

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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REDEEMING THE TIME

Jimmy Drummond

Genesis 40: 9-11

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I am thinking especially of the second scripture we have read and the matter of redeeming the time. If we look at the footnote to the scripture we read in Ephesians we can see it refers to opportunities; so perhaps it may have been better to have read the scripture in Peter where it speaks of "the rest of his time", 1 Pet 4: 2. However, I trust the Spirit will give us liberty to apply the scripture in Ephesians to our lives in a general way. We can say simply that our life is one big opportunity to be here for the Lord and for the Lord's things. What a consideration it is then, the matter of redeeming the time. How precious time is; perhaps especially when we are younger we do not appreciate how precious time is. I suppose when you are young you almost - perhaps not literally - feel as if you are going to live forever: you do not think about what it is like to grow old and to die; but clearly none of us are naturally going to live forever. Well, that is stating the obvious, but none of us will live forever, no matter how advanced man becomes. "The Cherubim, and the flame of the flashing sword" were set "to guard the way to the tree of life" (Gen 3: 24), and there is no access to that for man in his lost condition. Think of what God brought into the garden of Eden. He prohibited man from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God in His grace knew that man was not able for it; sin having entered the universe He knew that there was only one Man that would be able to resolve the moral question of good and evil. But sin having entered the race He guarded the tree of life. The only way to the tree of life now is through Christ because He Himself is the Tree of Life. Is that not wonderful!

Dear friend, beloved brother or sister, how brief life is. Have we not been reminded of that in recent times, the brevity of life. It does not matter how long you live for, and none of us knows how long we will live for, but even if you were to live one hundred years, life is brief. I once did a little calculation about the time that has passed from the beginning of creation until now. The Bible gives the history of man as approximately six thousand years, and the duration of most lives there have been would not equate to one percent of that time. How puny it is! We sung of man's tiny life:

Whose little life is as a span,
Whose glory fades away.

(Hymn 150)

Is it not so brief? Life for anyone is relatively brief. Indeed James speaks of it in chapter 4 of his epistle. You may say he is exhorting us to redeem the time. He says, "Go to now, ye who say, To-day or to-morrow will we go into such a city and spend a year there, and traffic and make gain, ye who do not know what will be on the morrow, (for what is your life? It is even a vapour, appearing for a little while and then disappearing,) instead of your saying, If the Lord should so will and we should live, we will also do this or that", v 13-15. Think of that, a scripture recording and telling us life is but a vapour. Someone else has said it is like the steam from a kettle; it is there momentarily and then it is gone. This condition in which we are: your life in this condition will be gone forever. How sobering that is; so the urgency then is to redeem the time. I would appeal and encourage each one of us in relation to that.

It is always a concern to bring Christ before the brethren, and in Genesis 40 it speaks typically to us of the Lord Jesus and of His life. What a life it was. I do not suppose we could really speak of redeeming the time in relation to the Lord. Think of that wonderful life, and all that it was from beginning to end for the pleasure of God, and yet it was so brief. In Psalm 90, a prayer of Moses, the man of God, he really touches upon the mortality of man, of you and me in our condition; he speaks about three score years and ten and a little more, and then he says, "it is soon cut off, and we fly away", referring to the spirit of a person returning to God. It then says "So teach us" (v 12) as if it is not something that comes normally to us, "to number our days", or to redeem the time. It says, "So teach us to number our days, that we may acquire a wise heart". The Lord did not need to be taught, we may say reverently, to number His days. Think of how many or how few they were. It speaks prophetically of them, "take me not away in the midst of my days!", Psalm 102: 24. Think of the allotted time span referred to in Psalm 90; but the life here of our Lord Jesus was barely half of that. And yet, think of it, Peter speaks about one day as a thousand years (2 Pet 3: 8), but when you think of the Lord's life and what it meant to heaven, one day was as a thousand years, such was the compression that was involved in the Lord's life here, such was the delight and the pleasure to heaven, to God and to the Father. So it says at the end of verse 9, "In my dream, behold, a vine was before me". How blessed it is

to keep Him before us, the Lord Jesus Christ. Think of His life and all its fullness, in all its perfection. We thought a little in the reading of the One who could say, "I am meek and lowly in heart", Matt 11: 29. What a Person to be attracted to! He was meek towards men and lowly towards God, bringing out His perfect manhood and dependence. What wonderful features we find in our Lord Jesus. Here the writer says, "behold, a vine was before me; and in the vine were three branches". In the description it almost sounds like a candlestick. I think it suggests to us that there was what was in the life of Jesus that was so great that it reflected back, and it shines forward as well. How wonderful it is: it is like the candlestick casting its light. It says, "and it was as though it budded". Think of that; it has been likened to Luke 1: "the holy thing also which shall be born shall be called Son of God", v 35. Think of what became manifest when the Lord Jesus was born. There was there that which was unlike you and me, which was essentially and substantially holy. How wonderful to contemplate that "holy thing"; and then it says also, "its blossoms shot forth". Again that has been likened to Luke's gospel. The Lord Jesus could say, "did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?", chap 2: 49. Think of how even as a boy at the age of twelve He took up responsibility, and in conscious sonship. He took it up, and He was here for the pleasure of God and for the pleasure of His Father. And then it says "its blossoms shot forth". What was seen there, the delight that heaven could take account of, and so the Spirit descends as a dove upon Him (Luke 3: 22), and it says "its clusters ripened into grapes". Think of the Lord Jesus seen here in the glory, and, we would say reverently, the substantiality, of His manhood: "ripened into grapes". And then it says, "And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup". Think of what came upon the Lord Jesus at the end of His pathway here. We have spoken of compression in relation to the fullness of the Lord's life. God has indeed been described as a God of compression; and compression also enters into ministry; not everything is explained. There is what is left for us to follow up and work out. It says here, "and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's hand, and gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand". Think of the Lord Jesus then as the perfect example. We can say that, especially as Luke gives an account of it as He moves forward and receives the cup from the Father. He could say, "not my will, but thine be done", Luke 22: 42. What a life! How wonderful to think of it, such a life, laid down; He could say, "I have received this

commandment of my Father”, John 10: 18. We were reminded recently that perhaps we have the tendency to look around and look at others, and choose someone as an example to suit our own conscience, but Peter says, “leaving you a model that ye should follow in His steps”, 1 Pet 2: 21. Is it not beautiful to know something of that life?

