalm 69 would fit in with your thought. It is prophetic in relation to the Lord: "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul", v 1. Then further down it says, "They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away", v 4. Then further down, "For the zeal of thy house hath devoured me, and the reproaches of them that reproach thee have fallen upon me. And I wept, my soul was fasting: that also was to my reproach", v 9, 10. These are all things the Lord felt as going into Gethsemane, do you think?

NRC I was reading that very Psalm as well and I was impressed because I was pondering the very fact of how the Lord could be so depressed, as it says, "amazed and oppressed in spirit" and what that represents. I was wondering whether we get a taste of that in the Psalms. It relates to what David's experience had been. I was particularly thinking of verse 3 of that psalm that you quoted. "I am weary with my crying, my throat is parched; mine eyes fail while I wait for my God". It is a moving thing to contemplate, is it not?

TWL It is quite a thing that the Lord knew that He would not be left in death: "neither wilt thou allow thy Holy One to see corruption", Ps 16:

10. So, although He knew that, it does not mean that He did not have to go into it, or that He did not feel everything as He went into it. The anticipation in Gethsemane, the anticipation of what He was to suffer, was what brought all these feelings to the fore. Would that be right?

KRC Do you think that is why He only brings Peter, James and John. Not all the disciples were exposed to that, but there was something for their learning, was there not? And that is why I wanted to have this reading because I feel when we come to the next section about Peter, he had not really grasped the effect of Gethsemane; not that any of us could, I suppose, but it is helpful instruction to see that. Help us with these words about the Lord Jesus: it says, “and he began to be amazed and oppressed in spirit”. That is what you are bringing out in Psalm 69, is it not? He says to them, “My soul is full of grief even unto death; abide here and watch”. Help us with what He was asking them to do in relation to being watchful.

TWL He was placing Himself into the hands of His Father in Gethsemane. As He went to the cross, He was conscious of what it was to have given Himself over into the hands of the One who had commanded that He should die, the One who would also raise Him from among the dead. The Lord is not presented as going forward in the might of His divine strength, but in the reality of the dependence of His manhood and committing Himself to His God. The disciples should have seen that, but it comes out later in their apostleship and martyrdom. That is what they had to learn. Do you think that is right?

KRC So, even in such times of pressure, the Lord was teaching them, which is a very wonderful and gracious thing, is it not, showing that He still cared for His own?

DCB It is interesting to see that the Lord directs His disciples here: “Sit here while I shall pray”, and then He chooses the three; but even there it says, “going forward a little, he fell upon the earth”. It is within our range to a degree, but we cannot be beside Him. I had that impression that we will never understand Gethsemane fully, and what it meant for Him, yet we are not left out. It comes into our view just to see something of what the Lord has gone through, even this, the anticipation of what lay ahead, and the way in which perfection shone out in that.

KRC That is very helpful, and I think it is very vital to the believer, to our daily maintenance in holding on to things. We can never really get a

full sense of it, but to have something in our affections of what it meant for the Lord in this way is food for the soul, is it not? That is needed. That is why I wanted to look at Peter on another occasion because we can find ourselves in a position where we will not be able for things, and it is vital that we have been sustained so that we do not find ourselves in a place where we are not able to cope.

DCB I can see the need to be occupied with the sufferings of Christ, and how we need to go over them. I suppose the way in which everything was according to the Father's will is what is brought before us in the way in which He speaks, "but not what *I* will, but what *thou* wilt".

KRC I always find this very interesting, especially in relation to that wonderful book, 'The Sufferings of Christ' (J N Darby, Collected Writings, vol 7), which I think is a necessity for us all to go over. However we can never come into the fulness of what He had to suffer. Is that why it is so important for us to come into an understanding - if we can - as to the sufferings of Christ?

DCB Food has been mentioned, food for our souls, and to see the Lord Jesus in this way is food for our souls. It is something to build us up. And clearly there is what there is as an example for us in some degree because it involves so much. "But not what *I* will, but what *thou* wilt" is clearly a word that we should each be taking up. I think one of the other attractive things is He brings in that title "Abba, Father" here, and that is a word that we are going to be able to use, and use by the Spirit, as the epistles show, Rom 8: 15; Gal 4: 6.

SCL Do you think what comes out in the section that you have covered is the reality of what it is to serve the will of God. I find this very testing, but the Lord here demonstrates in reality that if we are to serve the will of God, it will involve suffering, and there is no more perfect example than Himself. He does so in humility, in grace, in gentleness, in care and, even in the midst of all that was on His spirit, He was still seeking to teach His apostles. Elsewhere the Lord tells His disciples that if they were going to take on service, it would involve suffering, and here He demonstrates it. It is quite exercising to consider that.

KRC It is indeed, and we can go to Paul, where the Lord said to Ananias, "this man is an elect vessel to me, to bear my name before both nations and kings and the sons of Israel: for *I* will shew to him how much he must suffer for my name", Acts 9: 15, 16. I am guarded about saying that because, what do I know as to suffering? And it is not

necessarily physical. In the Scriptures and there were those who died for the Lord's name, but there are many who are suffering in many ways, and we can be thankful for what has come down to us. There are many who have suffered in relation to holding the testimony and the reality of how we gather, and who we gather with. These are things that have been made available to us as a result of faithful persons, do you think?

SCL You do not want to put anybody off taking up the exercise to serve, but it is also important to be real about it. You look at persons in the testimony and they might not have been martyred, but they were alienated sometimes, they faced great conflict in terms of persons standing against them. So, it is important to be real, but you do not want to put anybody off. I find it really exercising as to how far I am willing to suffer to serve.

JTB Further to that and to the reference to the psalm, I was interested in the Lord's word, "Sleep on now, and take your rest". One of the verses of Mr Darby's poem, 'The Man of Sorrows', comes to mind:

My soul in secret follows
The footsteps of His love;
I trace the Man of sorrows,
His boundless grace to prove.

I wondered if one application of the Lord's word, "Sleep on now, and take your rest", may have been an acknowledgement that none but the Lord Jesus could endure this. But on the other hand, when you are called to suffer - and I fully agree how little we know about it, we can depend on the boundless grace of God to support and help us in it. "Sleep on now, and take your rest".

DCB The Lord was going to go on to the forsaking, and no one else, whatever the sufferings, is going to go on to forsaking.

TWL I was thinking exactly that, and when we go through suffering, there is a Man standing by. There was no man standing by for the Lord; there was nobody. He was truly alone, and that is the intensity of it. I was reading the passage again, thinking about how He is actually heading into the penalty, and that He would be made sin.

DHM I am glad you brought that in; do you not think we see here what was entirely related to the Lord Jesus alone? His disciples were there, but they were present only to an extent. There was what they simply

were not able for; while for the Lord Jesus, there was a foretaste of what was going to be His portion later on when He would be literally entirely alone. I am glad you mentioned about forsaking.

