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"THE MAN CHRIST JESUS"

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AJMcK I seek help of the Lord and help of the brethren to enquire into this description of our Lord Jesus in Timothy, "the man Christ Jesus". My exercise is that we might be increasingly attracted to Him. At a fellowship meeting that I was at recently the brother who was taking the meeting said we do not speak about separation much these days, and I have been thinking a lot about that, but it seems to me that true separation really only comes about by attraction to Christ. I do not think we reach separation legally, but by attraction to the One who we sang of in our hymn who is the Centre of everything for God.

Paul in his letter to Timothy speaks of the greatness of the one who is "the man Christ Jesus", "the mediator of God and men". I would like to focus in this meeting on the greatness of all that this Man is for God; perhaps not necessarily our side, but I trust we may be sustained to enquire into His greatness and His glory as the Man who is everything for God. All of us in this room have heard of Him and all of us no doubt have impressions of Him. He is "the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all". We have had some help in recent three day meetings that "the man Christ Jesus" is the Man that God has always had before Him. Let us hold to that; let us keep that in our minds and in our hearts that this is the Man that God has always had before Him.

I read in Luke's gospel because of the reference there to "the holy thing also which shall be born". In thinking a little about the "the man Christ Jesus", (Paul speaks of Him as the "second man, out of heaven", 1 Cor 15: 47), there is a different order of man that comes in here in the beginning of Luke. It says, "which shall be born" and that applies to every man, woman and child since Adam and Eve, but "the holy thing" is Christ alone, the Lord Jesus alone.

We might get some help together in Isaiah considering how God has been manifested in flesh, "a root out of dry ground", deriving nothing from this scene, and the greatness of the glory of the fact that God has been manifested in flesh. We have a hymn that goes on to say

it is the 'wonder of His universe', Hymn 400. It is a tremendous thing that God has been manifested in flesh, and what we have in Isaiah prophetically is “a root out of dry ground”, deriving absolutely nothing from this scene.

Then we have the reference in John's gospel, “Behold the man!”. It was an interesting moment when it would seem that under God's hand one such as Pilate was drawn to give testimony to the greatness of the One who was before him, the One in whom he found no fault. Pilate had never had a man before him like that, and he exclaims, “Behold the man!”. The impression that has been in my mind as to that is in Hebrews where it says He “offered himself spotless to God” (chap 9: 14); One in whom Pilate found no fault.

Then finally we have that reference in Mark's gospel; the centurion is brought to say, “Truly this man was Son of God”. Amidst everything that was opposed and the hatred, everything that combined against our beloved Lord Jesus, there was one who said, “Truly this man was Son of God”. His heart was filled and his vision was filled by One who was here to fill out everything for God.

GBG It is a wonderful thing that there is only one God; “God is one”. He is the great supreme Being. But it also says, “the mediator of God and men one”, there is only one Mediator, that brings out His greatness; there is only one Mediator and we need a Mediator. Underlying that is that He is Man and He is also God.

AJMcK I think that is very important to lay hold of. We are not presented here with a man who is between man and God, but *of* God and *of* man, that is the order of this wonderful Man. There is none like Him. Mr Darby has an expression, 'There is one, and there is but one' (Synopsis vol 5, p106), that arrested me. There is an insistence there as to the uniqueness of the One who is both God and Man, and that can only be one Man.

GBG We can say in regard to the Lord Jesus, “What manner of man is this …!”, Matt 8: 27, KJV. He is unique, and His deity underlies His manhood.

AJMcK We are often told that it is difficult for us to hold these two thoughts in our mind together. We shall need the Spirit's help to enquire together to hold the fact that He is Man, but His deity underlies that at every level and every turn and every step, because the fulness of

the Godhead was there, Col 1: 19.

APG So you have referred to verse 6, “who gave himself a ransom for all”. His work is completely in accord with God's desires. God “desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth”; so that this Man Christ Jesus is completely in accord with God's will and God's desires.