I read in Ephesians, which has been described as *our* light (JT vol 27 p572), the truth at its height, and yet Paul has to say certain things to them, certain things which would then be necessary to be said to ourselves. He says where we started to read, “Wake up, thou that sleepest”. He was not speaking to unbelievers. Of course, if there is anybody here who does not know Jesus as their Saviour, then how urgent the message is for you to wake up. Another scripture says “now is the well-accepted time”. You say, 'Well, this is an address, it is not the gospel', but the scripture does not say wait until tomorrow till you hear the preaching; it says, “now is the well-accepted time; behold, now the day of salvation”, 2 Cor 6: 2. You think of how brief your life is in comparison to eternity. You cannot even actually do the comparison. There is no calculation you can do to compare the brevity of your life now to what all of eternity will be. Think of that, and if you do not know Jesus as your Saviour you could be standing on the brink of a lost eternity. How awful that is. For the believer, eternity is a prospect but, for the unbeliever, it is a precipice because you are standing on the edge of a lost eternity. You may be sitting here, and you may belong to believing parents, and you may have come to all the meetings, and you may not yet know Jesus as your Saviour because what you have been doing all the time is you have been hushing your conscience to sleep. If you keep hushing your conscience to sleep, it has been said, there will come a day in a lost eternity when your conscience will keep you awake with thunderous tones regarding the opportunities you had to come to know Jesus as your Saviour. Dear friend, there is no point speaking about redeeming the time if you do not yet know Jesus as your Saviour; may everyone here know Him as such, know Him as your Redeemer, and then you can redeem the time. And so it says here, “wake up”.

I just wanted to draw attention to some examples that may help us in relation to this scripture. The first one I wanted to speak about is in Acts 20 where we have Eutychus. That is another thing; you may know the Lord as your Saviour; and I trust you do, but you may be like Eutychus. It says of him in verse 9 “a certain youth, by name Eutychus, sitting at the window-opening, overpowered by deep sleep, while Paul

discoursed very much at length, having been overpowered by the sleep, fell from the third story down to the bottom, and was taken up as dead". You will not redeem the time if you sit at the window opening looking out rather than looking in and taking into account all that is proceeding. Verse 7 says, "And the first day of the week, we being assembled to break bread, Paul discoursed to them, about to depart on the morrow. And he prolonged the discourse till midnight". The dispensation is now beyond the midnight; the darkest hour comes before the dawn, and that is where we are in the dispensation, and the question then would be for your heart and my heart, 'Where am I?'. Am I able to keep going, or am I sitting on the window opening, starting to lose interest, starting to look out. And what happens is that he falls. What a situation this is; I suppose literally he almost killed himself. You can do that you know; you can trifle with the world: you can live close to the periphery. Some may fall over the edge, and God in His grace may pull us back, but there are those who have been lost. It is not worth trifling on the edge of things, and so it says here, "Paul descending fell upon him, and enfolding him in his arms." Paul is really an example to us. We have been reminded that it is a love chapter, the embrace is involved, and really Paul acts like the Lord, actually you may say, like Christ. Where we read in Ephesians it says, "Wake up, thou that sleepest, and arise up from among the dead, and the Christ shall shine upon thee". And that is what Paul did to this youth; he was able to save the youth, and that is a challenge to any of us who are older that we might be able to save the youth. The result is that "Paul descending fell upon him, and enfolding him in his arms, said, Be not troubled, for his life is in him. And having gone up, and having broken the bread, and eaten, and having long spoken until daybreak, so he went away. And they brought away the boy alive, and were no little comforted", v 10-12. So Eutychus is no longer called a youth, he is called a boy; that is, there is potential. You could become that; is that not wonderful? Perhaps you have not felt that interested in divine things, have not been interested in the meetings, but have been revived in your affections because Christ is shining upon you, and because of the warmth of His love. It is not His rebuking gaze, it is the warmth of His love, and you can be revived, and you become no longer a youth, but a boy. That is, you are a man potentially. It says that they "were no little comforted". Would you not like to be that; would you not like to be a comfort to your parents, a comfort to your local brethren, by being revived and becoming attached to what is of the Lord? How blessed to be that.

Paul makes this exhortation to wake up, and then he says, "See therefore how ye walk carefully, not as unwise but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

Ruth is another example of one who redeems the time. What a situation she found herself in. She must surely have considered this matter of numbering her days, given that her mother-in-law's husband had died, her sister-in-law's husband had died, and her own husband had died. Death had rolled in upon her circumstances and you could say that what is suggested in the scripture we referred to in Psalm 90 must have been on her heart. It says, "so teach us to number our days", and she really begins in chapter 1 of Ruth. She says to Naomi, "Do not intreat me to leave thee, to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried", v 16-17. Think of that; she came to the end of herself, the end of her own life. What a relief it is to come to the end of yourself and your own life. She was committing herself to the position whole-heartedly. Paul could say, "for me to live is Christ", Phil 1: 21. That would be someone who completely redeems the time. What a standard, and how measured we are to speak of it, but he says, "for me to live is Christ". Ruth was exercised and had begun to know certain things. It has been helpfully said that it is by faith that we know things; so faith is involved. You cannot redeem the time without having faith and exercising faith. It is by faith we know things, and it is by love we reckon things, and it is by the Spirit that we yield. These are instructive matters and if you are going to make progress and redeem the time you need to think about certain things. It is a reference to Romans 6; love causes you to reckon certain things, and it is by the Spirit you can now yield your members "in bondage to righteousness unto holiness", v 19.

Then it says in chapter 2 of Ruth, "I pray you, let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers. And she came, and has continued from the morning until now: her sitting in the house has been little as yet", v 7. Energy is also required to redeem the time. That is a challenge. There are greater and greater demands on our time being made by the world or business. It says of Ruth that "her sitting in the house has been little as yet". She would not neglect what was in the house in relation to the family. A believer would not neglect what was in the house in relation to the family, but another has said simply -

Go on! go on! there's all eternity to rest in.

W Lawrence

So energy is required, and the blessed Holy Spirit would strengthen and help us in relation to that. And then in verse 8, Boaz speaks to Ruth, "Hearest thou not, my daughter?". If we begin to redeem the time, think of the rewards that start to come. Boaz said, "my daughter". Think of being given a conscious sense of a relationship with divine Persons. Is that not a wonderful thing? If you start to redeem the time, if you start to give up some of your time - you might call it your own time - if you start to do that, you will get some sense of divine approval, and not only that, you will get some sense of having a relationship with divine Persons. How wonderful that is! There is nothing to compare with that; and so you find you can redeem the time wherever you are, if you are driving the car or in the train, wherever you are going or whatever you are doing, there is an opportunity in your thoughts, in your prayers, in reading: you can be redeeming the time. You do it, not because of some sort of ritual or some religious exercise, but because you have a relationship with divine Persons. She was going to discover that the person she had a relationship with was "a mighty man of wealth", v 1. Is that not wonderful? What a recompense there is for any time we give to divine things, and so Boaz says to her, "Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from here, but keep near here with my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field which is being reaped, and go thou after them". That is another matter that has been mentioned many times before, having your eyes "on the field that is being reaped". Think of the ministry of the recovery that has come to us. Think of the ministry of Mr Darby and Mr Stoney and Mr Raven and Mr Coates and Mr James Taylor. How can we have time to read the world's books if we have not read all the ministry? And if you have read all the ministry you will not want to read anything else. It is as simple as that; how blessed that is. Of course, there are the Scriptures as well, primarily the Scriptures, the word of God, but then too there is the ministry which helps us to keep within the banks of the river, and helps things to open up, and confirms any impressions we may have. We get impressions direct from divine Persons, from the Lord and from the Spirit, but then the Scriptures would confirm our impressions, and then the ministry too would confirm and support and help us. But then there is more than that because it says of Ruth that "she sat beside the reapers; and he reached her parched corn, and she ate and was sufficed, and reserved some", v 14. Think of that: parched corn; how beautiful it is, is it not? She did not just have what came from the books: she had something else, there was something of "the spirit of wisdom

