A WORD
IN ITS SEASON

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WHAT WE FEED ON

1 Kings 17: 7-16
2 Kings 4: 38-44
1 Samuel 30: 11-12

AM It will be apparent that these scriptures relate to what we feed upon, a most important matter for the preservation of life. The food that the believer takes forms him. We are formed according to what we feed our minds upon. It says of Mary, the mother of Jesus, that she "kept all these things in her mind, pondering them in her heart", Luke 2: 19. Pondering in your heart is similar to what we refer to as feeding, what we give our minds to.

In the first two passages the food was meal. In the first one there was just a widow, her son and the prophet. Meal is a basic food; there is nothing elaborate about meal. The woman had a handful of it; that was her measure; that was all she had. Although she had the handful of meal in a barrel, there was room in the barrel for much more, but she had her measure of meal, she was obedient to the prophet, and she found that there was sufficient to last for the whole time of need. She also had the oil in the cruse: these are very suggestive things. I suppose the meal speaks of the humanity of the Lord Jesus. We see the meal in Luke's gospel; we also see it in Philippians 2; the meal is there. There is the oil too; in Philippians it speaks about "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ", chap 1: 19. There is enough in the Lord Jesus and in the Holy Spirit to meet every individual need: there is enough! I desire that we all lay hold of that. We do not need anything else individually. To enjoy life together we need one another, we have been put together, and we enjoy things together, and the second passage relates to that because they were all sitting together.

In 2 Kings they were sitting before Elisha and he said, 'Now let us feed together'. The great pot was set on, although this was a time of famine. But the great pot was set on and the pottage was there, but the meal was needed to counteract any adverse influence that might have come in. It was met by introducing what speaks of the humanity of the Lord Jesus; the poison was nullified. It is in Himself! They could continue with the meal; they did not have to pour it all out and start again. What had been introduced, something introduced innocently, was actually met by bringing in what suggests the humanity of our blessed Lord Jesus; how precious that is. As we feed together on that, we find there is something else; there is a supply from heaven. His was

not an earthly humanity; His was a humanity of its own: He was a heavenly Man. The heavenly Man has been seen on this earth, One intrinsically heavenly. He came out of heaven; John 6 tells us that; He was the One who came out of heaven to give life to the world, v 33. How precious to think of all that was found in our Lord Jesus. The man from Baal-shalishah comes and he has this food from another realm. Blessed thing to get food from another realm! Solomon says, "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country", Prov 25: 25. There is a far country, far from this world, where there is a supply of heavenly food.

You might think that we should have started with the Egyptian in Samuel, but he just came to mind as I was thinking; we have had the household, and we have had the company together, and in Samuel there is a young man that comes to light. He does not have to be a young man; he could be anyone. He comes to light and he is given food, and the result of that is that he is serviceable. He is serviceable to the Master; David can use him. He takes him up and uses him as the means of a great victory. The Lord will take us up as we are feeding upon what speaks of Himself and what He has secured and what He has among the saints, and He will use us to His own ends. These are just simple thoughts in my mind, but I trust the brethren can make something of them.

WMP I find your outline very encouraging. When a miller is grinding grain the first product is something that cattle can eat, there is a quality that can be used in cooking, but then the finest is what is brought in for human consumption; and I was thinking of what you said about the meal and the absolute perfection we find in the Lord Jesus. No doubt we might also bring the manna into our conversation, and that should occupy us, all the precious graces that are found in the Lord Jesus that we have come to appreciate with the help of the Holy Spirit.

AM Hymn 293 which we started with is marvellous, is it not? There are seven graces of the Lord that the writer could draw attention to, and each one causes a response in the heart. How superior that food is! You have referred to the food that cattle eat; well, the younger son found that that was not enough; "he longed to fill his belly with the husks", Luke 15: 16. They are the bits that we are not occupied with! He knew there was a supply, he knew that there was what spoke of Christ. Then the fatted calf was slain (v 23); the Lord Jesus has actually gone that way in order that we should know what it is to fill and satisfy

our hearts with Him.

TRC In the first scripture there is a drought, in the second there is a famine. I wondered if we needed to have a judgment of the world and the fact that it has nothing for us: there is a dearth there.

AM Elijah had been living on what was providential, had he not? And rightly so! God told him to do this; he went to the torrent and the ravens fed him, chap 17: 1-6. They brought meat for him; it must have been quite a test for Elijah to have meat brought by ravens and to eat it. But he was there by the torrent; there was something that was flowing, but it did not flow for ever. It says, "And it came to pass after a while that the torrent dried up", v 7. God provides what is providential, and we have that in natural relations and things like that, but for what is eternal and what is lasting there has to be more than that. Even as to our relationships in life, we must enjoy things beyond what is natural otherwise the torrent will dry up and there will be a dearth of spiritual life.

TRC Did the woman in John 4 find that?

AM Yes, that poor woman! We do not know the details of what went on before, but we do know that five times in her life she thought she was going to find satisfaction and five times in her life her hopes were dashed, poor woman! And then she comes to the Man, "Come, see a man", v 29. There is One who will never let us down, One who will always bring in satisfaction.

NJH God is jealous as to what He gives the creature in the way of life and that is so disregarded by the world around us, but here is something greater; it is a new order of life, and He is infinitely more jealous of that.

AM Reference was made to the manna, and you can see how God felt about the way the children of Israel spoke about the manna and indeed the way they processed it, Num 11: 8. The manna was to be eaten as it was, it was not to be subjected to all sorts of treatment to make it more palatable. The manna was heavenly food, food of God's providing, and God was jealous as to that. He was looking for the children of Israel to appreciate it as He does. So, in Revelation, Pergamos speaks of the time when the church allied itself with the world, the overcomer is to have "the hidden manna", nothing polluted by the world, Rev 2: 17.

NJH And in the company of the saints we can speak of what is

granted, and jealous of the life that is granted spiritually, and that has got to be fed.

AM We look around and we would not even know each other if it was not for the work of God and some appreciation of Christ; our paths would not cross. But we have a life, which is not just a social life; it is more than that. We have a life because it is centred, to whatever degree we allow it, in a blessed Man.

NJH The life that is in Christ Jesus.

AM Exactly!

PAG Why is it particularly a cake that is to be asked for?

AM "Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thy hand. And she said, As Jehovah thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel". A handful of meal, although it is her measure, does not have any form, it is not an object, you could take a part or bit of it, but a cake is a complete thing. However limited our measure is, however weak we may feel, we must hold complete thoughts in our minds; thoughts as to the assembly: we must hold whole thoughts.

PAG I think that is right as to whole thoughts. In Leviticus 2 you have the oblation and a cake would be made in the oven; there is what is made in the pan (v 4), and what is made in the cauldron (v 6), but do you think that these would be aspects of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus? Do you think that contemplating the sufferings of the Lord Jesus results in what is formed. It brings about what is whole.

AM Yes, it does. You used the word contemplation; it is more than speaking about them. To contemplate the sufferings of the Lord Jesus affects the heart. Really all growth, everything in Christianity, is based on the heart. We grow in our affections. Go over the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, and, I would say, learn scriptures that speak of them. I remember being encouraged to learn Isaiah 53 by heart. If you wake up in the middle of the night, can you go over Isaiah 53? Can you go over Psalm 22? It is formative to do it and it is a most blessed thing to do.

