

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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RIGHTEOUSNESS

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SWS These are quite a few scriptures but there was a distinct impression of righteousness this morning. It came out in a very prominent way in giving thanks for the emblems, at least in my own mind, and I think the brethren felt that as well. Righteousness is such an important topic because it establishes within us the liberty that enables us not only to make progress in divine things but also to be found in the enjoyment of them. I really appreciated that verse that has been referred to, "righteousness and peace have kissed each other", bringing those two thoughts together. How wonderful, and I trust the occasion that we had was characterised by peace. But it is a peace that can only be known, and it is a peace that can only be enjoyed, in reality, if there is clear understanding as to the righteous basis by which God has moved, and continues to operate. I think that is something to consider as well.

We read these verses with no particular order in mind; but probably Romans would be a good place to begin. In chapter 5, there is the wonderful thought of how grace has overabounded, and that "grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life". God in mercy - as we often sing (Hymn 438) - has given His own Son, but I think grace emphasises the way that He has met it all, in order to secure righteously what is for His own heart. That is an even greater thought, and that is really what we are occupied with when we come together; righteousness is necessary so that we can understand the whole basis on which God has moved in order to secure something for His heart. It is a settled matter, and there is no peace like that -

O the peace of simply knowing (Hymn 390).

All that God has accomplished through His beloved Son is a settled matter; it is not necessarily an issue that is prominent before us when we come together, but it would be something that we have a real sense of in our souls as a settled disposition of God towards us. He sees us as in Christ on the basis of His righteous work, and through the work of Christ, God's righteousness has been established. So there is that wonderful peace that should characterise us from the moment we walk in the door. It should characterise us in our movements, and as we progress in that wonderful privilege that is ours as we come together in

the service of praise to be found occupied with what is for the heart of Christ, and what is for the Father.

So, Romans 5 is a good starting point, I think, to be reminded of that righteous basis and the way that God in His grace has moved; it is from His side, so that everything has been met. "Thou hast loved righteousness" really struck me this morning. He is the One who has fulfilled it, He is the One who has secured everything for the glory of God and for His heart. But it is also what characterised Him, the spirit in which He moved; it motivated Him, He *loved* righteousness. And the thing that impressed me, and the reason I read the words, "the sanctifier and those sanctified are all of one", is that we are to have the same attitude, the same bent of mind, we are motivated in the same spirit, so that we love righteousness. It is something that brings joy to our hearts, to have part in what has been secured for God on a righteous basis; and to move in the wonderful liberty that comes with that. And so we are truly with Him; not merely with Him as far as what He has secured for Himself, but it is the thought of oneness, in righteousness, sharing His thoughts and feelings in moving in the same spirit in relation to the things of God. That is such a wonderful thing to consider.

And then what our brother brought in as to the Spirit is really important. It is only by the Spirit that the full import of righteousness can be understood. I think man in a natural sense can understand as far as the terms of righteousness, what it brings, but man in his mind would be occupied simply with what has been done in a right way, his focus would be what is being done and the activity of righteousness - this is right and this is wrong. But divine righteousness goes so much further than simply what has been done - or questions of what is right and wrong. In fact, there are many men and women in this world who can have a judgment objectively or outwardly as to what is right and what is wrong (and we should too of course). But divine righteousness goes beyond that; that is the impression that I had. Consequently, I trust that we might get some help as we enquire together.

DMW In linking on with your thought as to divine righteousness being beyond what is outwardly judged to be right or wrong, is it accurate to think of it simply, although very deep and profound, as involving the rights of God?

SWS That is a wonderful thought when we consider righteousness as the rights of God. Some may think on the basis of what is right and

wrong but that is an extremely limited way to take up Christianity; because, when we take up the rights of God, it is in view of what God has purposed in His heart and is securing for Himself. Righteousness in a sense is the platform on which God has built this wonderful system that is functioning in life for Himself. So it is a much more expansive thought and sometimes I wonder if we think of righteousness in that way, to see how expansive it is. It is the basis on which God is building a system for Himself. It is not the way that man looks at it, but a *living* system.

DMW So there will be a universe founded on the righteousness of God. The difficulty has been through man and his history; no man could bring it in until Christ became a man. Would the previous verse to where we started in Romans 5 support what you are saying as to the platform that issues in life? I will just read the verse: “so then as it was by one offence” - that would be Adam, of course, by sinning - “towards all men to condemnation, so by one righteousness towards all men for justification of life”. This life is more than breathing; it is more than what is material, is it not? But it has its basis in this character which you are speaking about, which has been opened up by a Man, “Jesus Christ the righteous”, 1 John 2: 1. Does the footnote then support what we are getting at - it is subsisting righteousness (at the right hand of God)? This one righteousness subsists in heaven in the same Man who established it.

SWS That is helpful; it is what subsists in Him, what is in Him, based on who He is in Himself. We cannot say that of ourselves; it is unique to Him, and subsists in Him. It is something we are brought into, and it is only through the realisation of that, and the acceptance of that, that we can truly enter into it. It also says that “grace and truth subsists through” Him (John 1: 17); so that is another important aspect in our understanding of righteousness, do you think; the link between righteousness, and with grace and truth, and the way it comes out in a Person? I was thinking about something earlier in the chapter that links on with your thought. It talks about “those who receive the abundance of grace, and of the free gift of righteousness”, v 17. So righteousness is a gift, and shows that we need to be preserved from limiting our thoughts of righteousness to doing right or not doing wrong, because it is much more than that; it is something imparted, it is a gift: “the free gift of righteousness”, and it says that “those who receive the abundance of grace, and of the free gift of righteousness, reign in life”, which links on with your thought - “by the one Jesus Christ”.

DMW So He has companions. Would those companions be of the same character? In other words, all blend together in the oneness of righteousness because it has been established, and it will be the moral bond of the universe when He reigns. But is it established now in testimony in the companions?

SWS That was one encouraging thought to me, and was uplifting this morning, to view the assembly in that way, as a vessel of righteousness. That vessel has been secured through righteousness, but that vessel also has part in maintaining righteousness for Him in a testimonial sense. But then there is also maintaining an environment by which Christ Himself is free to make Himself known. Even when we come together; of course He comes to persons - we have been helped as to that - but it is important to realise that conditions collectively are also important, especially as to the extent as to which we can enjoy His presence collectively. And righteousness is a key feature of that, do you not think?

DMW Well, it must be. And I wondered about the end of the verse in the part you read in Romans - "to eternal life" - where the environment becomes an exercise. When we speak of testimony, it has a heavenly character of righteousness, where the rights of God are maintained in the assembly, but in the place where there is still opposition. We know this opposition: it is in us and outside of us: sin and death continue in the scene of testimony although annulled morally for us. So eternal life would underlie any movement spiritually in an ascending way. Again, it is more than existence; it is based upon the One who *is* eternal life. Everything we have, whether it be as gift or as an impression is all about the Man, and it is all in Him. That is where we are formed; that is where our life is - in Him, but it comes out testimonially here.