and revelation", Eph 1: 17. You may say it is as if Jesus the Lord gave her something. Think of what it would be, dear brother or sister, to be conscious of the Lord Jesus Himself giving you something: parched corn, something that He had prepared. There is something gained that is beyond the mere study of Scripture, or ministry; there is what comes from Christ Himself. Is that not wonderful, involving the "the spirit of wisdom and revelation"? It must involve impartation. There is something that the Lord would give you as you redeem the time, if you make time, set aside time for Him. Think of His own personal attention to you. He knows who you are. You are not just one of a crowd; you are not just one of a number. The Lord Jesus knows every person who gives more and more time to His interests. How wonderful He is, what bounty He has to share with you and how blessed the situation becomes.

Then, of course, there is also the exercise of the threshing floor. The word was that Boaz was there, "Behold, he is winnowing barley in the threshing floor to-night", chap 3: 2. It was barley; it is all linked with a Man, the Lord Jesus Christ who is risen from the dead. It is a risen and living Lord, One on the other side of death. You can see how worthwhile this is, because you are investing your time in something that cannot fail, something that is beyond decay, beyond failure. How blessed that is, and so Ruth is told that Boaz is in the threshing floor winnowing barley, and Ruth goes there at night. Have you done that? Later on it says that she was there at midnight, v 9. I think the apostle Paul must have known what it was to be in the threshing floor at midnight. How much he must have redeemed the time. You say, 'Well, it is midnight, that is the time you should be sleeping', a time perhaps when everyone else is sleeping, but Paul must have worked things out in relation to all that he had. Initially you get everything to meet your need; then exercise is required to acquire certain matters, and that must have marked Paul. The result of Paul spending hours on the threshing floor at midnight is seen in Philippians 3: "But surely I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all, and count them to be filth, that I may gain Christ", v 8. Have you done that? I would say that, have you, dear brother or sister, ever gone to the threshing floor at midnight? Have you ever been on your knees crying to the Lord for help in your moral exercises, help in relation to the spiritual blessings that are available, help in relation to the purpose of God? Because what happens here is

Ruth goes to the threshing floor, and then she lies down at the feet of Boaz, and there is a heap of corn. Think of that! As working out these exercises and redeeming the time, what happens typically is she starts to get an apprehension of divine things in all their greatness and scope and glory. It is really like Ephesians where it says "that ye may be fully able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height", chap 3: 18. There it is, the heap of corn; she was at Boaz's feet and she becomes privy to that, and then as a result you may say there is growth and so, later on in chapter 3 she is asked to bring her cloak. Now that would be a challenge for each one of us if we are asked to bring our cloak. It says, "and he said, Bring the cloak that thou hast upon thee, and hold it", v 15. She had to hold it up. It may be quite humbling to hold up your cloak and see how much evidence there has been of redeeming the time, how much growth there has been, and what measure we may have. It says, "And she held it, and he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her", v 15. How beautiful that is. In Ephesians chapter 4 it says, "until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ", v 13. What wonderful matters! She had six measures and what a measure it was, six measures; that is significant; how we would desire to have six measures. You may say she did not quite have seven, it was not perhaps the complete matter, but she was typical of a believer arriving "at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ". How wonderful these matters are! You know someone else had a cloak; Paul had a cloak and he asked Timothy to bring it from Troas. You wonder at that. Timothy must have looked at that cloak and he must have marvelled at it, if we think of it as speaking to us of the spiritual stature of Paul. I do not know if he would try it on; it would not be right to wear another man's mantle, but he would have looked at it anyway; and I am sure Timothy must have thought of Paul's desire that we should understand his intelligence in the mystery of the Christ. It is a wonderful matter that as we redeem the time we find help comes in from the Lord Himself and from the Holy Spirit and from the brethren. Naomi helped Ruth a lot; she knew what was going on. Another way to redeem the time is to try and keep company with those who are more spiritual than we are. You get help from the older brethren, those who not only have a knowledge of divine things but have experience of divine Persons. How wonderful that is; so Ruth perhaps would be an example to us.

Where we read in Ephesians 5 it goes on to say, "but be filled with

the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs". Something is being formed in the believer. Psalms would simply speak of experience. It has been said we should all have a psalm: you have got some experience with God. How blessed that is, how precious it is! We spoke of that in the previous occasion, this matter of coming to know the Father's will. Think of what it is to also know something of the Father's love. The hymn says that the Father's love is

Sweeter than all it gives (Hymn 26)

How blessed that is. That enters into our exercises, and psalms would speak of experience, and hymns perhaps would speak about some appreciation of divine purpose. In Matthew's gospel when they sang a hymn and went out to the mount of Olives (Matt 26: 30), it has been suggested that it was probably a hymn to the Father. It involves an appreciation of divine purpose, and then spiritual songs would link with the matter of joy. You redeem the time and you find what starts to accumulate is experience and what starts to accumulate is some appreciation of divine purpose, what starts to accumulate is this joy: spiritual joy, and spiritual songs "singing and chanting with your heart to the Lord". Again that is something that you can do at any time, singing and chanting with your heart to the Lord; nobody else might hear it. "Giving thanks at all times": we need the Holy Spirit's help for that. It goes on to say "giving thanks at all times for all things to Him who is God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ". That is not always easy in relation to our exercises in the wilderness path, but the Holy Spirit would help us. There is a sad example of someone in scripture who started to sing, and then stopped, and that is Miriam. She sang that wonderful song in Exodus 15, Moses' song, as having crossed the Red Sea. It says, "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song" (v 1), and after that it says, "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the tambour in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambours and with dances" (v 21), and they started to sing. But in Numbers 20, in the wilderness at Kadesh, it says, "and Miriam died there", v 1. It is the chapter just before the children of Israel sing to the well, typifying the Holy Spirit, and then progress is made. How that would cast us upon the Spirit that we may be maintained in this matter of singing, "singing and chanting with your heart to the Lord; giving thanks at all times for all things to Him who is God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ". Miriam was perhaps happy to only sing the

chorus of the song. We may enjoy something of divine things, but we might only be singing the chorus but we need to appreciate the whole song. In Exodus 15 the song says, "Thou hast guided them by thy strength unto the abode of thy holiness", (v 13), which we know has been linked with the truth of Corinthians , CAC vol 22 p393. And later on it says,

"Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance,

The place that thou, Jehovah, hast made thy dwelling,
The Sanctuary, Lord, that thy hands have prepared." (v 17)

- which has been linked to Ephesians. We need to sing the whole song; that is, you work out the truth so you are not just singing the chorus, but you are being formed by these matters "speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs". And then it says, "submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ". That is a remarkable thing; the fear of Christ is really Christ in the brethren, and we will not redeem the time much if we do not respect the brethren. The mind of the Lord is often conveyed through the brethren and what comes into our meetings. In Acts 9 the word to Saul is "enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (v 6), and the Lord's mind functions through the local company.