WMP "Make me … first"; what does that suggest to you?

AM This was the word from the prophet; it is like the word of God. Who comes first in my life? Well, that is quite a major test to me, who comes first. Does the Lord come first; do I put His things first? What do

you say?

WMP Well, we know our own proclivity is to put ourselves first, but that would completely ignore the fact that all that we are after the flesh, has been set aside by the death of Christ, has it not? Paul could say, “no longer live, *I*”, Gal 2: 20. He was no longer first in his own estimation; there was another Man that had captivated his affections and thoughts.

AM Somebody might have said this was an unreasonable request, and it was a cruel thing to do. There was a poor soul who had so little and you are saying give me something first; it seems like cruelty. But it was not! God put this into the prophet's mouth. He had already spoken to the widow woman; He says, “I have commanded a widow woman there to maintain thee”. He had already spoken to her; He guided the prophet in what He should say; so the prophet says to make him first something: let this work of God come to light. And she says, 'I have only got this but I will do it'. She is not claiming to have a lot, and blessing comes her way, and “The meal in the barrel did not waste, neither did the oil in the cruse fail”.

AMB The widow got that word from the prophet right away. It would appear that she had not actually made the cake, but she showed a willingness and the prophet brings in this immense reassurance for her.

AM So the word came to her and what followed on her part was exercise. Now many times we may have heard something, and we have thought that that is for me. But then, do we follow it up with exercise? If we follow it up with exercise we find it will not waste. There is what sustains life.

AMB And that has to be a daily matter.

AM Yes, it does, and this is just in her own circumstances. She was not asked to do anything great, to call attention to herself; this is just the sort of thing she would do anyway, but she worked it out in exercise and in obedience to the prophet and there was sufficient.

DS Is it good to bring out the substance that is in one another? She did not realise what she had. Elijah brings out the substance that she has to make the cake and to bring it to light in order that life may be sustained. Is that a good matter to see in one another, that there is that in one another to bring out for the sustenance of life?

AM Yes, it is, and that is an exercise. How do we bring out the substance in one another? You can see that persons have something

by what they say, but how do you bring that out? How do you develop that? Can you help us?

DS I do not know if I can, but it is very attractive. She was gathering sticks; so she was exercised in order that the thing should be brought to life. I think we see it in our young, and it is good if we see a young one gathering sticks; there is an exercise in order that there is to be a fire, in order that there should be life, in order that there should be a food supply. I think it is good to try and bring out the work of God in one another. Elijah saw that here. I think he saw there was life here and that there was something that she could bring out for her sustenance and for himself likewise.

AM We can see the work of God in one another, and we rejoice in it, the way the work of God develops. But maybe some of us need a little encouragement to draw it out, and you really have to get to one another's level and that is not always easy. I suppose as we are exercised about it, we pray about it, ask the Lord for guidance and help, then we will get it.

NJH You start with the meal; that is the starting point.

AM Yes, and when you speak about the Lord Jesus, the humanity that was seen in that blessed One, there is an answer in every true heart.

DCB Would you say more about the fact that she is a widow? It is an important matter that God had "commanded a widow woman".

AM She had no other means of support; she was bereft. I take it from what we read later on that the son would have been quite a small boy. She had no one to rely upon, but the word of God came and she answered to that and she found that there was blessing.

DCB The Lord Himself draws attention to this woman and to divine sovereignty since she was not of Israel, Luke 4: 26. We would see it through grace as being our own position, in a certain sense publicly widowed; there is nothing publicly to depend on, and that therefore gives the ground to hear the word of the prophet.

AM Yes, indeed, and accepting the state of widowhood is one of the ways by which we find that there is sufficient in Christ. A widow cannot depend on anyone else; there is no one else to depend on but there is sufficient in Christ, and He will see us through. All the days, she and her house ate for a whole year.

NJH A handful of meal might be like the household reading in the morning. I was thinking of the young getting something there to build on because the world round about is going to try and rob us all of the value of the meal.

AM It is quite apparent that they lived on this for the whole year "until the day that Jehovah sendeth rain upon the face of the earth". They would have eaten every day. They would have been foolish not to! It is foolish to start the day without reading, getting some touch from the Lord. You look back to younger days, and you wonder, 'Did I really go out without getting a touch from the Lord from the scriptures?'.

NCMcK You get the word of Jehovah and the word of Elijah. It is helpful to recognise the scriptures and the food that we get is from God, and to let them have their right authority with us. It is not like what people in the world feed on that is always questioned and changing, and questioning the word of God. There is immense substance in them to search out.

AM We were reading John 6 locally a few weeks ago and I was impressed where the Lord speaks of Himself, first as "the bread of God" (v 33), then as "the bread of life" (v 35), and then as "the living bread", v 51. Each have their own significance, but it begins with the bread of God: it is the bread of God's providing. He has provided! Now if God has provided for my spiritual life where can I find anything better? It comes from God Himself. In an occasion like this we should be looking for something, and we trace it back to God Himself.

JSS What would you say about the vessels, the barrel and the cruse? Each time the meal is mentioned it is the barrel, and each time the oil is the cruse mentioned.

AM Well, we have often remarked that it is important that these resources are contained in vessels, and in a sense we are the vessels; these are vessels that are suitable for what they are containing.

JSS I wondered if they would be protective. Care was taken to protect these things. I was thinking about the matter of prayer and deliberateness in taking time to be occupied with Jesus and relying on the Spirit; there would be a protectiveness about that.

AM Yes, there is protection in that. It is both the meal and the oil. We have not spoken about the oil, but the Holy Spirit is available for us to draw upon Him. He would be engaged in the formation of the vessel,

ourselves, but a little oil in a cruse, and a handful of meal in a barrel, it was all contained, recognising the value of it. Do we recognise the value of what we do have in Christ?

PAG It was the same food for the mother and the son. The son was not to get a different cake. Do you think it is important that we take account of our young people? They may not understand everything that is said, but we do need to make sure that what we say can be understood. It is not all in a code or a theory. We need to set it out in a way that can be understood and taken on.

AM I think that is important. Divine thoughts are very precious, but we can refer to things rather obliquely. We sometimes just use figures. I think it is necessary that what we say is understandable. We may not understand everything, but we will understand the bit that is for us. Young people may also pick up an atmosphere, and see that the brethren are enjoying something. It may be that I find brethren are enjoying something that I might not yet be in the good of.

JTB A handful in a barrel might not seem very much but does it bring out the thought of the capacity to expand that, "by it ye may grow up to salvation, if indeed ye have tasted that the Lord is good", 1 Pet 2: 2-3.

AM Yes good! You might ask why Elijah did not just cause the barrel to be filled but that is not the point. The capacity was there, and how do you improve it? Well, you live on a handful for a year; that is proving that the capacity is there.

JTB Newborn babes suggest a different kind of life. So we taste that the Lord is good and that enhances and deepens our desire for more: is that how it works out?

AM So we need to develop an appetite. You start feeding upon the Lord, upon that blessed pathway of His down here, start feeding upon Him as He is, start feeding on His sufferings, and your appetite begins to grow.

In chapter 4 we have the company, they all gathered together. It is a good thing to be gathered together.

NJH It says, "has made us sit down together", Eph 2: 6.