SWS He is the eternal life, and so I think that is what we have to come to and to realise it as well, when we consider the thought of testimony. Now man often thinks, and almost exclusively takes up testimony in relation to what is before man; our primary concern is what is Godward; that is the true testimony. Now there is what is expressed, there is what can be taken account of even by men, but our testimony towards man is not the point, it is Godward.

DMW This must be proven by an understanding the Spirit gives us. So, the Spirit in Romans 8 is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the Man; would that be right?

KRO This is very helpful. It was a simple impression but maybe we

will get to open it up. It pertains to what the life is, the Spirit, and I am just attracted by the thought "on account of righteousness". It is more than a sealing; it is an endorsement - I fail for words but it flows out of what has been accomplished in righteousness, and it is living. I am really helped by what you have both said as to the platform. I was looking for words myself in relation to it. God is love, is He not, we have that in Scripture, but His operations - everything that He has done in His will and in His counsels - are on a righteous basis? That is the foundation, the bedrock.

SWS It is interesting to bring that in, and it is a very helpful way to view God's dealings with man. True love can only be found on the basis of righteousness; do you think? Because if it is not on the basis of righteousness, there is always the potential for something to come in and create distance. God in love would not have that; He would have man enter into the full, unhindered enjoyment of His love and of His presence. And so that love has been expressed, and can now come out to man, on a righteous basis. Again, His desire is that nothing would come in to mar that, and so if love was taken up in any other way, there would always be that potential. I think it really expresses the perfection of God's love, the fact that it is on the basis of righteousness. I think that is a really helpful thought that you are bringing in.

DMW "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all", 1 John 1: 5. To me, that has a suggestion of righteousness; and love would not be love if it was not righteous. There would be something of pretension or sentimentality, or something like that.

LEO That is a helpful impression. The verse in the Psalms says, "Righteousness shall go before him"; I was just struck by the fact that it seems an intrinsic part of His nature. I think it was mentioned this morning in one of the thanksgivings that His righteousness is uncompromised; there is nothing that will change that consistency. I think about you talking about man's righteousness and how things that were considered righteous and morally acceptable years ago are now thrown out of the window. Man's righteousness changes with what suits man, does it not? But God's righteousness is perfectly consistent, and it is the same then as it is now.

SWS That is very helpful, and I think you see in man's history there is always that proof of what you say, the decline that comes in; and man constantly and conveniently changes his definition. We see that even in Christendom's view of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable;

what was at one time not even conceived of is now considered acceptable. But I was thinking of the verse, while not in the scriptures it is true,

Ever just are all Thy dealings,
Perfect wisdom marks Thy way;
Righteousness attends upon Thee,
Truth before Thee holdeth sway. (Hymn 125)

The writer had some sense of what you are speaking of, the unchangeableness of God in His ways, and how His righteousness has been consistent through the ages and will never change.

DMW That hymn says, 'From eternal ages onward'; God does not change. I suppose the change we see publicly that has been mentioned is because of the diminishing of the public testimony that moved westward, which moved on the basis of righteousness.

LMH I think the word you used, the convenience of righteousness, man's view of righteousness changing to suit his own needs, is a good way to put it, because you can see how the devil would work to mask what is wrong by calling it something righteous in man's eyes. You can see a danger in that; we have to know the true source of righteousness, the true example of it, do we not? We have to be careful because man will call things righteous that are very much not righteous.

DMW The scripture does enlarge on that a bit, especially for our day; what we see more and more publicly is that men are calling good evil and evil good, and it says in ministry (FER vol 3 p94) that lying is the primary characteristic of the old man; so in Colossians 3: 9-10 it says, "Do not lie to one another, having put off the old man with his deeds, and having put on the new". Well, that is what we see, that lying is almost a challenge to man, as to how much he can lie, and make it sound like it is right, make it sound like the truth. That is especially done in political circles.

KRO Is what we are speaking about in contrast to man's righteousness? Does that come out perhaps in 1 Corinthians 1: 30 where it says, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who has been made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and holiness, and redemption". It really brings in that the source has been God, does it not? I was thinking too that it connects with holiness; it takes us out of the earthly realm (as an area of influence).

DMW I was wondering as we were reading to open this meeting about

the distinction between righteousness and holiness. Is there any impression the brethren might have? I think we have holiness exemplified in divine Persons, and as mentioned previously in a reading, even God does not have what is called a free will; He cannot do what is evil, and the reason is because He is holy. And He does not deny Himself; therefore, He does not do what is evil and cannot do evil. So the abhorrence of evil perhaps helps us a little to understand holiness. If it has that character of abhorring evil, then the result must be righteousness. The rights of God are going to be revealed and have been revealed in "Jesus Christ the righteous"; and the Holy Spirit comes to indwell a vessel in the absence of the holy One. So we have an unction from the holy One in the assembly; and each individual does, even the children who are brought into the Christian circle. So we have no need for any one to teach us from the world what is right and wrong; there is an instinctive character to every believer having the Spirit, because of the unction.

WJO Do you think that holiness is an intrinsic state and righteousness is the intrinsic feature of that state? It is not exactly optional, it is intrinsic, because of a state of holiness.

DMW That is very good; so it is by love practically and there is a manifestation as we are formed in Christ; He becomes the root of life in our souls; so as to live in us, so to speak. It is after the kind of Man who is righteous - "Jesus Christ the righteous". Then we are referred to as "holy brethren"; and the result of that is that we maintain the rights of God in our souls and in our circle of responsibility.

SWS I was just thinking as you were speaking about the link between holiness, righteousness and sanctification. There is the verse "Be ye holy, for I am holy", 1 Pet 1: 16. That side of holiness is seen in the saints through sanctification, and righteousness is expressed thereby. I do not know if that is a good way to put it, but you think of God's work, and the work of the Holy Spirit to sanctify. There is such a thing as practical sanctification. So we can be found in a state of holiness, whereby righteousness is expressed.

DMW It is "sanctification of the Spirit" (1 Pet 1: 2), that is the *Holy Spirit*. I want to raise this because, while we probably will not go through any other struggle to the extent of what has gone before us, there were certain things established (as a result of conflict in 1890), and the maintaining of righteousness, or the rights of God, is sometimes based on what has already been gone through. Eternal life may not be very

well understood. The expression has not its application to heaven exactly, or to eternity really, so we cannot understand it very well by taking the words literally; it has to do with what may be known here on earth. The scriptures speak of “the coming age” (Luke 18: 30), which is the world to come, where eternal life will be public because of the reign of Him who is “the eternal life”, 1 John 1: 2; 5: 20. So I think understanding that a little better is helpful. I do not think it has anything to do with mere existence - when God breathed into Adam the breath of life, existence began for man, whether man would be with God or without God in that existence.

SWS The verse suggested is very helpful. Mr Darby's note in verse 9 helps, “but ye are not in flesh but in Spirit”, when we consider this matter of righteousness and the part the Holy Spirit has in it. He does note that there is a difficulty in putting a large or small 'S', but he says, 'It is clearly the state and characteristic of the believer; but it is so by the presence of the Spirit'. And so true righteousness can only be realised when the saints are moving in a right state. That is a result of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, moving and encouraging the saints, do you think?