Lastly we read in Revelation 21, which is a wonderful chapter. The section that we read from forms part of a few verses which speak of eternity, and what is eternal. What a wonderful matter that the assembly will enter the millennium, not exactly from eternity, because time will still exist on the earth during the millennium, but the assembly will enter the millennium from eternal conditions: how wonderful that is! Where we have read really anticipates a time coming when time shall cease to be. Think of that, when the world and its sad tragic history will be closed; it will be finished, and we will have entered into eternity. What a matter that is; it says here, "I will give to him that thirsts of the fountain of the water of life freely". We have spoken about redeeming the time but how wonderful it is that even here in time we can be given a taste of what is eternal. This is not the thirst of the sinner needing the gospel; this is the thirst of a soul who wants to drink in God's purposes of love. It is a fountain, it is the source of the thing. It says, "I will give to him that thirsts of the fountain of the water of life freely". Think of that; what a fountain to drink into. How wonderful it is. It would be something that sustains the believer. It says elsewhere, "Wherefore

we faint not; but if indeed our outward man is consumed, yet the inward is renewed day by day”, 2 Cor 4: 16. Well, what renewal would come from drinking into such a fountain!

I just commend those scattered thoughts to the beloved brethren. I would just say humbly there can be nothing to compare to redeeming your time in relation to the Lord's things and His interests here. The Lord speaks about the parable of the sower in the gospels and as having “an honest and good heart” and redeeming the time we will “bring forth fruit with patience”, Luke 8: 15. Luke speaks about a hundredfold; what a return that is. If you were to consider a hundredfold as an interest rate, as a simple interest rate, it would be a ten thousand percent return. Does that not interest you, the return that belongs to divine things? Although it may sound a little like Jacob's reasoning, if a hundredfold was viewed not only as simple interest but compound interest then the return is infinite. The reward for going in for divine things is infinite. How wonderful it is: it cannot be compared. Later on in chapter 22 the Lord Himself says, “Behold, I come quickly, and my reward with me, to render to every one as his work shall be”, v 12 That will be the day I suppose when how we have spent our time will be reckoned to us. There is going to come a time when how we have spent our time will become fully manifest. Faithfulness has been linked with the millennium, and formation has been linked to eternity. Faithfulness and formation: two substantial results from redeeming the time. So the Lord says “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end”, v 13. As if God is saying, He is the beginning and He is the end, and anything that is outside of Christ is going to pass away. What will abide will be what is formed substantially of Him in our hearts. May it be so for His Name's sake.

Bexley

12th November 2011

“WHO ALONE DOETH WONDROUS THINGS”

Richard Smith

Psalm 72: 18

Matthew 27: 42 (to “cannot save”), 50-54

2 Kings 5: 1-3, 9-15 (to “Israel”)

1 Peter 1: 3, 4

I have an impression, dear friends, as to this verse in the Psalms. I read it in the week and was affected by it. It says at the end, “The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended”, v 20. It seems he finishes with this. “Blessed be Jehovah Elohim, the God of Israel, who alone doeth wondrous things!”. How often do we think of how great God is? We are often in occasions like this; most of us have the privilege to go to fellowship meetings and evening meetings, three day meetings. Sometimes I tend to gloss over the words of Scripture but a verse such as this, I think, shows that God would have us to think of the One, “who alone doeth wondrous things!”. It does not just say that God does wondrous things but it is He “alone”. Men seek to build up their achievements, whether it is great sporting events, or businesses, or whatever it may be. Early on that happened, early after the flood, where we read of this morning. Men sought to build the tower of Babel, Gen 11: 4. It says, “let us make ourselves a name”. David here attributes wondrous things to God. How great He is. A brother recently spoke to us of the Sustainer of life. He sustains life, He sustains my life and He sustains your life. It does not matter whether you believe it or not, the fact is that He does. We went yesterday to see a little one born last Friday. God gave that child life. He gave it to that child individually. It makes you think. Doctors speak of the baby being quickened, but they do not know when exactly. One scripture says,

“If he only thought of himself, and gathered unto him his spirit
and his breath, All flesh would expire”, Job 34: 14.

Many great men have come to that, as to the greatness of God. Job comes to that. God says to him,

“Where wast thou when I founded the earth?
... Who set the measures thereof - if thou knowest? or who
stretched a line upon it?

Whereupon were the foundations thereof sunken? or who laid
its corner-stone”, Job 38: 4-6.

God did it all.

The beauty of creation, the hymn writer could say -

Is marred by man's ungrateful hand, (Hymn 150).

The wonder of creation, we can look at it, even marked by sin, how wondrous it is. Do you have any appreciation of the wonder of the things that God has done? He has done wondrous things in creation, wondrous things in the lives of men. Has He done anything for you? Has He done anything for me? How much do I appreciate Him? I did not want to dwell too much on creation as such but it says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth", Gen 1: 1. It is one of the wondrous things that we can take account of too. The children will hear many different teachings at school. They tell you that things came from nothing and so they did, but God made them. Do not forget that, dear young one. God created the world around you and He sustains the life that is within it. Whether men believe it or not, the fact is that it is so: God did it.

I read in Matthew, because I wanted to speak just a little of the wondrous things that God has done through the Lord Jesus Christ. How early on in creation it was that man fell short. Man and woman fell short of God's standard; it was not their standard, but God's standard and we all fall short of that. We know the story of sin coming in, of a huge gulf coming in between God and man, and how that man then hid himself. He tried to hide himself from God; how foolish! We cannot hide ourselves from God. "All things are naked and laid bare to his eyes", Heb 4: 13. Scripture says that. We cannot hide from Him. He says to Samuel, when Samuel is told to go and anoint the King of Israel, "Jehovah looketh upon the heart", 1 Sam 16: 7. He looks upon your heart, dear friend. He knows your motive and He knows mine. He knows what is deep inside us. Solomon speaks of guarding the heart. It says, "for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov 4: 23); that is what God looks upon: He looks upon my heart. Sin came in. He knows I am sinful. What wondrous grace it is that God sent His only beloved Son, Jesus. It is a wondrous thing that God did. He sent Him before I knew that I needed a Saviour; God sent Him. God was not taken by surprise. God knew that Man, His well-beloved Son, and what did Jesus do? Jesus accomplished the work of redemption. How simple the gospel is, at least for us, but what it cost the Lord Jesus. He said to one when He was here, "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, Thy sins are

forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy couch and walk?", Mark 2: 9. Which was easier for Jesus? One was accomplished by divine power, and the other could be said because of His wondrous love and His work to be accomplished. The hymn writer says,