AM We had a touch of that in our morning reading today, sitting down together in the heavenlies. This company were sitting together; they were sitting before the prophet. That is commendable. Sons of

the prophets do not always shine, but here they are sitting before the prophet and he says, “Set on the great pot, and boil pottage”. There was that which was being set on and something else was introduced. I am sure the person who did this thought that they were being helpful. Be careful where you get your impressions from. I say this from experience: there are many books that look good, but Satan can work insidiously in what appears to be good. Just be careful where you get your impressions from; they must come from God, but be careful that the mind of man has not introduced anything into it.

AMB It was a wild vine. God speaks about that in relation to Israel, planted “wholly a right seed” and what was wild had come out of it, Jer 2: 21. I wondered if you would say something about them being in Gilgal. Is that an antidote to the kind of thing that you are referring to?

AM Yes that is right. Gilgal refers to the judgment of the flesh; it is the place of circumcision where the flesh was cut off. The children of Israel were to constantly refer to Gilgal, whatever happened get back to Gilgal; it guards against inflation. What I am as a man in the flesh is gone in the death of Christ; it has been removed. But then we can be positionally there and not in the good of it. I suppose in a sense that might be like this man who went out and got the wild colocynths, he went out into the field, he was actually staying in Gilgal and he went out into the field and he gathered “his lap full of wild colocynths, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage”. They would not have been identifiable in the pot; they were shredded. No-one could have looked in and said it was not right: it was something shredded in; that is the way Satan works but the answer to that is the humanity of Jesus; “Then bring meal. And he cast it into the pot”. The prophet cast it in.

WMP I wondered if that was the litmus test for what we might read. You have spoken about Gilgal: what man is being promoted in it? Is that always a good test: is it Christ that is being promoted or is it something that attaches to what we are?

AM So many books, including Christian literature, draw attention to the author. That is what we find: what about how Christ is being promoted!

TRC The Lord's word to Laodicea is, “I counsel thee to buy of me” (Rev 3: 18); that is where the source is, in Christ Himself. Is that what you are bringing before us?

AM He is the One who will supply everything. In Laodicea it is gold

purified by fire, and eye salve, and white garments; that was all available from Him: He says, “buy of me” Where was He? In Laodicea He was outside the door, v 20. He was saying, 'I am knocking, and you can have all these resources available to you', and He says, 'More than that, if you open the door I will come in and we will feed together'.

NJH The Lord knew that what came into Laodicea was not from Himself.

AM It could not have been. Let us face it: Laodicea is not far from anyone of us. When we speak about these assemblies in Revelation, especially I would say Philadelphia and Laodicea, I would not relate them to any company of Christians. What I relate them to is a state of soul and in Laodicea there is a state of soul which is self-satisfied, considers it has all the ministry and it has everything it needs but it has not got Christ. It has everything apart from Him! And He says, 'I am outside'. I find that can be in my heart. We can read, we can speak about the truth, but have we got the One of whom the truth speaks?

PAG Does that maybe help us as to the ministry that we do have? Some of it is not very easy to understand, but what there is in it is a brother's impressions of Christ and maybe rather than reading it with a view to trying to understand it all, although it would be good if I could, reading it with a view to seeing how that brother had gathered up impressions of Christ and was able to express them, gives me a different view of it. The one thing I would say about other sources; if I felt that I had thoroughly exhausted the three or four hundred books that I have, I might have to think about it, but I do not think I ever will, and I certainly will never exhaust the Scriptures. I just say this as a practical thing, for me reading things that I know where they came from, and I know I can depend on, and that speak directly of Christ and come from Him, is a better use of my time than reading things that I am not sure where they came from. I might be able to reach a sober judgment about them, but why bother even starting!

AM You have actually touched on an important matter! Dear brethren, why are we here? If you were asked, 'Why are you here?', what would you say? Has the Lord placed you here? I can say quite definitely that it is the Lord who has placed me where I am. If the Lord has placed me where I am, would He have done so without providing in those circumstances everything I need for my soul satisfaction and for my growth? The Lord Jesus would not do that, would He? He would not place you somewhere and leave you in need. He places you where

there is everything you need to live.

AMB One feature of true ministry, first of all, is that it brings Christ before us; secondly, it challenges me morally. It does not leave me feeling self-satisfied; I am satisfied in Christ but not with myself.

AM Exactly! We can be satisfied in Christ, although we may be conscious of how far short we may fall. True ministry affects the heart and the conscience.

AMB What you have said in warning as to the Laodicea condition, "I … am grown rich, and have need of nothing"; we need to be very careful that we do not feel like that, but allowing ministry of Christ to enter into us avoids that; it does not feed the flesh.

AM Then as we allow it to have its way with us, and speak to the Holy Spirit about it too, what develops are features of the blessed Man of whom we have been speaking.

AMB What you have been describing, the way in which we should think about the Lord Jesus having asked the Holy Spirit for help, works.

AM It does, say some more.

AMB So if I feel a bit harassed and busy, and perhaps troubled about things, if I ask the Spirit for help to dwell on the Lord Jesus, to feed on Him, He brings about a condition in my spirit and my soul where I am able to do that.

AM Yes, and He would help us to focus our minds. One may have a wandering mind, but if you appeal to the Holy Spirit to help you to focus on the Lord Jesus He will do that; that is His mission: "He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you" (John 16: 14); that is one reason for His being here.

TRC Is it suggestive that in John 14, when the Lord begins to speak of the Holy Spirit, He refers firstly to the Father, "he will give you another Comforter" (v 16), but then He says, "the Spirit of truth", v 17. I wondered if the previous scripture as to the cruse of oil, the meal and the oil, need to be put together and that is what brings about formation. I feel the test of that. I think for myself I need to relate myself to the Spirit more and He is "the Spirit of truth".

AM What a title that is! It comes in several times in that section of John, chapters 15 and 16; "the Spirit of truth who goes forth from with the Father, *he* shall bear witness concerning me", chap 15: 26. Then

later He speaks of the Holy Spirit as bringing "demonstration to the world", chap 16: 8. The world is not a sphere where there is truth, He brings demonstration by the contrast, but then he goes on "But when *he* is come, the Spirit of truth, he shall guide you into all the truth", v 13.

DS The Holy Spirit will help us to recognise what is in the pot; so He guides us into all the truth in that context, so that we see where the life is and recognise what is false.

AM Yes, that is right, and to see that there is meal in the pot; that is what we need, the meal. How unique was the manhood of our Lord Jesus; how unique it is. There was never a Man like Him, and how blessed to feast our souls upon Him. And this man comes from Baal-shalishah, he is coming from another sphere, and he brings a provision from heaven, heavenly food. It speaks about the Lord Jesus, the work completed, the barley loaves, the fresh ears of corn, we are on resurrection ground now! That is an exercise: can we bring something in, not only to counteract anything that the enemy may bring in but something connected with the Man in the glory?

NCMcK That is another service of the Spirit, that connection with the Man in the glory. We often say "the Spirit is the truth" (1 John 5: 6) subjectively; help us with that.

AM Yes, so that the truth may be formed in us. The truth is "in Jesus" (Eph 4: 21); that is an absolute statement. But then the truth is in us as we are formed by the Holy Spirit; so a believer having the Holy Spirit has the means of coming out like Christ. What do you think?