TWL It is something that, as believers, we will never know. We will never know the intensity of what the Lord anticipated in Gethsemane. There is not another person who will ever know it, for one thing because they never knew love like He knew it. They never entered into a relationship such as He had; so there was that intensity that He was going to suffer as having to be put aside. Speaking very reverently, death for Christ involved all the terror of judgment upon sin, and nobody could feel that like Christ would, One who knew not sin, but knew what the penalty would be in its infinite greatness and severity. He knew that before He went there, and He still went there. That is Jesus alone.

KRC My exercise for this reading was to lift us in our affections because of the reality of what the Lord has done, and the intensity of what He faced, just as you are drawing that out. You have raised being forsaken. What does that actually mean?

TWL We need to remember that the scriptural presentation: when it comes to the forsaking, Jesus says, "My God". It has been said, it was, 'Man asking God, as His God, why He forsook Him', J Taylor vol 17 p12. To be forsaken meant that the communion in the relationship that He had enjoyed was withheld. He did not have recourse to the love that He enjoyed. And to be forsaken means that God, who had supported Him in the whole of His life, now could not. It is not that He would not: He could not. Christ felt the intensity of that because the relationship was perfect. He moved this way; He suffered this way; He anticipated this way for me: now that is grace and that is love.

KRC That is very helpful, and very attractive, because we are reminded that He did all this as an obedient Man because of the will of His God. We have been exercised in relation to looking at the true Servant. This is the true Servant coming out in all of His glory in what was a very dark moment in the history of man, was it not?

TWL This is heading on to the darkest moment of the history of time. There was never a darker day than when Christ was crucified. There was darkness over the whole land for three hours.

SD Can we get some help why it was by means of crucifixion that the Lord had to die? Speaking carefully, would the work of God still have been completed if the Lord had died another way?. Could you

just help us as to why that was the way that the Lord had to go?

TWL It was prophesied, was it not, that He was to die on a cross, and it was the worst that men could do? But the Scripture gives us this reason: “Cursed is every one hanged upon a tree”, Gal 3: 13. Christ bore that curse under which sinful man lay. He was perfect but He moved this way as a Man to save men; He had to die. The One who “offered himself spotless to God” (Heb 9: 14) was the only Man that was ever perfect; so He was the only Man that could die like this. Every other man had the sentence of death on him; Christ never had the sentence of death. We have a sentence of death because of our sin. He was never subject to the penalty of death, but He took on death; He offered Himself to God. We should love Christ when we understand that He knew the severity of death, and then He took it, and He took it for me and you. He took it for God too, but for me and you. Why do I love Christ? Why do I commit my life to Him? Because of this.

JTB “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6: 23); so the Lord Jesus had to die to settle the whole matter of sin and sins. Just on the forsaking, Mr Darby has a very illuminating phrase, ‘all dark, without one ray of light even from God’. He says, ‘For Him, death was death. Man’s utter weakness, Satan’s extreme power, and God’s just vengeance, and alone, without one sympathy, forsaken of those whom He had cherished, the rest His enemies, Messiah delivered to the Gentiles and cast down, the judge washing his hands of condemning innocence, the priests interceding against the guiltless instead of for the guilty - all dark, without one ray of light even from God’, vol 7 p169. That was the horror of the forsaking.

The other thing to say too is that communion was known in its fulness here at Gethsemane but on the cross, which we will come to, the conscious sense of the relationship was broken. And love: love could never mitigate what was there.

NRC I was reading verse 35, “And, going forward a little, he fell upon the earth”, and then it says, “and he prayed”. That communion that you are speaking of is seen there. It is very interesting to contemplate the full communion that He had with His God and Father, but what you have quoted as to the cross, ‘all dark, without one ray of light even from God’, is very affecting. He was there on His own, was He not? Here in Gethsemane, at this time of severe depression that came upon our Lord (I am speaking reverently when I say that), I was affected by that, that “he fell upon the earth”, and then it says, “and he prayed”. It shows

the love and affection that He had for His Father? I was thinking of what was said about “Abba, Father”? It is not just His Father; it is, “Abba, Father”. The greatness of that in itself is all-encompassing, is it not?

DCB This seems to be on the line of Mark's gospel. We have seen various times when the Hebrew is used directly, which suggests an intensity in the speaking, and there is an intensity in the speaking when He would say, “Abba, Father”, and bring in the fulness of the fact that He was in such intimacy. He does not address the Father as forsaken. But He came to that point on the cross where He did not use the term, 'Father'. He had to say, “my God”. It was God and man, a great transaction between God and man, and He is taking on the whole issue there.

TWL It is interesting that “going forward ... he prayed”. That is the dependent Man, the One who is placing Himself into the hands of His Father knowing exactly what was before Him. His only recourse was to place Himself into the hands of His Father. The sufferings of Christ are a very real thing. It is a very real thing to contemplate the intensity of the feelings that were found there in Gethsemane, that only He could feel.

DCB He says, “Arise, let us go” at the end of this paragraph. There is not the same indication of these feelings after this point. The matter has been , committed into the Father's hand, in that sense, and He goes forward in a holy calmness to what was to be endured.

SW I was impressed looking at some of the parallels in Genesis 22. Abraham says to his young men that they were to stay behind, and he and Isaac were to go forward. We can see how this moment was entirely between the Father and the Lord here. From the Father's side, the Father knew exactly what was in that cup too and the Lord's committal to it. I have just been impressed by that.

I was wondering if there is something in the fact that it is three times here that He comes back. It says, “And he comes the third time”.

DCB I wonder if that is a feature of completion. The matter was gone through and through and through, and then it comes to a culmination, and He has committed it to the Father. There is something about that, three times. The apostle prayed three times (2 Cor 12: 8) and then the word came, “My grace suffices thee”, v 9. There is something completed in an exercise, and God's word comes in.

KRC So that in itself draws out His perfection because He did not go forward in any hesitant way from this point. It was a complete matter.

“He stedfastly set his face”, Luke 9: 51. He was moving forward under the direction of God.

SCL Yes, the Jews might have said it was just a natural man; the mask could have slipped by now. But the Lord goes forward in absolute perfection, and it is a testament to the divinity of His Person. There is not a man alive but the Lord Jesus who would not in some way succumb to weakness.

JTB “Take your rest”: the Lord Jesus would never sleep again before His death. It brings out, first of all, His care for His own, but it also brings out the uniqueness of His Person that He would face all that transpired before Herod, all the indignities heaped upon Him by men, then He would appear before Pilate and be wrongly judged. He would carry His cross to Golgotha. He would be forsaken there. And yet here He says, “Sleep on now, and take your rest”.