DMW Therefore, we get in John 4 the Spirit as a gift from the Lord as “a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life” (where the Lord is); it is by faith, v 14. When the Lord Jesus reigns publicly in righteousness it is going to characterise the earth where sin and death have had their place. But they are subdued by His power then, and Satan bound for a thousand years. And this is why I think it is right to say that eternal life underlies the service of God, because evil must be subdued in us; it has already been subdued by the Lord Jesus at the cross, and judged by God when Christ was made sin; and death has not to affect us as it affects man. Why? Because the Lord Jesus, as a holy Man - and this was brought out this morning - offered Himself without spot and blemish for us in order to dispossess death, which was the righteous judgment of God upon sin - this will be actual in the millennium. So eternal life has its application to the place of testimony, where sin and death are extant. Consequently, the believer, in the victory of eternal life, which is what God desires for all of us, can proceed into what is spiritual in response. Does that not have to have its place in understanding the work of Christ at the cross, and understanding the rights of God?

SWS That is helpful. You used the expression that it underlies the service, and I think that the reference to what Christ accomplished and secured at the cross is extremely important to that because it is all

founded in Him. But without that work, we could never have part in that.

DMW That is why eternal life is now enjoyed in victory as having the gift of the Spirit; a well of living water springing up to where Christ is now. But we are still here where He is rejected, but will reign. Therefore, it says in the end of the verse in Romans 5, “grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”. So even now the saints, in the gain of eternal life, anticipate the millennium. Being in the gain of what the Lord Jesus did, dispossessing us of death, relieving us of the pressure of death as a penalty, and subduing evil, we are free from the bondage of sin and death. He defeated the devil; the devil had “the might of death” (Heb 2: 14) because of God's judgment upon sin, and man in the flesh, but not now on the believer; and in the millennium persons will be delivered from that. Even though sin and death will still be here, eternal life will be manifested publicly; sin and death will not be reigning. The saints then will be relieved of the pressure of death, and they will actually be free without the devil threatening, because he will be bound for a thousand years. The saints bear the testimony of eternal life now on the earth in the circle of fellowship where conditions of eternal life are to be maintained in righteousness.

SWS It is one of the key characteristics of the millennium, the kingdom in that day, that righteousness will reign. Righteousness is not reigning now; it does in the hearts of the saints; so morally you could say that the kingdom is being worked out now, and that there is evidence of it in the saints, but in that day it will be a literal thing. Think of that - righteousness reigning! That is a precious thing.

DMW So “righteousness, and peace, and joy” is the present character of the kingdom of God, and it is in the Spirit, Rom 14: 17.

LEO What can you say as to the pathway of righteousness that believers have before them? The psalm says, “Righteousness shall go before him, and shall set his footsteps on the way”, or the footnote reads, 'shall set itself in the way of his steps'. I was just thinking that following Christ in righteousness is fully marked out with righteousness; and there is nothing that would turn us from His path leading us to the Father. Is that right, that everything the Lord has done has been through setting forth righteousness? I think this is repeating what has also been said earlier, but I am just helping my own thoughts in bringing in that verse.

SWS I think what you say is exactly right, and the way you emphasise

that a particular pathway has been marked out for us. It is not our own pathway; it is not something we are left to decide for ourselves; it has been clearly marked out. And that should be a real comfort and encouragement to the saints. What a help, dearly beloved, to realise that as in Him it is clearly marked out! He has gone that way; it is apparent. I like the way that you put that; it has been marked out for us, that way of righteousness.

LEO It is the mind of God that has marked it out, and the Lord Jesus in full obedience to the mind of God has walked it.

SWS That is very good. God has marked it out; I think you see that in verse 13: "Righteousness shall go before him". It has been clearly marked. Christ Himself did the will of God, and not His own will; He perfectly expressed the way of righteousness that was clearly marked out by God Himself. He has walked it, He has demonstrated how it is to be done, He has demonstrated that path itself; everything is found in Him. Well, what a wonderful thought! It refers to Him as a model; it refers to us walking in His steps. I think it all relates to this, this path of righteousness that God has marked out; and He has provided His beloved Son to show us the way. He did so, He walked that pathway perfectly, demonstrating exactly the way in which we are to go; and I think that is so precious to think of.

LEO Do you think that could help our own understanding of the joy God would feel? We have mentioned that He has been uncompromised, He has not changed, but this One walking in righteousness, in perfection, the Lord Jesus, finding followers: if we were to walk here in this world in righteousness, that would bring similar joy to the heart of God, do you think? Do you think it has been long-desired, the walk of righteousness?

SWS That is to be seen in the saints. Of course individually we each have a responsibility in that way; but then it is a wonderful thing to consider how we can encourage and help another along the way, to walk that path of righteousness just like He did.

DMW Would that be in the Spirit?

LEO Fully in the Spirit, do you think; there would not be anything of ourselves in that? It is a matter of accepting the Spirit's power and being subject to it?

DMW That is helpful to think of it that way. "The kingdom of God is ... righteousness, and peace, and joy": is that not seen in the Spirit coming

out in the saints? As these vessels of humiliation are His, then He could not lead or guide in any other way than that which Christ took. So we do not have it in actuality, in perfection, but we have the Spirit of it, we have the Spirit Himself; would that be right? It will not *actually* occur until that last verse we read in Romans 8 - when the body is quickened, then actuality will replace faith.

KRO Just to add to that, you brought before us recently the matter of being “in Christ”. If we are in the Spirit, and in Christ as part of the sanctified, it all crystalises as to the distinctiveness of that part the assembly has in righteousness?

SWS It is really a positional thought; it is the position or standing we have before God in righteousness, on the basis of what Christ has accomplished and secured; but then there is to be that corresponding state, and we often have that before us. And I think the verses which you suggested as to the Spirit would help us about that. Again, Mr Darby's note is helpful, bringing in the state which is the result of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the believer. I think that is helpful, but to realise that state is to correspond with the position and standing we have before God. That is a very practical way to view things, and to take soundings as to where we are - does our state correspond with that dignified position that we have before God as in Christ? It is quite a challenging question to ask ourselves.

LMH I wondered if the verse in Hebrews 2 which we read, “for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren”, has to do with that, that the Lord is glad to call His brethren those who are found on a righteous basis before God. I am thinking of the privileged position that would bring: do we live up to that? The Lord not being ashamed to call us brethren is a testing thing, is it not? We can know the position is secure if we know Him.

SWS “He that sanctifies and those sanctified” - it is assumed; but it is for that reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren. But then again there is that exercise - or should be - and desire to be found in correspondence with that.

DMW I wonder whether in one sense this verse does address any responsibility. In the synoptic gospels, the Lord refers to His brethren - not brethren in the flesh, He does that more than once too - but His followers. Others would say at one point, when He was rather interrupted, perhaps, that His mother and His brethren were outside the circle where He was speaking; and His response was that *these* are my

brethren “who hear the word of God and do it”, Luke 8: 21. Now that is the area of responsibility, is it not? But would Hebrews 2 be the area of liberty in view of assembly response to the Father? It was His desire to make the Father known; but that is not really the same responsible place that He refers to in the synoptic gospels, is it? These referred to in Hebrews 2 are all one company, just like Christ.