NCMcK If this food is spiritual, which it is, if it is from God, which it is, then there is no other means of appropriating it than by the Holy Spirit.

AM "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him; and he cannot know them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2: 14); "spiritually discerned" involves that they are discerned by the Holy Spirit in the believer: "but the spiritual discerns all things, and *he* is discerned of no one", v 15. Who in the world understands the believer? He is a mystery.

PAG Help us about the pot and the colocynths and the meal. Normally speaking, as we have been taught and we would accept, if evil is apparent, evil is to be judged, and if it remains unjudged it is to be separated from; help us then as to how this applies: the meal is put into the pot, with the foreign substance.

AM I do not think the setting of this would in any way dilute what we have been taught as to assembly truth and our pathway here in separation; we have to separate from evil. But, for example, if something is brought in innocently, a brother might say something that is just not right; you do not have to jump on the brother but just bring in the truth.

PAG I just wanted to bring that out. I think what you have said is the crucial point: if it is done innocently. It might be a big mistake, it might be a small mistake, but wisdom and grace would have the resource to deal with it and not have to create a further difficulty.

AM Yes, and it is testing sometimes. A brother may say something not quite right: bring in the truth, and if it is done in grace the brother will appreciate it.

JSS Is there an example with Apollos, and how Priscilla and Aquila helped him? He was teaching only the baptism of John; it was not quite right, it was not the full thought, but they helped him.

AM Yes, they helped him; they did that graciously. But on the other hand, where there were those who opposed, Paul separated them. That was outright and public opposition; so he separated the brethren and taught them in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19: 9); that was different.

CAS The man from Baal-shalishah has things in his sack, whereas the man who had come from the field just had things in his lap. I just wonder if that helps us in relation to the preserving and containing of things that are precious.

AM I think so. The man who had the wild colocynths in his lap had not got the gain of what the widow had in the meal in a barrel and the oil in a cruse; she cared for what she had. We have the truth, we have the Lord, we have the Holy Spirit; we should appreciate the wealth that we have. We have tremendous wealth; each one has something. A brother many years ago said in a meeting, 'Dear brethren, we are sitting on a gold mine'. There is tremendous wealth; then let us appreciate it and protect it and preserve it, but we each have to do it for ourselves. The work of God can never be destroyed but it can be covered up, it can go out of sight, or it can be held loosely. We might think that what we have is just ordinary; divine things are not ordinary; they are special.

MBG The last clause that you read in this section was, “And there was

no harm in the pot"; I was wondering about that. One of the features of the Lord Jesus is that He was harmless: "holy, harmless, undefiled", Heb 7: 26. Is that a very attractive feature to be seen in our local places, harmlessness? I was thinking too in 2 Timothy 2, we know what that chapter is dealing with, but "a bondman of the Lord ought not to contend, but be gentle towards all; apt to teach; forbearing; in meekness setting right those who oppose" (v 24, 25); they would be features of harmlessness, do you think?

AM Yes, and it is interesting that you bring in that scripture because it shows that the truth is held in meekness, but it is clear. I think you will find that in Hebrews the word harmless has a footnote which says, 'guileless' (footnote 'a'). There was no guile in the Lord Jesus: what He said was clear. What He said was absolutely straight and transparent and that is a great feature to mark the believer; "neither was guile found in his mouth", 1 Pet 2: 22.

DCB The man from Baal-shalishah has loaves, and also fresh ears of corn. Is it important that there will always be something that is experienced: it was baked. But there is something fresh, and these two things we would desire to mark each of our occasions.

AM Freshness should not be a test. If I get a touch from the Lord that should be a living fresh experience, something that just comes out. It is not rehearsed; it is not what I said the previous week and the week before that; it is something fresh; I have had a fresh touch and that quickens. It quickens the affections of the brethren, stirs their hearts. There is what we produce, that has been wrought through exercise, the baking, the loaf, and again that is another complete thought, but there is what is fresh, the fresh ears of corn. Ears of corn, that refers to the Lord Jesus in resurrection. It has been cut down, the corn was cut down and there is something that has been secured, the ears of corn, Christ in resurrection.

NJH No further development there. It is fresh ears of corn, but it is cut off from the stalk. It is by itself it is contained in every way, maturity.

AM And think of the Lord Jesus as having come out of death in resurrection and is now in heaven and we can take account of Him there in absolute perfection, God's ideal in manhood; He is there in heaven in glory.

There is a young man in our last scripture and he had come to it that the world had nothing to offer him. That is one thing; that is a great

thing to come to, the world has nothing to offer you. But then David says, 'That is not enough! I want this young man to be serviceable'. We have that expression in 2 Timothy 2: 21: “serviceable to the Master”. But before he could be of any use to David he had to be given this food; they gave him bread, they gave him water, they gave him “a piece of fig-cake and two raisin-cakes”. I am sure there are impressions among us of what these items suggest, “and his spirit came again to him”, and then he is available for whatever David would have him do.

WMP What does that suggest to you, “his spirit came again to him”? Would it be an important matter that if there is this food and water available, and it is, that it is going to affect us inwardly?

AM It is life in expression, “and his spirit came to him again”. There is life! I take it he would have been half dead; he had not eaten and drunk for three days, he would have been in a half dead state. But he is given this spiritual food and life is restored.

NJH Typically his life is renewed with God. I was thinking Paul descended upon the young man and brought him up into the assembly; he was renewed inwardly in his relations with God, Acts 20: 9-10.

AM The expression is used there as to Eutychus, “for his life is in him”. His relations with God are renewed; that is a great thing.

PAG Abigail brought fig-cakes and raisin-cakes, 1 Sam 25: 18. He gets bread and water; you might say he gets the fundamentals. Christ must be there for recovery to come in, but a recovered person is immediately entitled to everything that the assembly has. There is not a period of probation. Once a person is restored as this young man was, he has to recognise the world had nothing for him; we have all had to go through that and maybe had to be restored from it, at least I have, but once a brother or sister is restored they are restored to the full bounty of all that the assembly has under its hand.

AM And there is here what would sustain him in the light of that it says in the Song of Songs, “Sustain ye me with raisin-cakes”, chap 2: 5. His affections were sustained; and having been restored, having been recovered there is that which will sustain us in a living link with Christ. I suppose the raisin-cakes suggest what is available in the assembly.

AMB It was those that were with David who found the Egyptian, the four hundred with whom David pursued. There seems to be a working together here for the preservation of life under David's headship.

AM At this point this company is one, four hundred men and David at the head of them. A short while before they were so embittered they were going to stone him, 1 Sam 30: 6. A short while after this we know that failure came in again, but at this point David was the head and the company was one, and what they found was that just as David's heart went out to others to whom he could show kindness so their heart went out. They found a young man and David says, 'Well, he is available; I can use him'.

Let us be concerned each of us, brothers, sisters, young or old that we are usable to the Lord Jesus for whatever He may have in mind. I cannot say what He has in mind for you, I would seek some sense of it for myself, but I cannot always say I have had a clear guidance as to that; but whatever He would use us for let us be available. Let us be willing and glad to serve the One who has done everything for us.