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

The work of redemption could not be accomplished in power alone; it needed the love of the Saviour; it needed the love of God, who was prepared to send His only Son, who alone could do it wondrously. What sufferings belonged to the Lord Jesus Christ! We were touched affectionately this morning as we remembered Him in the breaking of bread. Our brother said in his thanksgiving, that 'He went all the way': dear friend, did He go that way for you? He did go that way for you, and He went that way for me. The question is, have I put my faith and trust simply in all that Christ has done? The jailor said to Paul, "what must I do that I may be saved?" (Acts 16: 30); "Believe on the Lord Jesus" (v 31), repent and believe on Him. The gospel is so simple. We mentioned too in our reading this morning "the foolishness of the preaching" (1 Cor 1: 21); that is, according to men. We cannot take it in, in our natural minds; it seems foolish, and from one perspective it seems too good to be true. The work is done, and the precious shed blood of Jesus poured from His side when that spear was thrust into Him by a soldier.

Himself He could not save,
He on the cross must die (Hymn 240).

He could not save Himself. It meant He could not come down. Well, men in their mockery were right. He was prepared to stay there; He was prepared to stay there and suffer on the cross, having been scourged of men, bearing the hatred and malice of man, and then enduring the judgment of God. Not many words are spoken there, dear friends, but what it meant to Jesus! And it says, "When therefore Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished", John 19: 30. Here it says He "gave up the ghost. And lo, the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom". The temple had a veil across it and nobody was allowed in, except the high priest once a year. Nobody was allowed in there. So when Jesus died the veil was split in two.

Now that means that God has come out in blessing to us, and that we can go in in grace before Him. That is what it means, dear young one; through the death of Jesus God can come out in blessing to us. God alone can do wondrous things. Who else could conceive it? The work of redemption, who else could accomplish it other than Christ Himself? And He did it to God's complete satisfaction; and at the end of this scripture we read even the centurion said, "Truly this man was Son of God". You see there is nothing ordinary about Jesus. He is the Son of God, God's only beloved Son. God Himself, manifest in Manhood, what a Man He was! He bore my sin, He bore the judgment and He exhausted it on Calvary's tree. He went into death and came forth triumphant. We do not preach a dead Saviour. The Lord Jesus is living and exalted on high, and He lives in heaven. Do you know that? Do you know it for yourself? What does He mean to you? The centurion acknowledged these things, and he knew who the Person of Jesus was and he judges rightly, "Truly this man was Son of God". Now the work of redemption has been accomplished, what does it mean to you?

I read in Kings because there are a number of people mentioned here. Firstly, Naaman is mentioned and he was a soldier, and "captain of the host of the king of Syria", and he was a great man. Scripture says he "was a great man", but he was also "a leper". Lepers have dreadful sores in their skin that do not heal. It is not a pleasant condition, and in the Bible leprosy, of which we do not see much in this country, speaks of sin. It speaks of what is inside coming out, and we are all sinful. Naaman was a great man but he had a need; he had a need to do with God, and the way that he came to Him was through this little maid. This little girl had been taken from her home by the army and taken into another country; no longer with her parents, she served Naaman's wife. Think of that, she was taken from her home and she was taken by force to be with another; how sad that was, and she had no contact with her parents, it seems. There were no telephones in those days, speaking simply, she was with Naaman's wife, but she rendered a testimony to God and to the great things that God was able to do. She says to Naaman's wife, "Oh, would that my lord were before the prophet that is in Samaria! then he would cure him of his leprosy". She knew God could cure Naaman. How she exhibited God's heart of love. She had been taken away by this man's army, and yet still she was prepared to point to the place where he would be healed. She knew the great things that God could do, and Naaman did not, not yet; but he goes to see the prophet Elisha, God's prophet, and he stands

before the house of the prophet. He is told to “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times”. He was told to go and wash in the river; you may say how simple that is, but it says, “Naaman was wroth”. He was angry; it says, “he turned and went away in a rage”. He was told to wash to cleanse himself of leprosy, and he went away in a rage. Are you going to go away from the gospel in a rage, dear friend; or maybe worse, complacent; and caring nothing at all? You see, even though Naaman was cross, help came in. At least maybe if we are not just indifferent to the Lord Jesus, someone can bring help in. All he had to do was go and wash, and he says, “Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?”. These are the rivers of the capital city of Syria; why can I not wash there? The rivers of this world are no good whatsoever; they are no good. The reason he could not go there is because they would not work. He was told to go and wash in the Jordan. We are told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ: nothing else, dear young one; nothing else matters. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, which in type was what Naaman was told to do. The Lord Jesus can wash us clean; His blood alone can redeem us from every sin. There is no one like Jesus, and Naaman's “servants drew near, and spoke to him and said, My father, if the prophet had bidden thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?”. Dear friend, if we have felt our need in relation to our sin, would we do great things to get right before God? Naaman wanted to do some great thing, but the wonder is that the great things have been done. Jesus did them all, because only He could do them, and He has done them to wondrous completion. There is nothing else to do, except believe. I remember a brother preaching when I was younger and he said, ‘There is nothing to pay, nothing to doubt, nothing to fear’. It has all been done, as Naaman found out; all you have to do is believe, and be obedient to the gospel. “Go and wash”, and his servants helped him; what immense wisdom. Has someone guided you to the gospel tonight, dear friend? Have they? Have they pointed you to Jesus? Take advantage of it. Naaman, although he left in a rage, was not too proud to listen to his servants. What a display of the grace of God. How many times our loved ones, those we know and love, may have prayed for us, and guided us towards the Saviour. He washed in the Jordan and he became clean. It says, “his flesh became again like the flesh of a little child”. No marks were left. When you see a little baby, generally their skin is so pure, so soft and clean, and that is how Naaman was. We can marvel at it, no marks, no, nothing left, no scars. The work of Jesus is

too great for that. Nothing is left because it was washed so completely. God's forgiveness cleanses us completely, every trace of guilt is gone, and nothing is left. It says, "their sins and there lawlessnesses I will never remember any more", Heb 10: 17. How many have we committed? How many have I committed? How often may be they come back to our minds at the most inappropriate times, but when we are forgiven by Jesus no guilt is left that God would hold against us, everything is cleansed. Do you know that for yourself? Do you know what it is to be like Naaman, to be washed completely clean? He says, "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel". He came to what David said, "the God of Israel, who alone doeth wondrous things!". We can read of so many; Nebuchadnezzar is another one, the greatest king maybe in all the earth. What power he had. But there is no God but the God of Israel; how great He is. No one can wash away sin as Jesus can. As one could say -

What though the accuser roar
The ills that I have done!
I know them well and thousands more:
Jehovah findeth none. (Whitlock Gandy)

Naaman's leprosy was washed away; he was made completely clean; how great the God with whom we have to do.