SWS Mr Darby's notes are so helpful; it says as to “those sanctified” that it is 'Simply the character of the persons without reference to done or doing'. I think that is really helpful. So we are to be in the enjoyment of that, but it is important to realise that if we have not understood the responsible side of that, how could we be in the enjoyment of it? That has always been the challenge to me, and it is something to be exercised about; but do not wait until the Lord's day morning to be exercised about it.

DMW I think it is good to lay hold of these things. It says, “Lay hold of eternal life”, 1 Tim 6: 12. It is not something future laid up for us; I think it is not allowing death as a penalty to occupy us, not allowing evil to have its place characteristically in me. So the Lord defeated the devil at the cross. Consequently, eternal life was a result of Him who is the eternal life dispossessing death by going into it Himself for us, and annulling the devil who is the author of evil. While eternal life is what we enter into and lay hold of, it is in Him: He is that eternal life; it consists in Him, but practically, we are in the gain of what is in Him, appreciate it and have it there in Him, apprehending it in faith by the Spirit; “He that has the Son has life”, 1 John 5: 12. Does this support the view of what you say, and what Mr Darby says in his footnote, as to the character? On Lord's day morning, especially following the Supper, we respond according to a new order of mankind in the last Adam; we are just like Him in manhood, we are just like Him: the sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one lot.

SWS That line of the hymn was referred to this morning in someone's response -

Sons loved and loving ... (Hymn 90).

I think that really expresses the thought in simplicity.

DMW So *actually*, we will be conformed to God's Son in glory. What was hidden in the Old Testament was the church's union with Christ, and adoption individually into the family of God. Those were two things that were hidden in the Old Testament, and also to some extent the exaltation of Christ, even though you get it pictured, in Solomon, for example, the offspring of David. So God's thoughts spiritually, which

we can now enter into, as saved by grace through faith (Eph 2: 8), are according to the order of mankind set on in the Lord Jesus, and secured to us through death. The life that He took here in responsibility and obligation, is the same life that we have; only He was holy (“the holy thing”), and we are not. He laid that life down sacrificially for us to bring us into something far better and superior, and new; and we have come into that based on His resurrection. His resurrection made it effective for us.

KRO Does that tie with the scripture, “he that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one”? Sanctification and holiness are very much key. For example, in the beginning of Romans, the thought overlays holiness and sanctification.

DMW Just a word on that: this scripture in Hebrews 2 does not contemplate us becoming holy: it contemplates us as holy, I think.

SWS It is interesting the way that it is put because it shows that the thoughts of Sanctifier and sanctified merge together ultimately in what is for God. That is the point: “he that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one”; are all *of* one. It includes the thought of being one, but there is more to it: it is not only that the Sanctifier and those sanctified *are* one, they are “of one”. And I think that helps us to understand the fulness of this scripture, that it is the realisation of what God has purposed in His own heart and mind, and what He has secured through Christ, the Sanctifier, and what He finds in His people, the sanctified, for Himself. It is all for Himself, all of one.

DMW It is all the same kind, that is the thought; it is like the seed in Genesis, there was a seed for this and a seed for that; one seed. These hidden things of God are in spite of us. Is that why it is grace and not law? The very thing for each one of us, and together, is to be more and more in the consciousness of it.

Denton

22nd October 2023

List of initials (all local in Denton)

L M Hibbert, K R Oliver, L E Oliver, W J Oliver, S W Selman, D M Welch

“DELIVERED FOR OUR OFFENCES”

Glen M Barlow

Romans 4: 23-25; 5: 1-2

I have a simple impression for this occasion as to the One “who has been delivered for our offences”, and “raised for our justification”. I was thinking that there are many gospels of various kinds going out in the world today. Paul speaks in the Galatians of a “different gospel” (1: 6). They had heard a different gospel. I think what characterises every gospel other than the true gospel is that it would present the thought that there is something you can do for yourself, that there is something you can do to meet your own need and hopelessness. When we come to the true gospel, we present *another* “who has been delivered for our offences” and “raised for our justification”.

It is necessary that this should be so when we consider the great matter that stands out against us that offends, or should offend, our consciences and brings us into bondage and the fear of death. When we consider the matter of sin and the offence that it is against a holy and righteous God, and the prospect of the unbeliever as having offended God and “being dead in ...offences and sins” (Eph 2: 1), we must come to it that there is no answer to that predicament in ourselves, none. It has struck me what another has said, 'if you could by some means acquire to yourself the combined merits of all the saints of God who ever lived on earth, there is not value enough in all their holy living and dying to absolve one of your sins', CAC vol 14 p12. Our position is hopeless, but in the gospel we have to proclaim One who wishes to meet the hopeless case and has already done so! We do not present a work that *you* could accomplish to answer to God for the state into which you have fallen as one who has offended against Him, because there is none. What we have to present is that the very One against whom we have offended has *Himself* accomplished the work that can satisfy His claims. Our help, if we believe, has been laid on another. He has been “delivered for our offences”.

What a glorious message the glad tidings is, beloved. There was only one thing, speaking reverently, that God could give that would satisfy His claims of righteousness and it was the One that was most precious to Him. Think of the perfection of the life of Jesus in comparison with all that had gone before: four thousand years of constant failure; four thousand years of sin proliferating in a sphere in

which God should have been supreme. And, because of sin, the sentence of death and the fear and the bondage of death upon all men, because it is the righteous judgment of sin. It is necessary that sin should be judged.

Into such a scene came His beloved Son. I have been affected recently by considering the distinction between the way that God's presence was known in Exodus, when He appeared on Mount Sinai, and in the beginning of Luke's gospel. At Sinai, the children of Israel could not draw near to the mountain and they could not touch it; there were thunders and lightnings, Exod 19: 16. There is the sense of God protecting Himself against the unholiness and unrighteousness that marked that sphere. Then compare that scene with the beginning of Luke's gospel. There you find "a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger", Luke 2: 12. God has drawn near in the Person of Jesus, and Jesus, in the perfection of His manhood, has delighted God. There were thirty years which are largely hidden to us, but the summation of them is at the point of the Lord's baptism at the end of those thirty years, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight", Matt 3: 17. God found delight in Him in every moment of those thirty years, in the circumstances of every-day life. Every movement, every thought of His, satisfied the will and pleasure of the Father. That estimation as to His delight in Him was then repeated at the mount of transfiguration, as to the three years of His public service. God found in the Lord Jesus a Man who satisfied His heart and there was nothing lacking in Him.