AJMcK I think that is right. So, He perfectly and fully filled out every thought of God. I suppose it would be right to say that “given himself a ransom for all” is a general thought regarding His work, that ransom for the entirety of mankind has been paid and it has been paid in full. That does not take away our own individual responsibility to come into the good of it, but the fact is that it stands: the ransom has been paid, He has given Himself, He offered Himself to God spotless; that is the ransom.

GBG God is being commended here, “our Saviour God who desires that all men should be saved”; Paul wants persons to know that. Then the Mediator has been commended; “who gave himself a ransom for all”. Men have wrong impressions of God and of Christ but this One, the Mediator, He went as far as this! He can be commended to persons to trust Him.

AJMcK Yes, He is being presented as the One who is without compare. Humanly we tend to compare things, that is the way things work in our minds, but this Man is without compare; there is none like Him.

JL We can understand then that God has found a Man after His own heart, who would do all His will, Acts 13: 22. Such a One is thoroughly competent to answer every requirement of God's and for men.

AJMcK Say something for our help as to Him finding that Man.

JL It was clearly in mind that Christ as Man should come into this scene to give effect to the will of God, but I think it is very beautiful that prophetically it could be said, “I have found … a man”, as if all that came into expression when Christ did come so delighted God's heart. Every detail that was found in Christ was delightful to Him according to the pursuit of His will.

AJMcK And do you think the desires of God are expressed in the

thought of Him finding? The desires of His heart really come out; not only the thought of His will and the thought of His mind, but the heart of God is satisfied, the heart of God is fully answered in the One who is the Mediator. There is now One who can propose and fulfil everything for God and bring man into that.

PAG What is a mediator?

AJMcK A mediator in man's world tries to find agreement between two opposing parties. But the Mediator here has utterly satisfied what God has proposed.

PAG That is helpful and right. The Mediator brings God to man and, having brought God to man, the Priest brings man to God. But God must first come to man in righteousness, and the fact that He "gave himself a ransom for all" means that there is no finding of common ground; it is God's ground alone. Christ satisfies everything that meets the rights of God and yet does so as a Man, so in that Man God is also justified.

AJMcK That was my impression, that God has proposed from His side and He has established a proposal; He "desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth". I often misquote that, '*a* knowledge of the truth', but it is "the knowledge of the truth". That is God's proposal and it is fully answered in Christ, in the Man who has given "himself a ransom for all", such that God is utterly satisfied. The secret from God's side can be made known.

DS So the ransom had to be the Man; the ransom had to be made in a man. Man failed initially but God brought in a Man who would meet every moral issue in that matter, and remain a Man eternally, and bring everything back through that blessed Man for His pleasure.

AJMcK The "second man, out of heaven"; He came into a condition in which He could die. It is suggested in ministry that condition of life in flesh and blood, to which in us sin attached, was given up, J N Darby Synopsis vol 4 p108. Sin did not attach to that life in Him; we need to guard that. But as to us, sin has attached itself to that life. He was the only One, and is the only One, who could possibly take this place as Mediator, the only One who could make God's mind known.

DS Man is God's topstone in creation, and man failed so God had to bring glory back in a man, and in this Man He has found it; so He has not only found it in Him, but He has found it to bring many others back in that

same character of order of man.

NJH We could not have a mediator without incarnation. I was thinking of what has been said; it is men, and then man, and then One, "the mediator of God and men one, the man Christ Jesus". The incarnation was essential for mediatorship.

AJMcK So that takes us to Luke, "the holy thing". It has been said that the incarnation was the greatest event on earth. The fact that God moved in this way that One should come in as a babe, come into manhood. He can be described as "the holy thing". I feel tested as to this, I have read scriptures I find testing as to what I can say about them, "the holy thing also which shall be born". The whole of God's mind and thought is in that in relation to securing an answer from man, a securing of an answer from us; let us bring it right down to us today. Without this the distance remains, but "the holy thing" being born is that great movement from God's side into incarnation.