I just wanted to finish with Peter. Peter goes on a step. God not only has salvation in mind for us, but "an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance". Soon Jesus is coming back; soon He is coming back to take all those who believe on Him to be with Himself. No others are going to go, just those who are the Christ's. Now, are you going to go? Because God not only has salvation in mind for us (we have spoken about it), but He has an inheritance for us too. I remember reading somebody saying that 'when we get to heaven, I think we will be extraordinarily astonished'. What God has in mind for us! Why would we pass up that opportunity? Peter speaks of it, "incorruptible and undefiled and unfading". What else in this scene could ever be described in such a manner? The answer to that is, "Nothing"; everything fades, it wears away, it breaks, and it needs renewing; but not the inheritance that God has laid up for us in Jesus. Do you know something of it, dear friend? We are given the gift of the Spirit, another wondrous thing that God has done, given of His Spirit to dwell within the believer. It says, "in the last days, saith God, that I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh" (Acts 2: 17); but in this dispensation He dwells

within. The Spirit dwells within, a precious gift; do you know something of it? Do we know something of the wondrous things that God has done? I trust we do, because to those of us who believe in Him that is to be our portion eternally. What will we do with the time that is left here to us? What will we do? Our brother also said in thanksgiving this morning, 'Jesus has not asked us to do nothing, but to remember Him in the breaking of bread'. Will you partake in that service of remembrance and praise to Him? Some of us, maybe most here, remembered Him in the breaking of bread this morning, because we love Him. Maybe this is a challenge more to myself than anybody else here; how much do I do for Him? How much am I prepared to commit myself to Him in the time that is left? The past is gone; it cannot be brought back. The future lies with God, but what about now? What am I prepared to do for Him in the weeks and days that may be left to me? Nothing else matters really but what Jesus has done, and what we can do for Him. Everything else we leave behind. As one man could say -

To lose one's wealth is sad indeed,
To lose one's health is more,
To lose one's soul is such a loss
That no man can restore

(The Clock of Life, Robert H Smith, 1932)

God alone can restore it. God alone can give us salvation. How much He has done for us. God alone does wondrous things. May we be in the benefit of them. May we come to know Jesus as our Saviour. May we put our faith and trust in Him and may we, in our measure, in the time that is left to us, commit ourselves afresh to Him. He has done so much for us. May we be given the strength to do just a little for Him.

May He bless the word, for His Name's sake.

Gillingham

4th March 2012

NEEDED BY THE LORD

Will McKillop

Mark 10: 13-16

Luke 19: 28-36

These two passages refer, as we can see, to little children and then, I would say in the second scripture, to somewhat older but still young people. When the brethren here asked me to preach I was deeply exercised, having heard that there would be many children and young people here, and I believe the Lord would have me to speak to the little children, and to the young people. That does not mean that He forgets those that are older but we have had three days of instruction already, and one would greatly desire that this time should not finish without some child or some young person coming to it that the Lord needs you. I would say to the children that you may not have thought of this - and it is not a very deep thought - but whatever age you are, when the Lord Jesus was here, as a babe, and became a child, and grew, at some point He was the same age as you are. That is an extraordinary thing to think of, that there is not a child in this room, but the Lord Jesus at some time was your age. There is not a young person here who has not committed himself to the Lord that the Lord was not at some point your age. Think of Him as a babe, when His parents brought him into the temple to meet the requirements of the law of Moses: there was an old man there named Simeon of whom it says "*he* received him into his arms". What an extraordinary experience! You might say that all his life Simeon had lived for that moment, not knowing what it would be or when it would take place, but, having received the Babe into his arms, he said (which indicated that he knew beforehand, "Lord," (or "Jehovah") "now thou lettest thy bondman go, according to thy word, in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation", Luke 2: 29, 30. What a wonderful experience. I would appeal to children to think about the fact there are persons here today who are ready to receive you into their arms, because the Lord's thought is you should be blessed. So it says they brought little children to Him. Think about that; that you are here. You might say that your parents brought you, and I would credit them with thinking that they wanted the Lord to touch you. How blessed to think of that. Who these people were we are not told but I think it is right to say it probably was the parents, and especially the mothers. "They brought little children to him that he might touch them." What greater could a mother's heart want for her little child than that the Lord Jesus

should touch that child; and do so in a meeting like this, not because of the preacher but because the Lord is here. He is here to not only touch you but, as it says, "having taken them in his arms." Think of that, that in this meeting the Lord is waiting to take some little children into His arms. You might say, 'How would that work? The Lord is not here physically'. Well, it would come through persons who have the love of Christ in their hearts and who have great spiritual desires for you, as little children. The disciples, of course, are off the mark here as sometimes older ones are. The disciples rebuked those that brought them. We do not often find that the Lord became indignant but "Jesus seeing it, was indignant". The Lord would be indignant about anything in this meeting that would preclude your being brought to Him that He might take you in his arms. It says, "having laid his hands upon them, he blessed them." Or as it might read, 'He blesses them abundantly'. Think of how the Lord is ready to bless you abundantly at this time. You might ask how it could happen, that the disciples would miss the mark. Well, I know of two young sisters, just girls really, one nine and one ten, who wanted to go to the prayer meeting with their father and he took them. After the meeting someone said that they should be home in their beds. I think the Lord was indignant about that, and I think that at any time there is an attempt to preclude children from coming to the meetings the Lord is indignant, because He wants to bless them abundantly. And a child might ask, 'In what way will He bless me?'. Well, He would speak to you. 'Your parents have baptised you, they have committed you to Me and I want to bless you first in the forgiveness of your sins. I want you to understand that I am saying to you, although your sins may not seem many and not serious because you are so young; nevertheless, I died to put them away, and I want you to know that. I want you to understand that I have forgiven your sins'. And I think He would say, 'I want you to know that you are to have part in the great divine system of which I am Head'. You might say that you find it difficult to take in that thought. Well, in due course you will come to understand it because part of the abundant blessing is that He will give you the gift of the Holy Spirit and you will have an indissoluble bond between the Lord and your own soul. The Holy Spirit is that bond and the Lord could not finish blessing without conferring on that little child the gift of the Holy Spirit. And then there are the saints; He wants you to find your spiritual life among those who love the Lord, those already blessed and who are obedient to Him.

And so He speaks about, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child", meaning that there are persons here who,

through acquaintance with Christ and through the Father's discipline, have come to it that is a most blessed thing, apart from our place in the assembly itself, is to have part in the kingdom of God. And so the Lord speaks this word, "Verily I say to you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter into it". Well, that could refer to a person who is eighty or ninety years old who has not become a little child, who has not received the kingdom of God as a little child. The Lord is thinking about all, in that sense. But still in His mind and His heart He is thinking about the little children and He is thinking about the young people. I must say that it is a long time since I have been in a three day meeting when I have seen so many lovely children, and so many attractive young people. It has been clear to some of us that you have been glad to be here and in some measure you have enjoyed what has come before us. And now the question is, 'Is every young person here really committed to the Lord?'. If it has not dawned on you before, I hope it will at this moment that the Lord has need of *you*.