But what does that mean for us, as lost and far from God? The scripture says, "the redemption of their soul is costly, and must be given up for ever", Ps 49: 8. God gave up forever what was so precious to Him, the life of Jesus in perfection here. Jesus was the One whom He delivered, in the words of this scripture, "for our offences". It also says in scripture that He delivered Himself up, Eph 5: 2. He was delivered up by men (Acts 3: 13), that is man's responsibility, and He was delivered up by God (Rom 8: 32), that is God's disposition; but He also delivered Himself up. In the scripture where it speaks of Abraham and Isaac going to make the offering, Abraham says that God will provide Himself with the sheep for the burnt offering, and then it says, "they went both of them together", Gen 22: 8. Think of the Father and the Son in perfect accord, with one object before them in view of the glory of God; and the object was you and me. The Father and the Son went both of them

together, the Son prepared as the willing Victim to deliver Himself up for our offences, the Father willing to give up that which so delighted Him on your account and mine.

The death of the Lord Jesus and the shedding of His precious blood have answered the great question, really the only question that matters for anyone away from God. Think of how much men worry about questions of the day. They worry, for instance, about how long this planet can continue physically. I have been thinking recently that this world's moral conclusion is arriving far sooner than its physical one. It is going on to a sink of corruption, but think of how men worry about these questions, and the question of the eternal prospect of their immortal soul goes unanswered. Others perhaps seeking to answer it in their own strength without any prospect of success. We have to present in the gospel the One who was delivered, *He* was “delivered for our offences”, and *He* shed His precious blood. And so this question to which I referred, which the earlier part of Romans really addresses, is the question of how a holy and righteous God could show mercy and grace to those whom He would have to be the objects of His mercy and grace, while maintaining the claims of His righteousness. It speaks in the previous chapter of “the shewing forth of his righteousness in the present time, so that he should be just, **and** justify him that is of the faith of Jesus”, Rom 3: 26. The answer is to point to the blood of Jesus and for you to have your faith and trust in Him.

The passover to which we were referring in the reading is a very helpful type in this regard, because you will recall that the question of whether a person was saved or unsaved did not depend on their own thoughts as to salvation, but on the blood being on the door-posts and lintel. It did not depend on how good or how bad they thought they were, or even the degree of the trust of the persons within each household. A well-known tract (Safety, Certainty and Enjoyment - George Cutting) has the illustration of two different households of the children of Israel in Egypt. In both houses, the blood is on the door-posts and the lintel, but in the first house they know that the destroying angel is coming over and they are not really sure as to whether they are safe until the angel has passed, so they are cowering in the house. In the second house, by contrast, they are standing ready to leave Egypt. What the tract draws attention to, as to the distinction between those two households, is that your eternal salvation as having your faith and trust in the precious blood of Jesus depends on what *God* thinks of the

blood. That is what gave certainty in the second household. They could say, 'God has said, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you"', Exod 12: 13. That is really my impression for this occasion, that Christ has done it all. Let there be no doubts or fears as having your faith and trust in the precious blood of Jesus because nothing ever depended on you. If it did, you would be lost for eternity. There is nothing you can do to add to your salvation, and no one can take away from it. God has said, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you". The righteousness of God has been satisfied in the death of Jesus.

We know what that involved for Him. Where we read in the reading in Matthew 26, He was going alone.. At that time, there was communion with the Father, but He went alone as far as men could have seen. There were none that could understand, He "looked for sympathy, but there was none; and for comforters, but ... found none", Ps 69: 20. . There was communion with the Father, but your salvation and mine meant that that communion had to be broken. It is beyond our comprehension, but there was that moment when there was, as another has said, 'without one ray of light, not even from God' (JND Collected Writings vol 7 p169): all was darkness. And in the darkness, and in the distance, He bore and exhausted God's righteous judgment in relation to sin and sins. He bore the sins of many (Heb 9: 28), but He also bore the curse that lay upon man from Adam onwards. He went into the distance and He measured sin's distance. I gather persons used to speak about the 'unfathomable depths of sin', but it was brought out that *He* fathomed them. We can never understand what that involved for Him, when that communion that He so treasured and enjoyed with the Father was broken and the wrath of God was poured upon Him without relief. He was "delivered for our offences".

What has been given up is so precious and it has been given up for those in whom there was nothing to call forth the love that gave it. It raises that question which I suppose we could never really answer, 'Why did He love me?'. The great evidence of the love of God was at the cross of Jesus and what was demonstrated at the cross is that love required nothing from its objects. Nothing. If it did, we would have no hope. There was nothing in us to call forth that love, but it was such that He was "delivered for our offences". God gave up what was so pleasurable to Himself in view of your blessing and mine.

Then it says too that He "has been raised for our justification". We might sometimes tend to think more of the death of Jesus as being

for us and of the resurrection of Jesus as being for the Father, that He must glorify the One who had so satisfied Him. All was for God, but in this scripture we are told that He was “raised for our justification”. So that not only His death, not only the shedding of His precious blood, not only His burial as taking away out of the sight of God all that stood out against us, but too His rising again was for *us*. As to the matter of justification being linked with being raised, it has been observed that if God could not raise a man to life, justification would be a dead letter, FER vol 5 p292. What would be the joy of knowing deliverance from our sins, if we were still lost to the penalty of death? The rising again of Jesus is the testimony that the power of death has been broken and that our liabilities have been discharged. Every liability that stood out against us has been discharged, He “has been raised for our justification”. There is a Man raised, exalted and glorified, and His present position is the assurance that the believer has life everlasting. “The wages of sin is death”, and in being delivered for our offences, He has taken that upon Himself, “but the act of favour of God, eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”, Rom 6: 23. He “has been raised for our justification”.

It has been said (FER vol 2 p326), and I found it interesting and helpful, that if we think of a substitute as one who took our place in order that we might go free, we must remember that in the gospel the first Person to go free is the Substitute, the Lord Jesus. The One who took our place was the first to go free; He has been raised. What is the testimony to the fact that the believer will be raised? What is the testimony to the fact that we are set on the platform of resurrection? How do we know that resurrection is true? It is because the resurrection has already begun. There is already a Man in heaven and His place there is the assurance to the believer that our place is there. He “has been raised for our justification”. We could never be comfortable there if we had not been justified. The truth is that we stand in the worth of Another; the One who has been raised is our righteousness.

In the beginning of chapter 5, the power of justification is brought out. There are three things we are told that we can have as drawing near and as having been justified and placed on the platform of resurrection. It says we have “peace”, and we have “favour”, and we have “hope”. How could we have peace before God if any offence was yet outstanding? There is no offence outstanding for the believer. It is

impossible that a believer should be subject to the wrath of God and it is impossible that a believer should be subject to the condemnation of God. We may know discipline, but wrath and condemnation can *never* be applied to the believer because Jesus bore it and He exhausted it. There is no condemnation left for the believer, none, and so we have peace. We can come into the presence of God clothed in the perfect worth of the Man who has satisfied Him for time and eternity. We have peace in the presence of God. It is a peace that Adam, even in innocence, really never knew. Adam was incorrupt before he sinned but he was not incorruptible. But there is now a Man in the presence of God in the power of indissoluble life. It is a life to which nothing of Adam's nature can attach. Then we have the favour in which we stand. It is the favour of divine love, "taken us into favour in the Beloved", Eph 1: 6.