Glasgow

28th February 2026

List of initials:-

A M Brown, Linlithgow; D C Brown, Edinburgh; J T Brown, Edinburgh; T R Campbell, Glasgow; M B Grant, Grangemouth; P A Gray, Linlithgow; N J Henry, Glasgow; N C McKay, Glasgow; A Martin, Buckhurst Hill; W M Patterson, Glasgow; C A Seeley, Glasgow; J S Speirs, Grangemouth; D Spinks, Bo'ness

"THE THINGS THAT ARE NOT SEEN"

Andrew Martin

2 Corinthians 4: 16-18; 5: 1
Hebrews 5: 5-10; 9: 11-15; 13: 20, 21

Our first scripture refers to the believer's pathway down here, but it also refers to the fact that it is in view of another scene, in view of what is eternal. I had an impression to speak from these passages about "the things that are not seen" but which are eternal.

Paul in 2 Corinthians 4 had been speaking to the Corinthians about the experiences that we suffer down here, the pathway of the believer, but he says it is all working something: "For our momentary and light affliction works for us in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory". Paul's afflictions were on account of the testimony; he was suffering for the Lord Jesus. We have afflictions, and it may be that some of our afflictions are on account of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. We have afflictions also in common with mankind. Paul speaks of various circumstances earlier in the chapter. He says, "every way afflicted, but not straitened; seeing no apparent issue, but our way not entirely shut up; persecuted, but not abandoned; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus", v 8-10. He went through the circumstances of life, as a Christian in the true sense of that word; "always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus". What was manifested in the life of Paul was the life of Jesus. He was a true Christian. A Christian is not what the word has become in the world. Men have taken it, as they do with all things of God, and twisted it for their own ends so that people will think a Christian may be simply a kind person. A Christian is one who not only follows the Lord Jesus but sets out in his life what was seen in the life of Jesus here; that is a true Christian. No wonder "the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch", Acts 11: 26. Probably it was a name given to them in ridicule, but a Christian, beloved, is a very exalted person. We have a brother who sometimes reminds us that if you claim to be a Christian, you are claiming a very great thing. It would be a test as to whether you live up to it.

Well, Paul did. He lived up to this name and as a result he went through terrible experiences. He speaks elsewhere in these epistles of things that he suffered, most of which we do not read about in the Acts. He just endured them. They were part of what he was called to. The

Lord Jesus had said, "*I* will shew to him how much he must suffer for my name", Acts 9: 16. The Lord showed to Paul how much he must suffer for His name, but the Lord is very gracious and He is absolutely faithful, and if He was going to show Paul how much he would suffer for His name, He also showed him the glory. He speaks of "a man in Christ" in 2 Corinthians 12: 2. He says, "whether in the body or out of the body I know not", but he was "caught up to the third heaven". He was caught up to paradise, v 4. The Lord who was going to show His servant what he was going to suffer was not going to avoid showing him the glory that follows. And so Paul says, "our momentary and light affliction works for us in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory".

Now, when Paul wrote to the saints, I do not think he underestimated the afflictions the saints go through. When he wrote to the Romans he said, "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us", Rom 8: 18. I do not think he was telling the Romans that whatever they suffered was not very much. I think he was telling them that, however great their sufferings, the glory was greater. He had a sense of the magnificence of the glory that awaited the saints and he was saying here, "our momentary and light affliction works for us in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory". Well, beloved, many afflictions are experienced by the saints, many sorrows, many griefs. I suppose that for most of the believers I know, possibly the majority of the sufferings that they experience are sufferings in their spirits. There are many who are suffering greatly in their bodies, but I think "the sufferings of this present time" are often the sufferings that are carried in the spirits of the saints, and Paul says they work "an eternal weight of glory". The glory is yet to come. And what kind of glory is it? It is "an eternal weight of glory". That is almost a paradox, a "weight of glory"! But it is substantial and eternal. That is the great thing. The sufferings are for a time; the glory is eternal. And, beloved, when we are taken to be with the Lord, we are going to enter into something that is eternal, that will never diminish, and it is glorious. How precious to keep that in our hearts that the ever-faithful Saviour whom we know is not going to allow us to come short in any way as we enter into the glory. The sufferings are working "an eternal weight of glory", and I think the apostle here found that the experience of the sufferings he endured was bringing into his soul a sense of what that glory would be, the glory of being eternally with Jesus. What a glory that will be, to be like Him! Well, it was just that touch, beloved, in that section. I may come back to this afterwards, but

we have “an eternal weight of glory”; “the things” that are “not seen”, he goes on to say, are “eternal”.

Well, what are the things that are “not seen”? That takes us to Hebrews. In chapter 5 we have the Lord Jesus as “author of eternal salvation”. What does that mean? Does that mean that my sins have been forgiven and they will never be raised again? Well, that is a part of it. Salvation is a lot broader than that. You look at salvation in the Scriptures - and I do actually encourage everyone here, if you hear an expression that you do not fully understand, take it away and look into it. Look it up in the concordance or on your phone and see the references to salvation and the contexts in which they appear. We have salvation now. In a large measure salvation is available to us now. We are saved; we are saved from our sins. We are to be saved “out of the present evil world”, Gal 1: 4. How wonderful that is! The world is running on to judgment, and we are currently saved from it, we are brought out of it, we are to be apart from it. That is the believer's portion, to be apart from “the present evil world”. We are saved “from the coming wrath” certainly, 1 Thess 1: 10. How precious that is! The effect of salvation is eternal. It is not something that just applies now but without eternal effect. The effect of our salvation is eternal, salvation from our condition, salvation from our place. The Lord Jesus will come. That is salvation, is it not? “*Our* commonwealth has its existence in the heavens, from which also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory”, Phil 3: 20, 21. How precious, beloved, to have that before us, the fulness of salvation when even these bodies will be changed. Will we not be glad to be rid of them? As you get older, you begin to realise what an encumbrance they are to you, but we have a Saviour, One who is going to “transform our body of humiliation”. That is the character of the body; it is a “body of humiliation”; it is indeed that. Into conformity to what? Will it just be made better? No, it is “into conformity to his body of glory”. You cannot get two greater contrasts, can you? “*Our* body of humiliation”; “his body of glory”, two absolute contrasts, and, you know, we are going to change from one to the other in an instant! Is it not wonderful to think of that, when the Lord comes that change will be eternal?