And that is why I read in Luke's gospel, "having said these things" - we will not go into those, there is not time but - "having said these things he went on before, going up to Jerusalem". He was going up to die but there was something to be done on the way and notice that the environment is favourable to what the Lord wants done, like the environment in this meeting; it is favourable. There are lovers of Christ here who have been praying for you and who have faith that the Lord is going to see that you are loosed in order to be attached to Him. "It came to pass as he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany at the mountain called the mount of Olives". That is a favourable environment, the mount of Olives speaks of the area where the Spirit is active, and that is the environment that we have been in and still are, because the glad tidings are preached by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. And so He sent two of His disciples. You see, there is some person here, some young person that this colt typifies, and the Lord has already indicated to two persons that they are to loose you and lead you to Him. You might say, 'Who are they?'. Well, perhaps it is your father and mother, perhaps it is two brethren that you do not know very well. You will find out, and it really does not matter who they are because it is two of His disciples. And He said, "Go into the village over against you, in which ye will find, on entering it, a colt tied up". That is some young person here in this meeting. You are a colt tied up, tied up in a favourable environment, but the hour of *your loosing has come*. And He says, "on

which no child of man ever sat at any time". Think of what that means to you, the spiritual advantage that you have never been dominated in your mind and in your behaviour by some person who does not know Christ. The Lord is specific about that in Luke's gospel, "on which no child of man ever sat at any time". That is a great advantage for you, beloved young person, if you have not been under the domination of somebody who is really an agent of the devil. You have been tied; it might be, for instance, your parents have baptised you as a child and they have kept you tied up, they have been waiting the time for the Lord to send someone to loose you and bring you to Him. And so He says, "if anyone ask you, Why do ye loose it? thus shall ye say to him, Because the Lord has need of it". I was very touched recently to read a gospel preaching by Mr Taylor, and near the end he said, 'When I finished preaching last Lord's day a ten year old boy came up to me and said, 'I would like to break bread'. And Mr Taylor said, 'Why?' and this ten year old boy said, 'I think the Lord needs me', vol 49 p534. Has that thought ever entered your mind, that the Lord has need of you? He has got a place in His testimony in the service of God for you. He needs you. No-one else can fill that place. You might say it has got your name written on it, and now the time has come for you to be loosed and brought to Him who has need of you. We can well understand anyone saying, 'I need the Lord', but think of the Lord saying to some young person in this meeting (through others, because He sent two), "the Lord has need of it". Think of the Lord saying that somebody, two perhaps, might be going to ask you after this meeting, if you realise they have come to loose you, because the Lord has need of you? Well, you might say you are needed in other connections. But this supersedes all that. What could supersede the Lord having need of *you*? I recall another boy, not ten, but eleven, who said to his parents, 'I want to break bread' and they said 'Why' and he said, 'I want to be with the Lord's people'. Have you thought about that, that on the one hand the Lord has need of you, and on the other hand you should have the sense of that need and that there is only one place for you to fulfil that need to satisfy it, and that is with the Lord's people. "They that were sent, having gone their way, found it as he had said to them". Sent persons are not coming to you aimlessly about your soul, and about loosing you, and about leading you to the Lord; they are doing so because they know what the Lord has said and they are acting towards you in love and grace, and everything is just as He said it would be, and it comes down to this: when you are loosed, will you let them lead you to Him? And so, as it says, "as they were loosing

the colt, its masters said to them, Why loose ye the colt? And they said, Because the Lord has need of it". Whatever has been used of God to tie you up, so that you did not wander off into Satan's world, has kept you tied until the time of your loosing came, and now it has come. I have a sense from the Lord that in this meeting the time of loosing has come for someone and the Lord will know who you are; and then they loosed it and they led it to Jesus. That is what is in mind, that there are persons who are going to loose you from whatever is holding you back and they are going to lead you to Jesus. And now, notice the blessedness of what this colt experienced. Previously, "on which no child of man ever sat at any time" but now these persons put Jesus on it. There are persons who are going to put the Lord on you, in all His beauty, in all His attractiveness, in all His power, and they are going to lead you to Him. And what a day that is going to be for you when you look back on it. Indeed, what an hour it is for you now, that you are going to be loosed and led to Jesus. Well, may God bless the word.

Denton

8th April 2012

THE NEED FOR CHANGE

Douglas A Steven

Acts 16: 26-34

1 Cor. 15: 51, 52

I just had an impression about the need for change, a change for what is better. Some people are changing for the world. That is a sad state of affairs. You hear of young people who were once in fellowship and they have changed their course. They changed their outlook. They have taken their eyes off the Lord and they are walking away. They are walking away from what is good. They have changed. They have made a bad change. Oh, beloved brethren, I read about this jailor because what a change came over him. It is really the gospel in a sense, but here was this wicked man who had cast Paul and Silas into the jail and put their feet in the stocks and in the inner prison. He did all that he could do to contain them so that he could go to bed and sleep. But God was speaking. God spoke to this man. God had this man in mind. Earlier Paul and Silas had been in Philippi at the water where there were women praying, v 13. And there was a man needed. There was a man needed for that place to be with those women. And God had this man in mind, I think. It would certainly appear that God had him in mind because He changed him. God changed him. It was not Paul that did it. Paul did not change him. Paul acted like a Christian. Paul had been changed. Paul had had a big change. Anyway, the point is that Paul and Silas were singing, "in praying, were praising God", v 25. They fully accepted their circumstances, two of the greatest vessels on the earth at that time, representing the glories of Christ - all His glory - and the preaching of the gospel. That was their work and then something happened: this earthquake. Have you ever had an earthquake in your life? I have had an earthquake in my life. You get so shaken up in your soul. What has happened? It may not be a physical earthquake. Now *this* was a physical earthquake, but you can get an earthquake in your life: God shakes you up. And what is in view? It is to change you. To change your mind, change your view, change your direction. Maybe you are going the wrong way, like the two on the way to Emmaüs. The Lord came along and changed them right around, turned them back to where they belonged amongst the brethren. "They found the eleven", it says, Luke 24: 33. Their hearts burned within them as the Lord opened up the Scriptures to them, v 32. Is that not a wonderful way to change a person? Well, that is what we need to do; to

go after people and change them from going in the wrong direction.