You will notice that all three of the things that are spoken of in the beginning of chapter 5 are the consequence of what Jesus has done; peace "through our Lord Jesus Christ", and then, "by whom we have also access by faith into this favour in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God". So we can know peace, and peace forms the basis for the enjoyment of all the blessings that follow and the liberty of access that we have to the presence of God, as having been justified, and we can boast in hope of the glory of God. I have been thinking in relation to that verse that the unbeliever cannot boast in the hope of the glory of God. The glory of God involves that there should be a sphere, a universe of glory, all headed up in the One in whom God has secured His will and pleasure, but that must involve that everything contrary to that scene falls under judgment. In the second epistle to the Thessalonians we have some sense of what will take place in judgment and the solemnity of it. It says that there will be "the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, with the angels of his power, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who know not God, and those who do not obey the glad tidings of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall pay the penalty of everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his might", chap 1: 7-9. What a contrast with the blessing of those whose faith is in the One who has been delivered and raised. They know peace and favour and they can "boast in hope of the glory of God".

There is coming a day when God will "judge the habitable earth in righteousness by the man whom he has appointed" (Acts 17: 31), and the glory of God necessitates that. But the believer can "boast in

hope of the glory of God” because there is no judgment for the believer. There is no condemnation. There is no prospect of “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord”. There is the prospect of sharing with Him in His glory; that is the hope of the believer. The believer looks first and foremost for the exaltation of Jesus, when He will come into the place and the rights that are due to Him. There should be nothing dearer to the heart of the believer than that He should have His place and that every knee should bow to Him. But when that happens, He will have with Him those whom He has secured. The hymn says -

Quickened with Him in life divine,
 Raised with Him from the dead:
 His own (and all His own are Thine)
 Shall with Him in His glories shine,
 Our blessed living Head! (Hymn 40)

That is the prospect for the believer. That is why we can “boast in hope of the glory of God” because the glory of God does not mean condemnation for us. It does not mean wrath; it does not mean judgment; it means a Man set up in His presence, as the Centre of a universe of glory that speaks of Him. It means the prospect of eternal bliss. We can “boast in hope of the glory of God”.

The scripture we have read makes clear that everything of which we have spoken, and the entrance into it, depends on faith: “to whom, believing on him who has raised from among the dead Jesus our Lord”. How wonderful is God's grace in reckoning our faith to us for righteousness. Yet, the help has been laid on Another. Nothing is required from our side, and nothing we could give would ever suffice. But we must have faith and trust in the One who has accomplished the work. Earlier in Romans, it tells us that the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ is “**towards** all”, chap 3: 22. The righteousness of God has been made known, and it has been displayed at the cross that it is towards all, but it is “**upon** all those who believe”. I trust that all here have their faith and trust in the work of Jesus and His precious blood because there is no other means of salvation. There is none. He has been delivered for your offences and has been raised for your justification. And God's blessing -

Rich blessings, unmeasured, conceived in His heart!
 (Hymn 257)

are available to those who put their faith and trust in the One who God

has delivered and the One who God has raised.

And then there is the power for the present enjoyment of all that His work has secured. How can we enter into the peace? By the power of the Holy Spirit. How can we enjoy the favour? By the power of the Holy Spirit. How can we be boasting in the hope of the glory of God? How can our eyes be fixed on what is coming, fixed on the sphere to which we belong, fixed on the One who is there and the place that He fills? By the power of the Holy Spirit of God. God gave His all at the cross, and only God could give His all and carry on giving. He has given His Holy Spirit. So there is the power available in the sphere of Christ's absence to link us to Him in the place where He is. There is the power for the present enjoyment of the place of favour, and joy, and peace, and blessing and hope that belongs to every believer, because Jesus has secured it for them.

May we all enter into it in a greater way, for His Name's sake.

Sunbury

10th December 2023

THE WAVE OFFERING AND THE HEAVE OFFERING

Terry W Lock

Exodus 29: 1 (to “priests”), 22

John 1: 14, 35

Exodus 35: 20-24

We had a reference on Lord's day morning in one of the thanksgivings, in relation to the wave-offering that is for God. I was quite affected by that, and I have been thinking a little bit about it. The wave-offering is very interesting, because it is not an offering by itself like the burnt-offering, or the sin-offering, or so on; but rather it is taken from the peace-offering, Lev 7: 30. The peace offering is what the people of Israel were able to enjoy together, with the only stipulation being that anyone of the company that took part in it had to be clean from sin. From the peace-offering was taken the wave-offering. The wave-offering is particularly, to my mind, and hopefully I will be able to express it readily by the Spirit, what is for God. It is not exactly in relation to things done, and it is also not exactly in relation to things met. It is not like a burnt-offering or a sin-offering. It is rather an appreciation of what the creature offered was for God. There are many references through Scripture, but in Exodus 29, this is the time of the consecration of Aaron and his sons. It is why they were going to be for God, not exactly what they were going to enjoy, not exactly their privilege, not exactly what God had made them, but rather a day of consecration, what they were going to be in service towards God. That is what consecration means; it means a committal Godward. It is different from sanctification; sanctification is separation for God: consecration is committal in life for God.

So Aaron and his sons were going to be committed to God, and in relation to His service, and so on; it was a time of consecration, and subsequently it is very interesting that it is at that time that there is a wave-offering. So, beloved brethren, we had this reference on Lord's day morning in the service of praise; that is one of the most remarkable services that happens for God on the face of the earth; indeed it *is* the most remarkable service that happens for God on the face of the earth, following from the Supper. And we are bringing to God something that is in accord with His appreciation of Jesus. That is a very precious thing, to be able to take something of a Man that God finds so precious and present Him to God. Is it a privilege? Yes, of course it is a privilege. Is it something we enjoy? Yes, it is. But, beloved brethren, the wave-

offering and the heave-offering were God's appreciation of Christ. So all of these things were to be for Aaron and his sons. It was their unique part, but it was to strengthen them in relation to their service, and in relation to their sensitivity to what was going to be for God.

So I read in John's gospel because the wave-offering involved what was of the breast. Now, in Christ, indeed, if we want to see the particular love that passed between Himself and His Father, John's gospel expresses it, maybe the best of all, without limiting any other scripture: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father)". What a holy intimacy there was between the Father and the Son when He was here. It is a very interesting thing, because here "we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father": it is completely outside of the work He did. And there was a wonderful work; none of us would be here, none of us would be saved, outside the work of Christ. But how much Christ was to the Father in what He was, outside of what He did, and how the Father loved Him! How the Father loved Christ! Do we, beloved brethren, spend the time to contemplate how the Father loved Christ in all the excellence of His Person, in all that He was in answering to His own heart? That is the breast of the wave-offering.

So when we come to the Supper, we break bread in the wilderness, it is true, but then we move on with Christ into His own sphere, where He moves according to *His* heart. But the Father expresses His heart, and the Spirit expresses His heart, and in that area you have the breast of the wave-offering. You are going to present to divine Persons something of their appreciation of Jesus.