How is it all brought about? Let us look at this passage, shall we? The Lord Jesus was here as Man. We have referred to that. He did not seek a place for Himself; He could not have been a priest. This

section of this book is dealing in large part with the question of priesthood and the Lord Jesus as priest. The Lord Jesus could not have been a priest here because He did not come from the tribe of Levi. He did not glorify Himself. You could stop the sentence there, you could say absolutely, Christ did not glorify Himself, but "the Christ also has not glorified himself to be made a high priest": God did that. But it involved something. For the Lord Jesus to become a priest it involved terrible suffering. We are accustomed to His priestly service, are we not? We know what it is like when He helps us in times of trouble. He helps us in relation to God, in our links with God, but all that has cost the Lord Jesus a terrible price. "Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up both supplications and entreaties to him who was able to save him out of death". It might be sufficient to say that, but the writer here brings in these additional details. We know from John's presentation that death actually gave way before Him; He went in in the greatness of His power. That does not in any way detract from what it cost Him. The writer goes on "with strong crying and tears". Think of that: our Saviour, our Lord Jesus, had to go through these things "and having been heard because of his piety". The footnote says, 'in that he feared'. "Having been heard because of his piety"; apart from the three dreadful hours on the cross, the Lord Jesus was always heard. He was always in keeping with the Father. He was "heard because of his piety". What pleasure the Father had in hearing the Lord Jesus! What He said to Him! How He took account of Him! What did the Lord Jesus say to the Father? We have a few references. Think of that reference in Matthew's account when the disciples were sent away in service, John the baptist sent a message questioning , "Art *thou* the coming one? or are we to wait for another?", chap 11: 3. And we see Jesus alone, and His "works of power", and He had been rejected in the cities where these "works of power had taken place" (Matt 11: 20); there He was alone, and what does He say to the Father, "I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes. Yea, Father, for thus has it been well-pleasing in thy sight", chap 11: 25, 26. What pleasure the Father had in hearing those words! And the Father heard the words of Jesus as He approached what was before Him, and He cried out, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour", the cry of a holy soul that recoiled from dealing with evil, the result being death. "But on account of this have I come to this hour. Father, glorify thy name", John 12: 27, 28. The Father heard Him. "Him who was able to save him out

of death" heard those words. He did not save Him from death; He saved Him "out of death", "raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father", Rom 6: 4. What a wonderful triumph that was! No other was raised in that way. After His arising, others were raised. They are with the Lord now. We do not know much about them. But the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was a unique event, "the first-fruits, Christ; then those that are the Christ's at his coming", 1 Cor 15: 23. Every one of "those that are the Christ's" is looking forward to that. Those who have their faith in the blessed Saviour and know that they belong to Him are among "those that are the Christ's at his coming" and will have part in that wonderful resurrection soon to take place. "And having been perfected" the Lord Jesus as man has gone up into heaven. We cannot describe His present condition, but we know it is glorious. He has become "author of eternal salvation" "to all them that obey him". How precious it is! He is there in glory; we have our link with Him there; He is still our Saviour; He is the Saviour in every respect, the "Saviour of the body" (Eph 5: 23); He is the Saviour of our souls; and He is there in glory, the One in whom we have our faith, and the One who fills our hearts who is capable of filling every heart. How precious to know that! He is "author of eternal salvation". Eternally we will be in the gain of the salvation the Lord Jesus has secured.

In chapter 9 we have other references to the Lord Jesus and to His death; and more than His death, to the shedding of His precious blood. "How much rather shall the blood of the Christ, who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God, purify your conscience from dead works to worship the living God". The writer here is going on to speak not only about the death of Jesus, but the shedding of His precious blood, the great basis that God has to come out in blessing. The great basis on which the heart of God can be made known is the shedding of the precious blood of Jesus. God takes account of that blood. He can see that on account of the shedding of the blood of Jesus every moral question between God and man has been addressed. God is free to proclaim His love so that we should come to enjoy His love on a righteous basis, and that basis is that the blood of Jesus has been shed.

"Who by the eternal Spirit": I had not really in mind to say much about that but what I would say is that when Jesus died, He approached death on the same basis as that on which He had lived. The Lord Jesus lived here as a Man and everything He did was by the Holy Spirit, and

when He died, that was no different. “Who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God”: His whole life had been an offering to God. By the Holy Spirit He gave His life to God in that sense and when He died, it was on the same basis that “by the eternal Spirit” He “offered himself spotless to God”. Think of the moral greatness of the Lord Jesus that in everything He did not act in His own power though He had the power to act. He had the power over His own spirit as a Man, but He acted always in accordance with the will of His God and Father and He acted by the Spirit here. What excellence we see, what a model we have, beloved!

Well, the writer goes on, “And for this reason he is mediator of a new covenant, so that, death having taken place … the called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance”. The inheritance is a wonderful thing. We love to speak about the inheritance. What is it? An inheritance is something that becomes your possession. It is dependent on the death of one, and then it becomes your property. You know you have property, eternal property, and you can enter into it because the Lord Jesus has died. He has made it possible that you should come into your property. What is your property? Well, it is really to have part with Him, to have part in the assembly. What a great thing it is, association with Christ in the assembly. Someone once said you could almost define the inheritance in that way, association with Christ in the assembly. We have it here. The natural man cannot see it, cannot understand it, but we have it, and it is an “eternal inheritance”. We are sitting together here today, beloved; we will be sitting together in eternity. It is a wonderful thing: “has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus”, Eph 2: 6. That is our inheritance. Well, beloved, it is open to us to enter into now. I am very fond of a description a brother, William Johnson, gave. He supposed that somebody left you a large estate; you might never have seen the estate, but it has been left to you and you go to see it for the first time. You find that at the gate that there is a little lodge, and it is very attractive; you go into this lodge and look around and you think, 'This just suits me. I can stay here'. You might stay there for days, weeks, years, but you have not been to the mansion. You have not seen the real inheritance. The inheritance is ours to explore, the things that are freely given to us of God. This is our inheritance.

Another thing about the inheritance is that although you share it with the brethren, you share it with the Lord Jesus Himself. We are *co-*

heirs with Christ, co-heirs! Think of all that He has inherited, and He is worthy of inheriting. He has done the work, has He not? He has suffered; He has settled everything before God. No wonder He has an inheritance! He is morally worthy of it; and the apostle says we are "heirs of God, and Christ's joint heirs", Rom 8: 17. What wonderful grace that is, and that is our "eternal inheritance"! But we can enter into it, and we touch these things in spirit, do we not? If the Lord leaves us here for a few more hours, we may well do so tomorrow morning at the Lord's supper. I trust we will if we are left here. We trust that we have a taste of what is eternal. Now we enter into it in our spirits.

Meanwhile we are here and the writer in chapter 13 speaks about "the God of peace, who brought again from among the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, in the power of the blood of the eternal covenant". The "eternal covenant": this is a reference to Ezekiel, and what is said in Ezekiel is almost the same as in Revelation 21. In Ezekiel it says, "And my tabernacle shall be over them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people", chap 37: 27. Revelation 21 is very similar: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God", v 3. In Revelation it continues to speak about things that will not exist: "and death shall not exist any more, nor grief, nor cry, nor distress shall exist any more, for the former things have passed away", v 4. Mr Coates, the dear brother who wrote hymn 293 which we started with at the beginning of the reading, said those four things are a summary of the history of the world: "death", "grief", "cry", "distress", vol 13 p217. That is the history of the world, and all that will be gone in "the eternal covenant". God is true to His word eternally, beloved. All that will be gone, and we will be brought through. We are brought through by One who is a shepherd, "the great shepherd of the sheep". There is no need to put a name there. Who is "the great shepherd of the sheep"? I am sure every heart in this room would give the same answer: we know Him, the Lord Jesus. What a shepherd He is!