NJH Mary says, "I know not a man"; that is the creational side, but God is operating outside of man as such. The manhood of Christ stands alone as conceived by the Holy Spirit.

AJMcK Yes, exactly, it says, "*He* shall be great"; it is an emphatic 'He', "and shall be called Son of the Highest", and "power of the Highest overshadow thee, wherefore the holy thing also which shall be born shall be called Son of God". It is a tremendous opening up of God's mind in relation to the race and the basis on which something will be secured.

AMB So the Lord was totally unique morally, "the holy thing", that could never be said of any other man, and at the same time truly a Man; He was born of woman, of the Holy Spirit. These considerations would move us to worship.

AJMcK Yes, that is my impression and my desire that in being increasingly attracted to Him we are brought to recognise the greatness of the One who has secured everything, secured everything for God and has brought me into that; that brings it right down to our individual persons. He has brought me into the greatness of those secrets of God and the heart of it is One who is utterly morally perfect.

AMB It says of Him in Colossians "for in him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell", chap 1: 19. How marvellous that is; and such a One died for me.

AJMcK He loved me so much that He was prepared to die for me.

AMB Does the contemplation of that have a separating effect?

AJMcK I think it does. I wondered if we come to that with the centurion; there was something that set him immediately apart from everything that was going on around him; his heart and his mind and his focus was filled with One of whom he could say, “Truly this man was Son of God”.

PAG We have referred to “the holy thing”, why is that expression used? It is an unusual way to refer to a child that was born.

AJMcK Help us; I feel limited as to what I can say but there is something very attractive about it.

PAG In scripture, things have substance; there was substance here. Outwardly it may have been a babe and so it was, but there was substance here that had never been here before. I wondered also if the expression “the holy thing” protects His deity while acknowledging His manhood. We cannot properly hold the Lord's deity and His manhood in our minds at the same time, and therefore we should not seek to over-analyse or describe them either. The Spirit gives this expression to say in this One that was born everything that was for God was encompassed; God become Man, God manifest in flesh. And “the holy thing” would cause us simply to wonder at what God did that no one else could do.

AJMcK I trust this is right to say, but my impression of this is that “the man Christ Jesus” was there. He was not yet in manhood as grown up; He was a babe, but Simeon says, “mine eyes have seen thy salvation”, Luke 2: 30. He saw everything in that babe; it was opened up to him to see everything that God had in mind for His people. So, “the man Christ Jesus” was there; the preciousness and the greatness of what God has done should just seize us and fill our hearts.

PAG So “the holy thing” included the complete essence and potential of all that God would establish in Christ. One aspect of “the holy thing” is that there is nothing to be added to it.

NJH There was no growth as to His Person. There was growth as to His humanity, and it was delightful; every development of that holy Person grew as in the home, and amongst the Jews, but as to His Person there was no change, no growth in it.

AJMcK In that regard there was nothing that needed to be added. These things stretch our minds, and I feel stretched myself, but there is nothing needed to be added to this holy Man, this holy Person; everything was there for God. There was what developed physically before men and before God as we know, but everything for God was there.

RB 2 Corinthians 1 says, "For whatever promises of God there are, in him is the yea, and in him the amen, for glory to God by us", v 20. Does that enter into what you are bringing before us? The Lord Jesus is the Yea and the Amen, but then everything for God is in Him.

AJMcK Yes, very good, "in him is the yea, and in him the amen"; the writer is very definite about both.

RB It is all set out in Him but then the finality of the Amen, everything for God is involved in that; there is nothing more that can be added it is all there in its glory and completeness.

AJMcK Yes, so it is as He can be taken account of as "the holy thing"; everything complete.

TWL Does "the holy thing" encompass what He is as "the effulgence of his glory and the expression of his substance", Heb 1: 3? I know in Hebrews it is in relation to the Son but we are speaking about the One who is the Mediator; we are speaking about the One who could make God known. At the beginning of Hebrews, God "has spoken to us", v 2. He is the outshining of what God is. I am thinking about your opening statement about separation being by attraction; the attraction is because we have seen the glory and we know the substance and it is in the Man who was "the holy thing". It is a perfect expression of a wondrous God.