But then we move on here to where John makes reference to, "Again, on the morrow, there stood John and two of His disciples. And looking at Jesus as he walked, he says, Behold the Lamb of God". That is the heave-offering. The wave-offering is what is brought before the eyes of God; the heave-offering is energy towards God. It just says in this part, "Behold the Lamb of God"; as we well know, it is not, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (v 29); that is His work, but, "Behold the Lamb of God": it is just an appreciation. This is John's way of giving a heave-offering in application to God. He just appreciated Christ, "Behold the Lamb of God"; he appreciated Christ as He walked here for His God, not in relation to His work, but what He was unique in His manhood, for His God, as He walked in the scene that was

contrary to that God.

Speaking carefully, what a bright spot it was in the dark scene for the eyes of God to see Jesus here. And John took account of that. John took account of the One on whom the Spirit came, and whom He abode upon. John understood what divine Persons thought of the manhood of Jesus. And John says, "Behold the Lamb of God". As we know the Lamb of God goes back to the time of the passover when the lamb was to be perfect and it was to be kept in the house and it was to become attached to. Well, that was true. People in the house were attached to it, but that lamb was firstly for God: it was for God to appreciate. What a wonderful thing that is. So we come to the Supper, but, beloved brethren, we come up to the service of God and the service of God is a presentation of what Christ is for God.

But then there is more than that, beloved brethren, because at the end of Exodus where we read in chapter 35, we have what the people did: "And all the assembly of the children of Israel departed from before Moses. And they came, every one whose heart moved him, and everyone whose spirit prompted him". All these persons had an appreciation of God and, beloved brethren, I trust we have an appreciation of God, the God that has given us part with Christ. What a God He is, the God that would take up persons like us in all our failings, in all our shortcomings, in all our fickleness, and give us association with the Man of His choice. What a blessed God. And so subsequently as we ponder and contemplate love such as that, our hearts begin to move us, and they should, beloved brethren. Our hearts should begin to move us. That is what happened here, "every one whose spirit prompted him; and they brought Jehovah's heave-offering for the work of the tent of meeting". They facilitated the way; there was energy Godward. They facilitated the way for God to have His portion. The people had their portion: God was their portion, and He had made it known to them.

But now they were exercised that God had His portion. So they brought this heave-offering, but it goes on to say, in relation to this, "every one who was of willing heart brought nose-rings, and earrings, and rings, and bracelets, all kinds of utensils of gold: every man that waved a wave-offering". The wave-offering here is only related to the gold articles. It is different later on in the book, but here it is only in relation of the gold articles. And what is gold in the things of God is again an appreciation of the excellence of Jesus. These people

represent those understood that; who understand what Christ is in His excellence for God. This gold was what was going to cover the whole of the tabernacle system: it was going to cover the ark; it was going to cover the boards; it was going to cover the table of shewbread; it was going to cover the golden altar; it was going to cover all those things. This gold that they brought was going to facilitate all of that. And everything that was before the eye of God in the holiest speaks of Christ. And they brought it. They instinctively understood that that was what was suitable. They brought a wave-offering, but then they brought more than that. They brought copper, and they brought silver, and they brought those things as a heave-offering. The tabernacle went through the wilderness, and it went through the wilderness according to the glory of the God whose tabernacle it was. So they brought a heave-offering. They brought the things that the boards sat in, the silver, that the tenons sat in, the copper that made the brazen altar, all of those things. Their hearts prompted them, and they prompted them because of the appreciation they had of what God was, and in type what Christ was for God.

Beloved brethren, it is a simple thought I know, but when a brother made reference to this on Lord's day morning, I thought about it, and I thought, what a wonderful thing it is for God. For us not only to have a place where His heart is answered, but to have persons intelligent as to His appreciation of Jesus. We were reminded on Lord's day morning as well of the assembly coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. What is she filled with? Filled "even to all the fulness of God", is Christ. She is Him over again. We have heard it many times. She appreciates Him in what He is for God.

Well, may we be encouraged in this and contemplate on this for His Name's sake.

Edinburgh

12th December 2023

WHAT WAS LAID ON CHRIST

Norman J Henry

Isaiah 53: 6

Mathew 26: 36-42

1 Samuel 17: 20 (to “commanded him”), 29

John 10: 27-30

I would like divine help to speak a little about what was laid on Christ, the Lord Jesus. Who would know what that was? This was an incalculable matter, which affected not only mankind but God Himself. You might say the resources of God would be called into full use at a time like this when something would be laid upon Christ that could be laid on no other. No other in the universe could take on what was put on Christ. Think of men of God that had been previously! No one could say, 'Jehovah hath laid upon them the iniquity of us all'. We have all gone our own way. It says, “every one to his own way”. We have all gone different ways. You have your ways and I have mine, and it was all away from God, like the younger son in Luke 15 going away. He went out without his father but he came back with his father; that is recovery.

Think of what was laid on Christ! Only He fully knew what that was. He says, “the cup which the Father has given me, shall I not drink it?”, John 18: 11. When did He get that? Was that publicly seen? No! Nobody saw that publicly. That is why I read of Gethsemane just to get some little impression of the pressure that was in the heart and mind and affections of Christ. There is no one more feeling than Christ. When He came to this matter, what was in that cup was abhorrent to Him. It was done in secret. Even the selected disciples did not know. The Spirit had to give us Matthew 26 and Mark 14: 32-41, showing what transpired at Gethsemane. The disciples slept through it; they were not able for it. The Spirit of God gave us these touches, Jesus says, “not my will, but thine be done”, Luke 22: 42. What words these were to heaven, to the Father's ears! What the angels must have felt! The angels were singing at His birth and the angels must have marvelled. What that life of perfection meant to the Father! The Father would delight in that pathway, and yet it came to this point and there was this cup. No one knew anything about it, “the cup which the Father has given me”. What was in that cup? Everything that was against God: sin, death, everything was in that cup, the whole judgment of God on

the race, and the Lord knew that. In His wonderful, gracious feelings and affections, He would know He would have to go there to provide a basis for salvation for everyone who had put faith in God. How would David be saved without it? How would Abraham and the patriarchs be saved? It depended on God overlooking “the times of ignorance” (Acts 17: 30) as to men or even His people. These men died in faith but they *needed* the work of Christ to come into eternal blessing, and *we* need it. No one here gets it by birth. We never could get anything by birth. We speak about repentance; repentance is that you abandon your own thoughts, and you are accepting God's thoughts.

But here it is laid upon Him. The horns of the altar involve strength in Christ, and here it is laid upon Him. “And Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all”. What precious balm to our souls! Do not be ashamed to produce tears; I mean genuinely deep feelings. I know what it is like to sit through preaching after preaching after preaching and hardening inside: 'I am not going to give in tonight'. Thank God He never gave up! He kept going until eventually each one of us had to accept it that He went there for us. He went there for me. So, it says, “Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all”.

The day of atonement looked forward to Christ. It was a very great matter in Israel's history, the day of atonement. No man could go in but the high priest and he went in and presented the offering, and he took the coals and incense and went into the Holiest, Lev 16: 12. That was typical of the presence of God. The perfection of Christ was in the divine presence. What a place to be! Then the blood was put “upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat”, v 15. How precious! That has given God a basis to come out to you tonight, in a forgiving way to men, however hard, and they are getting harder. The days are getting harder, more sinful, more unashamed. They celebrate Christmas but may have little regard for His death. What we had before us this morning was His death, which brought us into the good of things, and here - I will just go over it again - “All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all”.