NRC I am struggling to think of the words to use, but to think that that was all done as a Man. Here He is in communion with His Father although you could never take away the greatness of His Person as to who He was in Himself. The hymn says,

God manifest in flesh, O wonder of His universe! (Hymn 400)

Yet these things He had to go through! I was thinking of the remark that He would have never slept again and what was before Him: yet He did it all as Man. In view of what has been brought before us in this reading, what does it represent? It is really to fill our hearts in appreciation of the greatness of His Person.

TWL It is of all importance that He goes forward in the calmness of committal and devotion and subsequently, as *Man*, He has the way forward to death in calmness. Now, there is no man that would suffer affliction like this, knowing the terror that was before him and yet going in calmness, but Christ went in calmness. So He could quite readily not reply to Pilate. He could do that because He was in the calmness of His committal and dependence.

DHM What we see shining out is His dignity in a unique way. There was no protest, there was nothing of that sort. He faced what could be faced by none other, clothed with divine dignity in His manhood. Who else could have done that, but Jesus?

TWL “Who, when reviled, reviled not again; when suffering, threatened not; but gave himself over into the hands of him who judges

righteously" (1 Pet 2: 23) refers to what happened in Gethsemane, and He went from there to the cross in all His dependent manhood in the settled condition of soul and He went to die for His God.

KRC What you are emphasising is good because men took Him, but He gave Himself up to God, did He not? There is no weakness here on the divine side; there is power actually. Is it the fulfilment of what God had planned and purposed, and He was the One who was doing it for His God?

TWL He is the only One that could because He was spotless and He is the only One that would because of His devotedness. And these are two features of the life of Christ which mark the whole thing.

KRC What you were saying about not opening His mouth is helpful because it is quite a contrast to Peter when he was accused, to the extent that he curses and swears; but I was thinking of what the Lord says, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak". There is something to learn in that for us all, just to appreciate more what this One has done, do you think?

DCB It is another gracious touch, is it not, that He gives them every possible credit He could? He knew what the flesh was in them and their weakness, and would sympathise with that. That is how His spirit is: even at the time of the greatest pressure for Himself, He is giving credit, looking at those who would go as far as they could with Him. While it does not come into this gospel, elsewhere He says, "Let these go away", John 18: 8. He does not expect them to go this way with Him, but they went as far as they could; and then, in a certain sense, He dismisses them.

SCL Going back to where we read in Isaiah, we can understand heaven's judgment on persons who reject the gospel is as it is. The Lord has given everything that we have discussed. It is the rejection of the sufferings of Christ and all that He did it for, and His expression of love and grace, all that is rejected. I also wondered about the converse to that in Hebrews 12 (and I know we are speaking about what preceded the cross), where it says of the Lord, "who, in view of the joy lying before him, endured the cross", v 2. There was joy before the Lord in all that He endured and what was to come as a result of all of the sufferings: there would be persons that would contemplate Him and appreciate Him and grow in affection for Him. Part of the joy that was before the Lord as a result of His sufferings would be that there would

be persons moved by it and grow in the appreciation of all that He did.

KRC There is very deep feeling to consider in that section in Isaiah. It is therefore a benefit to consider that we know that there is One who has taken that judgment Himself. There is no getting away from the judgment of God, that God is a righteous God and a real judge, but Someone has taken that on my behalf. If we are humbled by it and affected by it, there is no fear for the believer, is there? It is a wonderful thing. I was thinking just as you were speaking, when Stephen preached in the early Acts, it says “And hearing these things they were cut to the heart”. They were rejecting this. They refused to be humbled by what Christ had done.

SCL Let us even take this reading today: what does that mean to the heart of the Lord? Right now, there are persons contemplating in their measure what the Lord actually took on. That means something to the heart of God right now.

KRC That is why I desired just to focus on this so that we would come away with something, however small it may be, for the glory of God.

DCB In the giving of the passover there is a reference to “its head with its legs and with its inwards”, Exod 12: 9. We get some secret of the inwards of Christ here, as the passover is to be fed upon; but also you see the same in the burnt-offering, which is wholly burnt up: there is what is wholly for God. There is our contemplation, but there is God's contemplation and the Father's contemplation of the excellence of Christ that is distinct in this chapter.

NRC I was just wondering why in Mark's gospel when it speaks of the bondman's ear having been struck off, there is no explanation; the Lord does not say anything regarding the ear in His answer. In the other two gospels the Lord tells Peter to put his sword back in its sheath, but in Mark's gospel there is nothing at all. It just goes on to say, “And Jesus answering said to them, Are ye come out as against a robber, with swords and sticks to take me?” Is there anything in that?

DCB You can see the Lord in grace; the last miracle He did was to heal the bondman. But the way it is put here would sober us: that if we do something like what is done here, it is damaging to the testimony. There was something that was not right that was done, and it affected someone's ear; so we have to be careful, but I could not say any more than that.

KRC Is Peter interfering with the will of God and the One who went

out in a state of calm? I have read today in Zechariah 13 where it says, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd", v 7. We could get help on that.

DCB It is affecting that *He* was the one who was to bear the stroke of the sword and no-one else at this point. It does not say it was Peter in Mark, which has often been remarked. That means that each of us can put ourselves in his place: I could be the one doing this. Well, the Lord was the one to bear the stroke at this time. You mentioned interfering; it was interfering with the way that God was acting in going forward.

TWL We speak of Mark as being the Servant's gospel, and the Lord here is not exactly occupied with things that are happening around Him. He has committed Himself to this, to head to the cross as the Servant. It is not that He bypasses this matter but in Mark's gospel, He is heading to the cross. He is serving His God. That is the feature of this part of the gospel. Would that be right?

DCB There is a reference to "a horse girt in the loins" (Prov 30: 31) which I think links with Mark's gospel. There is One going forward, going directly. We have to realise that when He says, "not what *I* will, but what *thou* wilt", even *saying* that was under the Father's direction. There is not an element of rebellion; we see He is being subject in displaying what His feelings were.

JTB No doubt He had heard; His ears had been opened that very morning "to hear as the instructed" (Isa 50: 4) and He would feel that the Father had this in mind for Him. The ear is a very important organ in the body. Psalm 40 refers also to the ears, "ears hast thou prepared me", v 6. That is a reference to the Lord Jesus. So, He heard in a totally balanced way, whereas what Peter did to the bondman of the high priest put him out of kilter. He had no way of weighing up fully what the components of any matters were.

To bring it down to a practical level, what we listen to needs to be studiously considered, does it not, in a balanced way? "Ears hast thou prepared me". This man became unbalanced but, as we know from other gospels, the Lord's healing touch came in. So, for the servant, therefore, there is someone listening with one ear, so to speak, which is totally inconsistent with the Father's will.

KRC My father used to say it was the last miracle the Lord performed. It is a very gracious touch, healing the man's ear. The man would no doubt have been given every opportunity to hear the gospel in a

balanced way so that he would get the opportunity to come into blessing, do you think?