I have been thinking about the shepherds. Of course, the Lord Jesus is distinct. He is "the good shepherd", and "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep", John 10: 11. The "great shepherd" is "brought again from among the dead", and "the chief shepherd" is to be manifested in glory, 1 Pet 5: 4. The Lord Jesus, in whatever way you regard Him, acts in shepherd care to His own. How does He act? What

does shepherd care mean? Well, it is interesting to look at the shepherds in the Bible. We had some remarks at home which led me to look at them quickly. The first shepherd we have was Abel. He was a shepherd and what marked Abel was that he held the sheep for God. He “offered to God a more excellent sacrifice”, Heb 11: 4. That is what he did; he said, 'They are not mine; they are for God'. He offered them to God, precious thing! God took account of that. The Lord Jesus has done that; He would hold us for God. When we come to Jacob, we see that shepherding involves self-sacrifice. He says, 'I have experienced the heat by day and the frost by night. I have done this for years', Gen 31: 40. He experienced it. Whatever we say about Jacob's spirit at that time, he knew what self-sacrifice was. He sacrificed himself for the sake of the flock. That is not going as far as the Lord Jesus laying down His life, but it is on the way. He sacrificed himself. Then we come to Moses; he was a shepherd. It says of Moses first that he “tended the flock”, Exod 3: 1. What a lovely word that is, to tend; the care that he expended. Maybe that was not always obvious. Sometimes some of us have experienced shepherd care, and we might have found that it has prevented us from doing what we want. It is all for our good, and this comes from a tender heart: he “tended the flock”. The next thing it says of Moses is that “he led the flock”. Where did he lead them? He led them “behind the wilderness”. He was leading them to where God was going to be made known. Think of Moses and all that flock! He had them with him and he saw that burning bush and God's word came out, and God made Himself known to Moses in a way He had never made Himself known before.

It is a precious thing to take account of, “the great shepherd of the sheep”. He has tended us; He has led us; and through Him we come to know God in a way we could never have done otherwise: precious service of our Lord Jesus! Ultimately, we come to David, and David “fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and led them by the skilfulness of his hands”, Ps 78: 72. No wonder He is a great type of the Lord. He “fed them”, a well-nourished flock, and he “led them”. He also protected them; he guarded them. The Lord Jesus did that. He says, “those thou hast given me I have guarded, and not one of them has perished”, John 17: 12. He fed them and he led them. In a sense things headed up in David, but all point on to “the great shepherd”, the Lord Jesus Himself, and in His wonderful service He has done what no other shepherd could do, and He has established an “eternal covenant”.

I am just going to refer to 2 Corinthians 5 where we read. We have spoken of the Lord Jesus and all that He is doing and has done. We have spoken of His sufferings; we have spoken of His death; we have spoken of the shedding of His precious blood; we have spoken of His shepherd care for each one of us here; and we have spoken of the fact that He is going to come and take us all to be with Himself. Ultimately, when we see Him we will be like Him, 1 John 3: 2. We will not need these bodies then. "For we know that if our earthly tabernacle house be destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens". What marks us here is decay. We deteriorate. Some of us were saying as we get older our bodies do not work as well as they used to. That is just the normal course of nature. But "we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens". I trust that in everyone here of responsible years there is something that is entirely of God; there is a work of God; and we have it in these vessels, such as we are, but the vessels will not go through. "We have a building … eternal in the heavens". We will be clothed with a body that is suited to, and capable of, housing that work. There will then be no discrepancy between the work of God that goes through and the vessel in which it is contained. Is that not wonderful? It is "eternal in the heavens". That is our prospect, beloved. It will not be long; the Lord is coming soon; we are assured of that. The world can go on its way. It is proceeding on its terrible course, but we have a bright prospect. It is "eternal in the heavens". Our Lord Jesus is there, and we will be with Him and we have that hope to maintain us in our pathway here. Though it be a path of trials, testings and tribulation, yet still we have our blessed Saviour.

May He bless the word!

Glasgow

28th February 2026

THE GRACE OF THE GLAD TIDINGS

Glen M Barlow

Matthew 3

I had a simple impression to take up this scripture in the gospel as having been impressed that it foreshadows, at the outset of the Lord's public service, what would be accomplished in His death. It speaks not only of the condition that His death had to meet, but the glorious answer to it in the grace of God.

This chapter has its primary bearing on Israel, but Scripture tells us that all that happened to Israel is written "as types of us", 1 Cor 10: 6. I think Israel really represents man in responsibility before God, presented with divine providence and favour and yet failing in that responsibility, and failing completely. That is what Israel's history illustrates to us, the way that everything that God set on for man, everything that He provided for man's blessing - right from the outset, right from the garden where man was placed in the most favourable circumstances possible - met with failure, met with sin, when committed to man in responsibility.

I would like to take up this chapter which contains the thoughts of repentance, faith, the giving of the Holy Spirit and sonship, as conveying something of the desires of the heart of God in the gospel, because He is approaching man now, not on the grounds of man's responsibility, but on the grounds of *His own grace*. That is what I would seek some measure of help to speak of today - the grace of God presented in the glad tidings to men.

The chapter begins, "Now in those days". What were "those days"? The character of them is set out in the preceding chapter; they were days in which the incoming of God, "God with us" (Matt 1: 23), was met with the murderous hatred of man. Those are the days in which this message was conveyed by John the baptist. The incoming of the Lord Jesus was God "manifested in flesh", 1 Tim 3: 16. What it met with was the hatred expressed in Herod's actions, the murderous hatred of man against God, the rejection of God. Is that different to the day in which we live? We live in "those days" when the incoming of God in grace has been met with the rejection of the world. They hated the Lord Jesus "without a cause", Ps 69: 4. That being true, the call in the gospel is on all men to repent.

Repentance relates to our sins - the things we have done and

what they mean to a holy and righteous God; it relates to what we are - our sinful state; but I noticed a remark a little while ago that it relates too to the fact that we 'belong to a world that has rejected Him', CAC vol 28 p17. I think that must turn the heart in repentance to God. That is the race; that is the order of man to which we belong, the man that saw Jesus, God's provision of a Saviour, and said, “Away with this man”, Luke 23: 18. Does that turn your heart to repentance? So John called on Israel to repent here, but now God is enjoining “men that they shall **all everywhere** repent”, Acts 17: 30. That is what God is *enjoining*, and I understand the force of the word “enjoins” in that scripture to be that He *commands it*. He commands repentance. You might say that, even if there were no means of salvation, God would be entitled to command repentance. But He is not bringing forward repentance in the way of demand, but in the way of grace, FER vol 15 p13. That is how God is presenting repentance now. John the baptist could not present that, but what is foreshadowed in the latter part of this chapter indicates the way in which repentance, with faith, can open the way into all the blessings of God. As recognising what we are before a holy and righteous God - our sins, our sinful state, the responsibility of man away from God - we can be brought by His grace into divine blessing.

So the effect of this word of John is to draw a distinction between those who repented and those who did not. The gospel draws a distinction. There were men here who thought the distinction was between Jew and Gentile. There is no such distinction now. God's distinction is between those who have confessed their sins - it speaks in this chapter of those who “were baptised by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins” - and those who have not. Have you confessed your sins before a holy and righteous God in repentance? It distinguishes the wheat from the chaff; it distinguishes these Pharisees and Sadducees from those who came to be baptised by John. John says, “do not think to say within yourselves, We have Abraham for our father”. They would have made a claim, as you might like to do, on the grounds of what they were according to flesh; they would say, 'Well, we are children of Abraham'. However, in Galatians it tells us, “Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Know then that **they that are on the principle of faith,** these are Abraham's sons”, chapter 3: 6-7. So John says, “that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham”. He has! God has raised up of that which was utterly morally dead children of Abraham: “*you*, being dead in your offences and sins”, Eph 2: 1. Do you have faith?