When you come to Gethsemane, what a scene! “Then Jesus comes with them to a place called Gethsemane, and says to the disciples, Sit here until I go away and pray yonder. And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and deeply depressed. Then he says to them, My soul is very sorrowful

even unto death; remain here and watch with me. And going forward a little he fell upon his face, praying and saying, My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; but not as *I* will, but as *thou* wilt". Thank God for the will of the Father! The Lord Jesus hated sin as much as God hates sin. He loved righteousness, and God loves righteousness, and here He is given this great matter to bear, and He says, "if it be possible let this cup pass from me". If the Father had said, 'Yes', where would you now be? In a lost eternity! No hope at all! Think of persons going to spend eternity without Christ! Their conscience will be restless eternally. The greatest vehicle of torment will be a restless conscience. It will be impossible to satisfy the conscience then with the lost! Too late! Everyone here who has been converted, even then just for a few moments, had the terrible sense of what it means, what being lost means, and the hand is outstretched to bless you, to fill your heart with Christ! There is nothing like it.

Now, it says, "if it be possible let this cup pass from me; but not as *I* will, but as *thou* wilt". Satan was powerless, when a Man goes to that extent in the face of what Satan has seized. Death was actually God's penalty for sin but the power of it was seized by the devil through Cain, and he wields that power over the race. The fear of death keeps persons in bondage the whole of their life. That is what has happened to every generation since, and here this blessed One is about to be made sin. He was made what He hated most. It was not just saying, 'I will accept you in perfection only'. The fact is that God *made Him to be sin* for you and me (2 Cor 5: 21), and that is why when a person gets forgiveness, it is absolute. It is for the whole of your life. Now remember that: you cannot spend your life as you want because if you have received that, it covers every sin, although sin may come into our responsible history. That is marvellous. That is how great forgiveness of sins is. It is something worth telling the race. What is holding you back? You can have forgiveness of sins without one qualm or question in your conscience or anything. It is all met in the blood of Christ. Is that not wonderful?

So, it says, "And he comes to the disciples and finds them sleeping". I think that is why the Spirit gives this outline because the Lord Jesus goes back a second time and then He prays a third time and eventually He says, "Sleep on now", v 45. He knew they were not able for this scene, but the Spirit of God gives us the agonies of Christ. They were agonies of Christ in anticipation of what He would do at the cross

and take sins away. The sin matter was gone into *absolutely* on the cross. He suffered for righteousness in His life; He suffered for sin on the cross, the three hours of darkness when the sin matter was resolved eternally for God; and if it satisfies God, it should satisfy you and me. And it says here, "And coming he found them again sleeping, for their eyes were heavy", v 43. I think that was because it was such a great matter.

Now we come to 1 Samuel 17. The Philistine giant was challenging Israel to produce an opponent; he did not know what he was taking on. Instead of seeing somebody in Saul's armour, it was an unprotected youth. He went forward as a type of Christ. Christ could have gone through the midst of the people, Luke 4: 30. They took up stones to cast against Him, but He hid Himself, John 8: 59. He could have asked for angelic protection, but He did not, Matt 26: 53. He went forward as unprotected. What a Saviour! David got that giant where he should get him, right in his head; the Philistine mind was dealt with on the spot.

It says David "left the sheep with a keeper". I think you will see in John chapters 14, 15 and 16, He is making known to His own who the Keeper would be in His absence. He has left the sheep, and the Lord Jesus provided for us in the Keeper He has left. He has left the Holy Spirit, and if you get salvation, you need the Spirit. That will bring assurance into your soul, and therefore He leaves the sheep. And when questioned David says, "What have I now done? Was it not laid upon me?". The footnote says, 'Or, "Is there not a cause?"'. There was a need to get the Spirit in the absence of Christ, and the Spirit will be with us until the coming of the Lord at the rapture. We will have a Keeper with us. I want to speak respectfully. He is a divine Person, but we have a Keeper, and there is no one like Him. As someone has said, He is the greatest Friend on earth. David says, 'Is there not a cause?'. They said he had forsaken the sheep. There was a cause he had come for. He was coming into conflict and the Lord went before us in the conflict, in a conflict we could not have other than lost. We had no ability to face the enemy of our souls. We have a divine Person that laid down His life for us, and we have a divine Person that sustains us in the way through. We have a Keeper here in the Holy Spirit, and that is a blessed thing.

Now, just finally I would like to make a reference to John 10. He says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me;

and I give them life eternal; and they shall never perish". That is one thing to remember. There is no going back once you get it. Once you lay hold of Christ, He lays hold on you. You might weaken, but the hold of Christ will never weaken. He says, "no one shall seize them out of my hand". What an all-the-way-through Saviour, sustaining you in the testimony, sustaining you going to work, and next week, or whenever it may be, sustaining you. "No one shall seize them out of my hand"; He gives an assurance. People want assurance, safety: this is the best safety you can get.

And then it says, "My Father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one can seize out of the hand of my Father. I and the Father are one". I was thinking this morning, and we would feel what the brethren here have gone through over the years, that the service of God will never cease. I believe that. The service of God, whatever the conditions may be, will continue, and that is because of the hand of Christ and the hand of the Father. In other words, the Father's interests are secured and the Lord's interests are secured. "And they shall never perish, and no one shall seize them out of my hand". I think seizing is grabbing at something. Things can happen so quickly in our lives. We need to be preserved from the enemy's tactics over us to try to weaken us. I will go over it again, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them life eternal; and they shall never perish, and no one shall seize them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one can seize out of the hand of my Father".

He says in chapter 17, "the men whom thou gavest me out of the world", v 6. He really brings them back to the Father. They were the Father's gift to the Son. That is a blessed thing. That involves predestination, that we might "be conformed to the image of his Son", but more than that, "so that he should be the firstborn among many brethren", Rom 8: 29. Christ has brethren given by the Father to Him, and Christ brings them to the Father. That is why I think it is unailing. There will always be a response from hearts. Those chapters we had today in Matthew and every gospel are full of persons returning when it seemed it was impossible to get a response. Even if there are two or three, or however many it may be, there is bound to be a response. I think that applies here: "My Father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one can seize out of the hand of my Father". I think things are going to be completed in power. It is not going to end in

weakness. The Spirit will be there to the end. We will not be without the Spirit. The gift He gave will be with us “for ever”, John 14: 16. We have that Keeper and when the assembly goes at the rapture, the Spirit goes as well. Solemn conditions lie on the world's system. Others will be brought in and they will be anointed to preach, but they will not have the indwelling Spirit that you and I can have because that involves the formation of the assembly, and that is a remarkable thing. It is a dignity and a privilege to be in the assembly, dear brethren. It is a fine thing to end the preaching with that, a recognition of the local assembly for the heart of Christ.

May the Lord bless the word!

Manchester

17th December 2023