JTB That is one of the Lord's miracles given His pathway of service here. It is interesting to see how He went about giving the deaf the capacity to hear.

Edinburgh

11th May 2025

List of Initials (*all Edinburgh unless shown*)

D C Brown, J T Brown; K R Cumming; N R Cumming; S Duthie;
T W Lock; S C Lock; D H Marshall; S Walker, Glasgow

SALVATION

Mark I Webster

Romans 5: 7-9; 10: 8-10

Matthew 14: 22-32

Philippians 3: 20, 21

I desire to say a word as to salvation and as to the One, the blessed Saviour, in whom it is found. We all need salvation, and whether we are in our sins or whether we are believers, we need it for the duration of our lives here. Salvation is for time, although the consequences of it go through into eternity. In eternity there will be two categories of persons. There will be persons that are with Christ in the restful enjoyment of His love; they will not need salvation then. And there will be those, sadly, for whom the opportunity for it has gone; they will be in what the scripture speaks of as “the lake of fire”, Rev 20: 15. That is a very solemn and serious thing to consider. But we need salvation now, and from these four passages I would like to speak of four aspects of it.

The first, the most fundamental of all, relates to our salvation from the wrath of God, which is a most solemn thing to consider. Persons, including some we may know, may belittle God's wrath, or seek to avoid any discussion as to it. Often, they are fearful and uncertain as to it, but it will most certainly come. Consider for a moment the scene around, the wickedness in the world. We do not need to dwell on it, but we see it. Can God leave that? It would be impossible for God, being who and what He is, to leave the sin in the world unceasing and unjudged. When the Lord Jesus returns to this earth, He will deal summarily with the evil in the systems of men that will be unleashed when those who compose the assembly have left at the rapture, Rev 6: 12-17. Following the period of the millennium, when He will rule in equity, He will sit as judge on the great white throne where the final act of judgment will be executed towards those still in their sins, Satan himself having also been cast into the lake of fire. That is all most solemn; for those still in their sins it is fearsome. But it need not be, because what we can present in the glad tidings is One who is available as a Saviour. None need fear the wrath of God which will be expressed in summary judgment; there is the means and the provision in the blessed Saviour whereby you and I can look ahead with certainty, and without any fear of that wrath, because of the work of Christ. How blessed that is.

I trust everyone here has the certainty of knowing the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, the Saviour of sinners. It is the most fundamental, the most blessed, matter of salvation, the beginning of our soul history with God, when we turn to Him in repentance and receive the Lord Jesus as our Saviour. Do you know Him in that way? That blessed One, the Son of God, has in love gone to the cross and, in virtue of all that He has done there in bearing the judgment of sin and in the shedding His precious blood, God is fully free to be favourable towards you and me.

What does God look for from you? He looks to you that you might recognise before Him that you are a sinner and that you might receive, by faith, the Saviour of His provision, whom He has raised from among the dead. If you, or any other, want a disposition laid out in a logical way that will prove to your natural mind what I am speaking of, you will be disappointed, because what is presented to you is for your acceptance by faith. What is presented to you is God's word, and His word is brought to you that you might receive it by faith. Take God as His word now, and He will assure you tonight that because of His beloved Son, the Saviour of sinners, and all that He has completed in His work on the cross, He is favourable towards you. All that is needed from you is the recognition that you are a sinner, and faith in the Saviour and in His precious blood.

Romans 3 brings out the importance of that, with the consequence of it being that you not only know with certainty the forgiveness of your sins but, because the blessed Saviour has not only gone into death but has been raised from it, you are justified in the sight of God; free of all sin. What a wonderful matter it is to be able to count ourselves amongst those to whom the apostle Peter refers when writing "who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree", 1 Pet 2: 24. How precious that is. God is propitious to all; He holds the whole world in provisional reconciliation to Himself on account of the work of Christ, who Himself "is the propitiation for our sins; but not for ours alone, but also for the whole world", 1 John 2: 2. The work has been completed and the One who has done it is now living on high, a blessed and glorious Saviour, available to you right now. Your salvation from the wrath to come depends entirely on you believing on the Saviour and having faith in His blood. I trust that is the portion of everyone here tonight. Dear friend, if you are unsure, have to do with God about it. You may be young, you may be old, but it is imperative that you do; it is imperative for your salvation and for your blessing. The alternative is

almost too awful to contemplate, that which I have spoken of already, the wrath of God that is to come. That is the first most essential matter of salvation.

The second matter of salvation that I want to speak about is in our second scripture; it is what we sometimes speak of as salvation from this present evil world in which we are. If you are a believer on the Lord Jesus, as I trust you are, you are here in a hostile world. If you believe on the Lord Jesus, Satan knows that. He cannot see into our hearts, that is impossible for him to do, but he can determine whether we are believers through our walk, how we behave and what we say, which he observes. If you are a believer on the Lord Jesus, he is determined to damage you in this present world. As believers on Him, we all need this present salvation. How is it to be experienced? The essential thing firstly is that to which I have referred already, that you believe that God has raised Him from among the dead. Then we need to confess Him, our living Lord. That is an important thing because, as the writer puts out, and it is very clear, "For with the heart is believed to righteousness; and with the mouth confession made to salvation". Earlier he wrote of confessing "with thy mouth Jesus as Lord". If you have received Him as your Saviour, the One that has met every claim that God could levy against you on account of your sinnership, then God would say, 'That One who has so wonderfully made provision for you as a sinner, He is your Lord'. You are to recognise His claim upon you. The Lord Jesus, the One by whom the worlds were made (Heb 1: 2) has claims upon you and me. He has creatorial claims and rights upon us, but He also has claims upon us in love on account of that which He has done in the great work of redemption. Therefore, He is our Lord; we belong to Him. I trust you recognise that and, as this scripture brings out, salvation from this present evil world is found as we confess Him as our Lord. That is very important; it is not good enough for us to just say, 'I am a Christian'; indeed in some ways that is somewhat presumptuous, because the meaning of "Christian" is one that is Christ-like, and who would wish to claim to be like Him? It is what believers were called by others in the early days of Christianity; they were "first called Christians" in Antioch, Acts 11: 26. If you do say that, it is better said than not, but in the world in which we are persons will often say, 'That is alright; you are entitled to your view, your religion, or whatever it is'. But I am sure all here who have confessed Him as Lord have found that it provides the point of salvation from the world. Because, although unbelieving persons might be very amenable, your

friends at school, persons with whom we work, our neighbours, and so on, whenever the name of the Lord Jesus is confessed, it makes them feel, perhaps sub-consciously, uncomfortable in your presence. That is not surprising, because God has established Him as Lord of all. When a believer says, 'He is my Lord', it provides a point of practical separation and salvation.