That is the ground on which that which was dead can come into life. There is no distinction of Jew and Gentile. There is a distinction of those who have repented and have faith, and those who do not. Judgment is coming; this scripture makes that clear. It was true when John spoke; it is still true now. We are not preaching judgment - this is a day of grace - but judgment is coming; the wheat will be gathered "into the garner", but the chaff will be burnt "with fire unquenchable". This is the solemnity of the gospel, beloved! This distinction is drawn on the grounds of repentance and faith. It is a distinction that has *eternal consequences for your soul*.

Well, if we are to have faith, that faith needs an object. We have sinned against a holy and righteous God. The righteousness of God must be upheld; in must be judged. Faith needs an object, and in that light, I find verse 13 extraordinarily beautiful, "Then comes Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan to John". He comes as it were from the place of reproach to the place of death. Another has said that 'where sin had brought me, grace brought Him', JND, Collected Writings vol 16 p352. That which these waters of baptism speak of, death, is that to which we were entitled. He was not entitled to it; holy, spotless, perfect Man. There was nothing in Him that warranted the waters of death, and John recognises it: "John urgently forbad him". John recognised there was nothing worthy of death in that Man. In another place he says, "Behold the Lamb of God", John 1: 36. You think of what John saw in that blessed Man, but He came to the waters of baptism. This of course speaks directly of the baptism of John and the way that the Lord Jesus identified Himself with Israel in condescending grace, but He Himself tells us in Luke of another baptism: "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened until it shall have been accomplished!", chap 12: 50. This passage foreshadows the death of Jesus in which He came where I was! He came into the very place of death where I was: a stone, morally dead. He came into that place, and His voice is heard there, His voice can be heard in death, John 5: 25. He came to the very place where we are as away from God, and *He* suffered the penalty that belonged to *my* sins. Precious Saviour! Precious Saviour that He should say, "Suffer it now"; the One who came in grace to the place that belonged to me. That way involved the cross, it involved His sufferings at the hands of man, it involved that He should answer to a holy and righteous God, not only for what I have done, but for what I am; that He should answer to God in those three hours of darkness for what the whole order of man was before God. The glorious basis for salvation

was laid in that precious work, the shedding of His precious blood having accomplished atonement. The witness to that life given up is the fact that His blood was shed, and that work forms the basis of salvation for all who repent and have faith in Him. Do you have your faith in the Lord Jesus and in His precious blood? I trust all here do have their faith in Him.

Then it speaks of how, having been baptised He "went up straightway from the water". Baptism is a type, not just of death, but of death *and* resurrection. The Lord Jesus, the One who has accomplished that work, is now the other side of death. He has been raised "by the glory of the Father", Rom 6: 4. If the shedding of His blood is the witness to the fact that His life was given up, then His being raised is the witness to the fact that death has been overcome. Everything that stood out against these persons to whom the Lord Jesus came here - the persons with whom He identified Himself, everything that stands out against you, He has answered for it, He has met it. He has met the matter of sin; He has met the matter of death. He has met every liability that falls upon you, if you have faith in Him. He "went up straightway from the water". He has gone on to new ground. The gospel has in mind that you should have part with Him on new ground; part with Him in an order of things to which sin does not attach, to which death does not attach, because He has met and overcome it all. The power for that is in the Holy Spirit of God. It was referenced this morning that the glad tidings are preached for this purpose, that we might receive the Holy Spirit of God. I think one of the reasons for that is that the conscious knowledge and enjoyment of everything that has been secured by the death and resurrection of Jesus is known only by the Holy Spirit. The gospel is preached for your acceptance, not your understanding. I trust that everyone here has *accepted in faith* what has been presented in the gospel, but if you want to *know and enjoy* what you have accepted, only the Spirit can give you that. So the gospel is preached that you might receive the Holy Spirit. The baptism of Jesus exceeds in every way the baptism of John, "*he* shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire". The desires of God come out in that, I think, the desires that you may enter into blessing. The work has been accomplished, the victory has been won, the ground has been won for you, and the Father would desire that you would come onto that ground, and the Holy Spirit is the power for it.

We then have this acclamation of heaven for the Lord Jesus. It speaks of God's absolute satisfaction in the Person and work of Jesus,

and therefore any who have their faith in Him have no cause for doubt. If our salvation depended on anything that we could do, if it depended even on our own appreciation of what has been done, what doubts we might have! But the One who accomplished this work is the One of whom the Father could say, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight”, the One in whom He finds His delight, now and eternally. What the Father would desire is that you might be brought into relationship with the One in whom He has His delight, and to be the object of the same favour. What glorious thoughts God's are!

In John's epistle, it says, “even as *he* is, *we* also are in this world” (1 John 4: 17); that is, as another has said, that as Christ is the object of the Father's love, so too is the believer, FER vol 13: p53. “As *he* is”: what a portion is the believer's! He remains always distinct as the glorious Son of God, but as He is the object of the delight and favour of the Father, so are believers in this world. So the gospel goes on to sonship. It must. That is the Father's desire in purpose, that we should be sons by adoption (Eph 1: 5), and this glorious, completed work forms the basis for us to be brought into that relationship. At the end of this gospel, when the Lord Jesus is in resurrection, it says, “And as they went to bring his disciples word, behold also, Jesus met them, saying, Hail! And they coming up took him by the feet, and did him homage. Then Jesus says to them, Fear not; go, bring word to **my brethren**”, Matt 28: 9-10. There was a Man infinitely delightful to the Father when on earth, and on the cross, and in going into death. Now He is raised and He is still delightful to the Father, but the difference is that the Father's delight is now also in others whom He has secured; “go, bring word to my brethren”.

Well, I trust that all here are counted among His brethren. The gospel has great things in mind: not just relief from judgment - necessary and essential though that is - but that we should be brought into living relationship with the One who has secured our blessing; into living relationship with a God who, when met with the failure of man in responsibility, came out *from His own side in grace*. He provided everything He required, because of His love.

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

Sidcup

5th April 2026

THE STEPS OF JESUS

Chris S Menzies

I like to think of the steps of Jesus, they are not in heaven; we have all known what it is to want to go to heaven; when we have dreaded facing the world, we have desired to be taken right out of it; but then the footsteps of Jesus are not in heaven: they are here - here in this wilderness. He has left us an example, and we are to follow in His steps. There is much time wasted; many opportunities have gone, and gone for ever, but then the little time that is left has not gone, and the steps of Jesus are still here. "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls", 1 Pet 2: 22-25 KJV.

This pathway is open to us all, but we shall not be able to take it up unless we realise not only what the Lord has done for us, but what He has done *to* us. Do not think that any Christian is different from you; we all have the same weakness and the same tendencies - "the flesh profits nothing"; but what makes the difference is realising what the Lord has done *to* us, and answering to it.

"What have I done to thee?" Elijah said to Elisha; the Lord said to His own, "Know ye what I have done to you?" and Paul when writing to the Corinthians said, "in the **power** of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body ... and have all been given to drink of one Spirit", and that Spirit is the power a Christian needs to enable him to follow in His steps.

Australia

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