AJMcK "The effulgence of his glory and the expression of his substance" is not merely that it was there, but it shone out in relation to every believer; it shines into the heart of every believer. This is the greatness of the Man that God has. Is He the Man that we have?

GBG This is the assurance that all God's purposes will be fully secured. He is the Son of God. As Son of man He takes on man's place; He is here operating in view of God's pleasure, He is securing what God desires.

AJMcK There are a few references in what we have read to the Son of

God, and I wondered if that comes out. The Lord often refers to Himself as the Son of man. He takes that place, but He is Son of God. Everything for God is assured and established and finished in Him.

GBG We have to appreciate that, "shall be called"; we have to appreciate the greatness of this Person.

BWL "*He* shall be great": is that our appreciation? We grow in appreciation of Him. In John's gospel He *is* great; we have spoken about His Person and who He is, His greatness, but we grow in our appreciation of Him, do you think, as we see Him in whatever circumstances He comes into in the gospels?

AJMcK I think so, and I wondered if it was a reference to His public life of service, "*He* shall be great", and how greatness was seen at every step, was seen at every turn. But I like what you suggest: He grows in our appreciation as our hearts are engaged towards Him; our appreciation of His greatness develops and it grows and we come to the point that we can take account of the One who is "the holy thing", everything for God.

BWL Do you think piety is vital? It is mentioned in 1 Timothy 2, and really it is a pious atmosphere here at the beginning of Luke; these are persons that can appreciate Christ.

AJMcK Yes, I think that is right, and it is quite a test, an exercise for us all practically to live a life of piety. It is easy to become absorbed in other things; it is easy to become distracted. Piety would keep us focussed upon Him.

APG Would Mary be an example? She had faith; she believed this, "blessed is she that has believed" (v 45); she had faith to lay hold of the greatness of this One.

AJMcK We were reminded in the reading at home this week that she "kept all these things in her mind, pondering them in her heart", chap 2: 19. She went over them, over and over, and that suggests to me in relation to what the angel had said to her and what was to come about; what an occupation for us to be attracted to Him and to go over and over in our heart the greatness of the One who we are speaking about.

DCB Your first scripture finished with a reference to "the testimony to be rendered". Does it come into all your scriptures that there is a testimony rendered to the Person, "the holy thing"; you see the effect of

a testimony, even from an angelic testimony in this scripture.

AJMcK So you get the sense that from God's side there is no possibility that He could hold back from drawing attention to the One who is everything to Him. The One who is everything to God has been borne testimony to all the way through. That testimony is maintained; that testimony continues.

DCB It is very interesting as you go through your scriptures to consider who gives the testimony. Pilate has to get testimony; that is a wonderful thing that God ensures that Christ is magnified. Of course, you can see in the centurion that there is something of a moral change in a person that is coming out with a testimony in such circumstances.

AJMcK God will always see to it that Christ is magnified; that testimony will be there. It is an interesting moment as to Pilate; what was it that moved him? What caused him to say what he did? It was the greatness of the One who was before him.

JL Is it somewhat a consequence of that testimony that the expression can be used He "shall be called", He is the Son of God, but it says that He "shall be called": is that because that was taken account of, and therefore He could be rightly described as "Son of God"?

AJMcK I think that is right. I am finding what we are saying is very helpful, that the testimony is leading us to the greatness of the Person. So, He "shall be called Son of God": there is no limit as to that, there is no limit as to how that testimony might play out, how it might be seen, how we might take account of it. I suppose the testimony to His greatness is in the heart of every believer and it is that He should be called that. It is that we should appreciate the greatness of who He is.

JL He came into such blessed evidence that the centurion who we read of was compelled to make that confession, "Truly this man was Son of God".

AJMcK What else could he say?