Separation can sometimes be viewed as something rather negative and legal, but it is not that; separation from the world is the most blessed thing. It is a wonderful experience for a believer to find that they are saved from this present evil world; they are apart from it morally; and this is recognised, albeit sometimes reluctantly, by others around them. We may have to engage with the world in our studies, in our work and so on, but in the confession of Jesus as Lord, we find that there is a separation, practically, from all that is evil. How wonderful that is in a world that is becoming more demanding of us, more explicit in its promotion of what is evil - and I am speaking here not of that which most persons, including those that are young, understand and recognise as evil in the world, murder, assaults and that kind of thing - but that which is morally corrupt and unclean, which is growing in its brazen and insidious character and influence. But how blessed it is, with the power that God's Spirit gives us as we ask Him for it, to be a confessor of Jesus as Lord. It sets us apart, practically, from that which is evil in the world, and protects us from the activity of Satan as he seeks to entrap us in our minds and affections.

I wanted to speak from Matthew's account of the storm on the lake of another aspect of salvation that is brought out there, that of the Lord's activity in love in His care for His own in the circumstances in which we are down here. We are all in different circumstances, and those circumstances in which we are found trouble us at times; they often bring sorrows, tests and challenges. In His ways in love with us, the Lord Jesus may allow and order certain things which test our faith. At times, just as with Peter here, our faith may wane. We may become overburdened, maybe overwhelmed, by the circumstances in which we are, and our faith fails. Yet the precious Saviour in His love and grace is available; He is available at every point in our lives. Peter found that. Consider the circumstances in which Peter was here; all here can understand them. The wind was contrary; the waves were strong. Peter was walking on the waters, his eye was on the Lord Jesus; and then took his eye off Him. We might say very simply that if nothing had happened, he would have gone fully under the water. He was in danger

and he realised that, and he called out. What clear and simple words these were, "Lord, save me". They are those we can all utter at any point in the circumstances of life. How assuring that is! We prove the help of divine Persons; we prove the Father's care, we prove the power of the Holy Spirit in confessing the Lord's name as we call upon Him; but we can always turn to the Lord, our blessed Saviour, and we can cry out to Him, "Lord, save me".

Peter did not have the time for anything lengthy; the matter was urgent, and all he uttered were those three words, "Lord, save me". Did the Lord ignore him because of his lack of faith? Of course He did not. What does it say? "And immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught hold of him". What a Saviour He is! In the circumstances of life, He is there to save us. Sometimes we may get into things on account of our own foolishness or weakness. Is the Lord's love changed? No. As we call out to Him, there He is; He hears the feeblest cry, and it says, "immediately Jesus stretched out his hand". How comforting that is. He may subsequently have to speak to us about the matter, in His ways with us, as He did to Peter, but His love and His saving grace will never waver. He is always available to us as we call to Him in the circumstances in which we are. They may be very simple or ordinary circumstances. Nothing is too simple or ordinary for Him.

I remember an incident in my life when I was a child. I was with my parents returning home in the car from a fellowship meeting on a Saturday evening. It was dark, and we were driving down a hill on a long twisty, very narrow, country lane. We could see the headlights of a car coming up the hill very fast and my father said something on the lines, 'That car is going at speed, that is dangerous'. It got nearer and came round a bend in front of us very fast and there was no place to pass at all and little time to stop. I can remember my father simply calling out, 'Lord, save us', and He did - immediately. How wonderful it was to prove the truth for ourselves of what Peter experienced, that something seemingly impossible was not impossible for Jesus. There is a little saying that some of us have mounted on the wall in our homes: 'There is nothing that Jesus cannot do'. How true those words are. Whatever the circumstance of life may be we all prove for ourselves the truth of those words as we call out to Him.

I read finally in Philippians 3. What the apostle writes here has sometimes been described as Jesus' final act of saviourship. It is a wonderful thing. The Lord Jesus, our blessed living Saviour is, I trust

we all know, the centre of another realm altogether. He Himself is in a glorious condition, no longer in that of flesh and blood into which He came in order to suffer and to die. It is Him that we, as believers, await. I trust everyone here is awaiting Him, as the apostle who wrote this was awaiting Him, “we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour”. We await Him as Saviour because of what follows, “who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory, according to the working of the power which he has even to subdue all things to himself”. All power is with Him. When He comes at the rapture for His own, one blessed aspect of His coming is that He will come as Saviour. He will come to “transform our body of humiliation”. What a comfort that is. There is much suffering amongst the Lord's people and possibly as we get older, we feel the limitations of our physical beings, the frailty of them, and the temporary character of them. But what a wonderful prospect to have, that the One whom we have known through our lives as our Saviour, in those many wonderful aspects of saviourship in which He can be known, will, whether or not He has not already taken us to be with Himself, undertake His final act of saviourship in transforming our bodies of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory. At that point we shall be like Him for, as the apostle John writes, “we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is”, 1 John 3: 2. We will be forever with Him; the time of his saviourship in faithful love will end; we will no longer need Him as Saviour. Everything that has entered our lives here, necessitating His untiring activity in love, will have ended; we will be untroubled in His presence, enjoying the sweetness of that love. I am sure the savour of all that He has done for us and the delivering power of His Name will ever remain in our hearts, but His service and activities in love as a Saviour will no longer be needed. How blessed that is.

All of us therefore need Him as our Saviour. If you are still in your sins, receive Him by faith as your own, personal Saviour. If you are a believer on Him, may you and I prove the blessedness of His saviourship in our lives here and the salvation from the world that the confession of His Name brings, as we await Him as Saviour to take us home to be with Himself. He is truly an 'all the way home Saviour'.

May that be the experience of everyone here, for His Name's sake.

Sunbury

24th December 2024

DIVINE GUIDANCE

Neil C McKay

Romans 8: 12-14

Acts 13: 1-4

1 Thessalonians 4: 16-18

Divine persons have undertaken to lead us and to guide us, for we need much guidance. We tend to look for these things in other places, but soul progress requires divine direction. Romans 8 shows us that the divine thought is that divine Persons, the Spirit Himself in that chapter, should control us, take charge of our bodies. The Holy Spirit is not here simply as an influence or to be called on as required, but is here to take charge - we are to give Him control of the ship, you might say. Much of our weakness and lack of understanding, and not seeking guidance when spiritual guidance is available, is because we neglect that.