I feel for these young people. I do really, because they are going in the wrong direction. Well, this man was changed, and it was a very fine change. He did all that was needed. He washed them from their stripes. "What must I do that I may be saved?" Have you ever cried out that? Have you ever cried out anyway? If you cry out, the Lord will hear you, if you are crying in earnest. And He will change you if you are needing to be changed. This man was certainly needing to be changed. And so they said to him, "Do thyself no harm". He was going to kill himself. He was going to take his life. You think of that. He thought the prisoners had gone and, of course, he would probably lose his life anyway, as he would be held responsible; but Paul cries "with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm". The gospel goes out every week; it goes out every Lord's day. The gospel, the grace of our God, is being sounded out, "Do thyself no harm". "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved". That is the word here. "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved, thou" - that is the man first, the head of the house - "and thy house". The whole house is in mind. God had a household secured for the locality in Philippi. What a wonderful way to change a man. And how ready he was to be changed! He did all that was necessary. Here was a man that cared. He cared for Paul and Silas eventually. He did not care about putting them in the jail but he cared for them afterwards. He was sorry for what he had done. It is a good thing to be repentant if you are sorry. Tell God you are sorry for what you have done. Well, this man did that anyway. It showed he was changed. He washed them from their stripes, and they spoke the word to him, and they were baptised. Paul and Silas must have told them about baptism. Well, you will have to die too. You may have to die physically, but morally you will have to die, going out of sight because Christ died for you. Christ did physically die. But baptism means that you take your place alongside the death of Christ morally, and you come to learn that He has died for your sins, and you have to live for Him. That is the situation, as far as I see it: "Believe on the Lord Jesus .. thou and thy house ... and was baptised, he and all his straightway". And then he fed them. Well, he cared for them really, did he not? He cared well for them.

I want to just speak about the other scripture, dear brethren, just to talk about the final change. I do not want to say too much about that but that is a wonderful thing. Who knows too much about it? Paul

obviously knew. Paul knew what was going to happen in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye. Can you measure that? Can men with all their computerised machinery measure the "twinkling of an eye"? No, no, but that is what is going to happen at the resurrection, when we are going to be changed. That is what Paul says, we are going to be changed; that is the rapture. He is speaking about the rapture. He speaks about it again in Thessalonians. The Lord shall come "with archangel's voice and with trump of God", 1 Thess 4: 16. You think of the trump of God; it would be a military sound: in a sense it has a kind of military side to it, the trump of God. The world will not hear it. They will not hear it. Nobody other than those who are the Christ's will hear it, or even see the rapture. We will all be gone in an instant, in a twinkling of an eye. There will be the trump of God "and the dead in Christ shall rise first". How wonderful that is; you think of that. How many are the dead in Christ, awaiting their call? Well, their bodies are in the grave, but their spirits are with Christ, of course, but we are awaiting the call. We are looking forward to it when He comes. "He that comes", it says, "will come", Heb 10: 37. There is no doubt about that, and "he will not delay"; and "we shall all be changed". What a wonderful change it will be. We need to be changed now, you know. We can be changed. We had a meeting on Lord's day morning, here in this place, and I felt myself - someone said afterwards to me, 'You know, it would have been wonderful if the Lord had come this morning'. Well, we are ready for Him to come. We had such a sense of His presence amongst us, I felt. I think we all did. We felt there was this movement from glory to glory. I read that scripture afterwards. It says, "we ... are transformed", 2 Cor 3: 18. You see, that is another change. That is the first change. You are changed as a believer, and then you find this wonderful change as amongst the saints of God; you come together with them and you remember the Lord Jesus, and you have a sense, an impression and experience of His presence, and you are lifted up in your spirit and you know there is a change taking place. What is it? It is "from glory to glory". You are "looking on the glory of the Lord" and you are being changed. I know the brethren have had this experience, but I just love to speak about it, because we had it on Lord's day. And we have had it before. And if the Lord spares us and we are left here, we will have it again. Well, are you ready for that? Are we all ready for it, looking for this wonderful change that will be experienced in our lives, and then this final change when our blessed Lord will come? He says Himself, "I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am there ye

also may be", John 14: 3. Is that not a wonderful proposition? That is the best thing we can think about, being with Christ and then forever, with bodies of glory in "conformity to his body of glory", Phil 3: 21. We will all go. All those who believe in the Lord Jesus will go together. It is not just a few of us here. Think of the millions that will be raptured. We could never count them. You get some idea of it in Revelation.

Well, dear brethren, I trust we are encouraged and we look forward to the Lord's coming when we will all be changed into our glorious bodies forever. For His Name's sake.

Grangemouth

22nd May 2012

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

David J Hutson

John 16: 12-15

I desire, beloved, simply to draw attention to what is said in this wonderful scripture regarding the Holy Spirit, “the Spirit of truth”. We sang to Him, and we have referred to the gain it is for us for Him to be here. How that is impressed upon us as we read these verses! I cannot explain them, but simply draw attention to the wonder of the present position of the Holy Spirit, “the Spirit of truth”. What a scope there is for us! As the Lord Jesus says, “he shall guide you into all the truth”. What there is yet for us, beloved! Who can say that we have yet reached “all the truth”? But He is here with that purpose: “he shall guide you into all the truth”.

And then, how wonderful the place He has taken in what we speak of as the economy! “He shall not speak from himself.” Think of One, we say with worshipful spirits, who is Himself God in no less a way than the Father and the Son, as included in that glorious Name, “the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28: 19), and yet He has come into a position where the Lord Jesus says of Him, “he shall not speak from himself”. How wonderful that is!

And then it says, “whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak”. How wonderful every sentence, or part of a sentence, in this scripture is! To think that there is conversation proceeding in heaven and this glorious Person, “the Spirit of truth”, is hearing what is proceeding: “whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak; and he will announce to you what is coming”. He would ever keep before us the glory of what was yet to come, so that we might be delivered from occupation with the present order of things. How wonderful what we have even in the Scriptures indited by the Holy Spirit! John could write, “we know that if it is manifested we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is”, 1 John 3: 2. That was indited by the Holy Spirit and recorded by John. That is one of the things that is coming. How liberating these things are, to liberate us from occupation with what is here, with our weakness so often felt and our limitations, although there will ever, of course, be some limitation because we are but creatures. “He will announce to you what is coming.”

And then how wonderful: “He shall glorify me”. What

experience we have of that! As we come together in this way and, as gathered in the light of the assembly, what a place is His, what service, if we may speak of service. “He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine.” I would not seek to define or explain what that is; “he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you”.

And then, “All things that the Father has are mine”. Who can say what that includes? He says, “on account of this I have said that he receives of mine and shall announce it to you”. That is, the things that the Father has, and the things that Christ has, are received by the Spirit and announced to us. Who can limit the scope of even such a time as this with the presence of “the Spirit of truth”?

I feel I can say no more, beloved, this is so profound; but just draw attention to it that we might realise the greatness and glory of the present position as having “the Spirit of truth” with us, and with us, may I say carefully and reverently, in service in order that we might know what is proceeding above between the Father and the Son? These things are really in some measure inscrutable. May they lead us more to worship in the presence of such a glorious Person! In the name of the Lord Jesus.

Edinburgh

24th April 2012