We had a remark in our local reading from a younger brother who had observed that, in speaking to persons about Christianity, and about their faith, often what occupied them was how that faith helps in our circumstances, meets difficulties we find in our lives, and how the Lord and the Spirit help us in our employment, family life and so on. All of that is true - Christianity is nothing if not practical. However, it is helpful to see that divine guidance comes in in relation to the things of God, that God is operating with regard to His own purposes. Whatever guidance and help we get from divine Persons, it is not simply to help us in our immediate circumstances; it is always in line with God's operations and the formation of Christ in the believer. It is not always therefore what we expect. We often look for help in immediate issues and turn to the Spirit when it is some trouble of our own making, through our own wilfulness. Divine guidance is working in view of the purpose of God, and whatever way divine Persons help us, the answer to your needs is not the most important matter. It is that God should form you according to His own purpose and grace in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8 was mentioned in that reading: "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *these* are sons of God". The truth in this chapter corresponds with the section of scripture in Numbers chapter 21 through to 24. The brazen serpent and the springing well represent a point in the wilderness journey where the people of God prove the benefit, typically speaking, of the Holy Spirit and from that point move into the land. In Romans we see that: "God, having sent His own Son in

likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh" (v 3), which corresponds to the brazen serpent, speaking of God's condemnation of sin in the flesh; and the Spirit is then brought in as the power for the believer - corresponding to the children of Israel singing to the well, and consequently moving towards the land. It is the dividing point between their wanderings in the wilderness and their journey into the land, a definite point in their history when they cease wandering aimlessly and move directly towards the land. The difference is in the judgment of the flesh and the appreciation of springing well, the Holy Spirit - those that walk according to Spirit, mind "the things of the Spirit" (Rom 8: 5), who "are not in flesh but in Spirit", v 9. And "if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live". They live and move towards the land, representing God's mind for them. They then find things which are against them, as seen in Balaam's prophecies in Numbers 23 and 24. These answer to: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who against us?", Rom 8: 31. God would not allow the people to be discredited or to be cursed. God is supporting and maintaining His people and they are now moving in the right direction.

The children of Israel had had guidance previously in the pillar of smoke by day and the pillar of fire by night, and in the tabernacle system. They encamped around the tabernacle system - that is, everything in their wilderness life had to take reference from the tabernacle; their guidance depended on that - when the pillar of cloud or the pillar of fire moved, they moved, and when it ceased to move, they stayed. The testimony is a moving thing; there are always exercises involved in how to carry out the will of God in difficult circumstances, and these should always take reference from the tabernacle, where the presence of God is known among His people. There was guidance there, which for us would involve our local company and the saints generally.

How does that work out in our lives? If it is the case that believers are to be occupied with exigencies and difficulties here, why do we so often speak about spiritual things, and why do we have readings in Ephesians? I think one answer to this is in these scriptures. While we are here in the wilderness, everything is to take reference from the tabernacle system, from the truth of God there and the place of the children of Israel was determined around the tabernacle. Their blessing was determined by their protection of what was most valuable and their ability to recognise the movements of the testimony, and to

move in accordance with it.

From Numbers 21 to the end of the book, there is no more mention of the things which had previously been a guide to them. Aaron and Miriam died in the previous chapter, Moses was somewhat marked by failure, and the ark is not mentioned again in this book. The great point in the teaching now is the leadership of the Spirit towards the land. It is a landmark when we begin to be governed by the Holy Spirit.

When we are exercised that way, spiritual leadership is necessary. The chapter is very practical; it says, "if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live". As long as we carry on with the deeds of the body, actuated by our own wills, we are not going to enjoy spiritual life. This chapter devolves upon *us* taking up the exercise: we have the Holy Spirit now, He is going to guide us, but we need to take on that exercise. We have to walk according to Spirit. It does not say that you let the Spirit put to death the deeds of the body, but you recognise that there are things that you cannot go on with any more, and your intention and determination is to judge and reject these things that are fleshly. When that is your intention, you recognise the Spirit's power and ask Him to come in and help you - that is how it works out practically. You do not expect the Spirit to do it all, but you give Him scope to do it, you recognise that there is a new Commander in charge of your body and that is the Holy Spirit. He is going to bring in life, but you must go down this moral road to find that. You will not find any further help or guidance until you do; you are not going to move towards the land until you recognise that. There is always this encouragement: "ye are not in flesh but in Spirit" (Rom 8: 9): that is not what you are, you are not a fleshly person anymore, you have every capability of being spiritual.

From then on, Israel defeated Sihon and Og, features of the flesh, and have the Spirit's help in that victory. It is not that Moses defeats them exactly, nor the ark going round as it did around Jericho, it is the children of Israel going on in the power of the Spirit. How did they avail themselves of the Spirit? It says, "princes digged," Num 21: 18. That is, there were noble persons there among the company who worked on spiritual lines, sowing to the Spirit. You might liken it to our local companies. Am I sowing to the Spirit, making room for the Spirit? Am I digging out things that are extraneous, things not needed, things that are hindering the Spirit's operations in me and in the company locally? Are we making room for the Spirit in our local places? That is where the Spirit comes in to lead. It is not only that we are governed by

basic right or wrong, but our lives are on a different line. We are moving towards the land, occupied with spiritual things, and the Spirit helps us in this.

Then: “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *these* are sons of God”. Why does Paul put it in this way? Further on, in verse 23, “we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, we also ourselves groan in ourselves, awaiting adoption, that is the redemption of our body”. We are awaiting the full glorious result of redemption. We have sonship now, but redemption has not been completed in regard of our bodies. The work of redemption has been accomplished by Christ, but redemption as to us will be completed when we have a body of glory like Christ’s body of glory. *Then* persons will see we are sons of God. I suppose in the millennium persons will recognise us as sons of God because of our glorified condition. We will be evidently sons of God, as having a glorious body like Christ, in suitability to the work of God in us. It will be a body that shows that we are sons of God. But *now* there is no outward evidence that we are sons of God. The way to tell, according to this scripture, is by recognising those who are led by the Spirit of God: only sons of God are led by the Spirit of God. It is remarkable is it not? You see someone walking in the Spirit, evidently enjoying divine things, led by the Spirit - there is one of the sons of God. We will soon be dignified with bodies of glory, but now there is a tremendous dignity accorded to persons who are led by the Spirit of God, who are walking according to divine guidance. They are sons of God. Paul helps us to understand the dignity and the glorious character of those who give room to the Spirit and are characterised as being sons of God.

I wonder if we see this in the Acts of the Apostles. There was definite movement of the testimony in Numbers 21, the Spirit leading in the journey towards the land. Here is another movement of the testimony. There is an assembly in Antioch, distant from Jerusalem, the original centre of God’s operations. But now the testimony is moving further afield, and the Spirit is operating distinctly in Antioch with this in view. There are very many signal marks of the Spirit’s operations in Acts which belong to the beginning of the dispensation. We do not see such evident manifestations of the Spirit these days because of the broken day in which we are. Mr Coates said about that, ‘It is a day of departure and ruin, and it could hardly be expected that God should accredit in a public way a condition of things which is contrary to His mind’, Letters, p83, 84. The present time of breakdown has meant that things are weak, and we must understand that there should be exercise

in seeking where the Spirit is speaking. I trust we accept that the Spirit does speak, and that our safety and salvation lies in listening to what the Holy Spirit says. It says in the Revelation that the Spirit speaks to the assemblies (Rev 2: 7); that is, in every place you would recognise that the Spirit has prerogative to speak: "let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies". Divine guidance comes into our gatherings together by the Holy Spirit's speaking and leading us.

It says, "there were in Antioch, in the assembly which was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon ..., Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen ..., and Saul." It would seem that in the assembly there, these were the prophets and teachers, and "they were ministering to the Lord and fasting" - providing suitable conditions for the Spirit to operate. They were digging the well, they were working in their local assembly exercised that it should prosper. It is a fine thing to do in your local company - to minister to the Lord and forgo other things which you may normally enjoy, in order to gain spiritual power. And in those spiritual conditions, "the Holy Spirit said, Separate me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then, having fasted and prayed" - with further fasting and prayer, they recognised and accepted the Spirit's speaking, and "having laid their hands on them, they let them go". They sailed away, sent by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was in charge of the testimony; He governed the spread of the testimony westward as we see throughout the book of Acts. He continues to speak and to guide. Paul writes to Timothy, "the Spirit speaks expressly", 1 Tim 4: 1.

There is a very unjealous atmosphere here: these five men are named, and two of them are sent out on this first missionary expedition around Asia Minor. The others accepted the Spirit's authority regarding this movement of the testimony. How needful these men were, being left in Antioch to maintain what is for God in the local company. I do not say that we should not go to visit other companies; it is important that the saints visit each other, but it is also important to maintain local responsibility in each local assembly. What would be maintained locally in a place? They would maintain the truth, as it says, "Keep, by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us, the good deposit entrusted", 2 Tim 1: 14. The only way they could maintain the truth is by the power of the Spirit. They would maintain the Lord's supper and the service of God, every local place where there are enough persons would be exercised to maintain those. That would be of utmost importance. No doubt the gospel would be preached; it is not an assembly function exactly, but a

local assembly would be exercised that persons would hear about the redemptive work of Christ and be converted and receive the Holy Spirit and be added to the company. Those persons whom the Holy Spirit left in Antioch would maintain discipline; I do not think a local assembly can continue or prosper if they do not exercise discipline in a place. We do not often like to speak about it, but it is imperative. Every local assembly is bound to exercise discipline in order to maintain the economy of local assemblies and enjoy practical fellowship with them. What a responsibility these brothers were left with - to shepherd the assembly and maintain these assembly functions. They would no doubt maintain ministry; think of the weekly calendar we have, all in accord with scripture. The prayer meeting: in Matthew 18: "where two or three are gathered together unto my name" (v 20), would include the prayer meeting. In 1 Corinthians 14 you get the ministry meeting. Acts 20 would set out the reading meetings, and also 1 Corinthians 3, "Do ye not know that ye are the temple of God" (v 16), the place of enquiry. All these things are in scripture; these persons would be exercised to be used under the Spirit's guidance to bring in the help that was needed for the brethren. When I was young, I used to ask why we were going to these meetings all the time? We need them. We need the Spirit's help, we need the constant guidance, we need to hear what the Spirit is saying, we need to understand the movements of the testimony.

Then we have in Acts 14 that Paul and Barnabas returned to their own company, "and thence they sailed away to Antioch, whence they had been committed to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled", v 26. The Spirit was with them; under His guidance their commission was completed. The Spirit records that there was no lack in that work. Whatever He gave them to do was "fulfilled". They came back, and "having arrived, and having brought together the assembly, they related to them all that God had done with them, and that he had opened a door of faith to the nations. And they stayed no little time with the disciples", v 27, 28. What a fine company that must have been! And so we have Paul and Barnabas returning with such tidings to those who had maintained the company in its local place. It was from there the gospel spread westward - from a sphere in which persons were ministering to the Lord and fasting. They were governed by the testimony and guided by the Holy Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 4 shows that the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus both lead us. Both are available to us, and both are in charge of the testimony. The Lord is in charge of the testimony from heaven; the Holy

Spirit is in charge here. When the saints are raptured, taken to be with the Lord, it is the Lord Himself who comes; He does not delegate that action to any. Now in times when the Lord's headship is known and experienced, namely the service of God, we understand that the Lord comes in Himself and leads His own; it is not so much the Spirit's leadership that is known. The Holy Spirit is needed; He is the power to enjoy, "access by one Spirit to the Father", Eph 2: 18. He will always be with us; we will never be in a state where we do not need the Holy Spirit, and will have the Spirit eternally. But in Thessalonians the Lord comes Himself, with no intermediary. That is the next great movement of the testimony; until then we are left in the testimony here and it is to be our guiding rule.

So the period of the testimony will finish; we will be forever with the Lord and continue to have the Holy Spirit. We will not need guidance then; we will not be worried about exigencies then or difficulties at work then. What will really matter then is not the difficulties that we faced last week or the week before, but what God has formed in us for His eternal glory. That is what God is operating towards, all according to His own purpose and grace. As it says in Romans, "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to purpose", chap 8: 28. That is, God is not operating with us as He operates with persons in the world: He is operating with us with regard to His own glory. That is why it is so important. Eternally what will have value is what was worked out in our souls by divine Persons during this present period. I do not believe the truth of God is known and understood in the way it ought to be. We are outwardly very weak and ought to be very humble, but nonetheless, if someone were to ask where persons are who really know the truth of God, I would be able to answer them. There are many places where there is a real and genuine love for the Lord Jesus, but where is the Spirit leading? He is guiding persons into the great things of the purpose of God. He does not lead persons to different companies; He is leading persons to the land and leads only in that direction.

May we be encouraged, for His Name's sake.

Birmingham

10th May 2025

A PECULIAR TREASURE

Richard Cumming

Matthew 18: 20 (to 'midst')

Malachi 3: 16, 17 (to 'prepare')

I have a very simple impression, beloved, from these well-known passages of scripture. I am freshly affected as to the preciousness of what there is, and it is continuing right down to the present time, to this week even; what there is “where two or three are gathered together unto my name”. This is the Lord speaking, about this matter of gathering together unto His Name. We freshly experienced that on Lord's day morning, and there was a very real sense of divine power entering into the occasion, the activities of the Holy Spirit. We oftentimes refer to what has flowed out from the breaking of bread, what there is that entered into the service of praise. How precious these things are, what is being maintained in freshness and in the power of that blessed One, right down to this week; what there is for us to carry from our experiences of what we have enjoyed on Lord's day. I am impressed by what there was that went through the day, the preciousness of that, and what we can carry with us in our spirits as the week proceeds.

Think of what is referred to here; the thought of smallness comes in, the twos and the threes. There are many localities going on faithfully in small numbers in these days; but there is what is being maintained in faithfulness, and in fidelity, those gathering unto the name of the Lord Jesus. I am just freshly touched by the need for continuing, to be maintained in the preciousness of it. Divine Persons are available to us, to help us to continue here as overcomers. There is a great need to be maintained in such a way and holding fast to what is precious in relation to such gathering, showing forth the Lord's death: “ye announce the death of the Lord, until he come”, 1 Cor 11: 26. We are to be freshly conscious of His presence coming in and what there is that flows out. What vibrancy can enter into the occasion, and does, in the power of the Holy Spirit. We speak as to the activities of the Holy Spirit in these days, and rightly so. What a Person we have, the One indwelling the believer and the One who is able to quicken our hearts, quicken our affections, giving us to be conscious of the day leading to a close. We often refer to the word in the Revelation: “the Spirit and the bride say, Come”, Rev 22: 17. As it lays hold on our hearts and our

souls, it helps us to be maintained in these closing days as we wait for our Lord's near return.

I just link this with where we read in Malachi. It speaks there too, about those who “thought upon his name”. I feel the edge of this for myself, but may we be maintained in faithfulness, and fidelity. We have read just recently in John's gospel where the Lord could speak to some who had turned aside, but then He could say to His own who were there with Him, “Will ye also go away?”, John 6: 67. Peter answered Him, “to whom shall we go?”, v 68. May we keep the reality of that with us. As we seek help, help comes in. There is no doubt about that at all. We have the preciousness of the Name, the preciousness of the Name to those who love the Lord and who are waiting for His appearing.

Then there is here, “they that feared Jehovah spoke often one to another”. Again, how precious that is too. There is what is being maintained in relation to what can be enjoyed as regards to divine Persons. The Holy Spirit is helping us and, as we have said, quickening us in order to be maintained in answering to what relates to the praise and glory of divine Persons, what is welling up within the heart and within the soul: “they that feared Jehovah”. I would hesitate to say that this would be reverential fear; this is something found in those who have a deep sense of what is right, and what is fitting by way of response to divine Persons. It says, “they shall be unto me a peculiar treasure”. The footnote 'a' is helpful in relation to that; it says, 'my own possession'. How precious that is, “a peculiar treasure, saith Jehovah of hosts”. As we think of that title, we think of the greatness of what God has. That provides a fresh stimulus to us: we may be in a day of small things, but we are referring here to Jehovah of hosts. How we can sing in relation to the work of the Lord Jesus -

For Thou hast brought again to Him
More than by man He lost; (Hymn 431).

How great the operations from the divine side, and what has been secured that we might be maintained in it. It says, “saith Jehovah of hosts, in the day that I prepare”. Just prior to that it speaks too of Jehovah observing those who spoke one to another; “and heard, and a book of remembrance was written”. I think it has been said that what we find here is not just persons, but persons who are worshippers. We have recently had the thought that we get in John's gospel, “the Father seeks such as his worshippers” (chap 4: 23), and persons are being

secured. The thought perhaps in that chapter, is that persons have been secured, and here it is, you might say the persons who worship. May we each one be preserved in the preciousness of it.

May the Lord bless these few simple remarks.

PRECIOUS TO GOD

Graham J Gaskin

Ephesians 5: 25-27

Acts 20: 28

I am very grateful what our brother has brought before us, because I had an impression too, about what is so particularly precious to divine Persons at the present time. It is found wherever there are conditions that are of true assembly character, and this is why I read the section in Ephesians. We have limited numbers to walk with, some of our meetings may be quite small and we may be conscious of that, but God has very large resources. We may not appreciate the fulness of what is available in the assembly. God is bringing through something which is so particularly precious to Him, even where there are pressures and times of difficulty. We perhaps cannot take account of the richness of all that is under the Lord's eye, and yet there are twos and threes, as our brother has said, that are going on in faithfulness, and God has such delight in them; I wanted to call attention to that.

I read in Acts just to show how precious to God the assembly is as it has been purchased at such a great cost. How much He must value what is expressive of assembly character!

Connected with all this is the greatness of the love of the Christ. I was reading an article by Mr A J Gardiner last night and he was speaking about what takes place in John 13, see 'The Power of Love' Collected Articles, Part 4 p169,. There the enemy was active; there was an emissary of Satan in that company, Judas, and although the enemy was so near, yet it says Jesus "having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end", John 13: 1. The love of the Lord Jesus continues and is going to preserve what is true to Him right through to the end. He said at the end of Matthew's gospel, "behold, I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age", chap 28: 20.

The Lord Jesus has resources that in His love He is going to make available to the assembly, that she will be brought through triumphantly. It has been said that He would not spare anything in order that the assembly should be preserved and set on.

That is why I read these words in Ephesians. It speaks of the Lord serving. It says He is going to purify the assembly “by the washing of water by the word, that *he* might present the assembly to himself glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things”. It has been said, and I think it is right, that this washing is not exactly to remove any impurity: you cannot think of that in the assembly viewed as the vessel of God’s purpose. It is rather to bring out the purity of what is there, which is so inherently attractive and what answers to the Lord’s affections. (Mr Coates thought that it suggested excellence and beauty conferred rather than defilement removed, CAC Vol 26 p73). Beloved brethren, that is what is going on today despite what may appear as weakness and small numbers. What an encouragement for us to see that God still has that which is so deeply precious to Him.

I suppose the exercise for us is that although we can be assured that God will have and maintain what was according to His purposes and it will go through in triumph, am I having my part in it livingly? Am I enjoying what is responding to the heart of Christ? Am I conscious of His love, that sustaining love of Christ? I believe the Lord would call attention to His affections for His own. In that very same chapter in John 13: 23 you find that the apostle John refers to himself as the disciple that Jesus loved and who was in the bosom of Jesus. This is the one whose ministry goes on to the end. That character of the Lord’s affection for His own is going to continue despite everything and it is going to be maintained in power, “having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end”. Beloved brethren, how wonderful to be in the consciousness of the Lord’s affections: may we know and enjoy the currency of them. May it thrill our hearts. We may be conscious of this being a day of small things, but nevertheless, what is so precious to divine Persons is being brought through. May we be encouraged to find our part in it and find the joy of it. We can be in the enjoyment of His love individually and I often think of the hymn of Bernard of Clairvaux,

The love of Jesus, what it is,
None but His loved ones know. (Hymn 279)

Paul was conscious of the Lord’s love to him when he said, “the Lord stood with me, and gave me power”, 2 Tim 4: 17, the Lord in His

affection sustained His apostle and supported him in the testimony that he had to give. But how precious for us to take account of the depth of His love to His assembly; and may we be increasingly conscious beloved, of the Lord's love to us both collectively and individually. Things are going to go through in power for the Lord Himself is great Accomplisher of these things and He is going to bring them about for God's glory.

May we be encouraged for His Name's sake.

Aberdeen

15th April 2025