DS One of the great testimonies was when the Holy Spirit rested complacently upon Him (Matt 3:16); is that a great testimony to "the holy thing"? It has never been seen in any other way. We receive the Spirit, but the Spirit rested complacently on this holy Man: wonderful thing!

AJMcK So there is a touch there as to the fulness of the Godhead

being there, nothing short of that. I personally find it hard to hold it in my mind, but the fact is that there was in One who was here, “the man Christ Jesus”; nothing short of the fulness of the Godhead; there was a complacent resting of all that God is in a Man. “The holy thing also which shall be born” was going to carry and fill out everything for God.

PAG **I** think it has been rightly said that there could be no thought of development as to His Person, but what was enhanced when here as Man was His moral greatness. “He learned obedience from the things which he suffered” (Heb 5: 8); “thou didst make me trust, upon my mother's breasts” (Ps 22: 9): He learned what it was to trust. He was “heard because of his piety” (Heb 5: 7); He was answered “from the horns of the buffaloes”, Ps 22: 21. It had not been His place before to trust! We have to learn, we have to be heard, we have to be answered; that was not His place in deity, but He took it in manhood in lowliness and grace, and gave God a moral basis to answer Him on account of the moral excellence of what He saw.

AJMcK And those things were added “as a root out of dry ground”; none of those things were derived from this scene. Help us as to that.

PAG Another feature of His moral excellence was that as Man He derived everything from God. Luke's genealogy goes back to that, “of Adam, of God” (chap 3: 38); that was the derivation of all that He had and was as Man. As has been pointed out He derived nothing from man after nature and so morally too He sought every resource in God; He did not seek resource in man. He appreciated what was there for Him; He appreciated the supper at Bethany; He appreciated the affections of His own; He credits them as having persevered with Him in His temptations (Luke 22: 28); He appreciated that, but what He derived He derived solely from God.

AJMcK In Isaiah it says, “For he shall grow up before him as a tender sapling”; something of that development that we are speaking about, was before God. It was not necessarily appreciated by men, but He grew up “before him as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground”. He had the need to draw nothing by way of resource, by way of strength and development, from this scene; everything was there.

GBG As a Man, God was His object; He grew up before Him.

MBG I was just thinking of what it says in Isaiah 42, “Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth! I will put

my Spirit upon him", v 1. I was thinking about what has been said: He is the only One who came in to do the will of another and did it. You mentioned He came into a condition in which He could die, and doing that will involved even that. He was "obedient even unto death" (Phil 2: 8); I wondered if that sets out His moral excellence but also His uniqueness. Each one of us, if we have come to appreciate what is "the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom 12: 2), it is through moral exercise, and it is "righteousness unto holiness" for us (Rom 6: 19), but for Him He came in and was that 'holy thing' intrinsically. He came in to do another's will and did do that will.

AJMcK So there is a certain restfulness and peace about this, "For he shall grow up before him as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground". There is no conflict here. What you are saying is helpful; the moral perfection of Christ meant that of course He would do the will of another. Of course He would go that way, and although scripture speaks of conflict and it speaks of pressure, and we need to be careful what we say as to Gethsemane, He says in one sense quite restfully "not my will, but thine be done", Luke 22: 42. That was what He would always accept. Is that your thought?

MBG And even then, His dependence is brought out; it says, "he prayed more intently", v 44.

AJMcK Yes, utterly dependent on the will and mind of another.

GBG As growing up before Him, God's eye was never off Him. What pleasure God had in the tender sapling. He had God before Him, but God had that blessed Man before Him.

AJMcK So we do not know much of those thirty years, we do not know much of that development, but we do know that the Lord Jesus Himself said, "I ought to be occupied in my Father's business", Luke 2: 49. So God's eye was upon Him and His pleasure and delight was in One who grew up before Him, and everything that was there had relation to the filling out of God's mind and God's heart.

JSS So these words you have drawn attention to, "before him", suggest what is constant, do you think? God's eye was constantly on this One and the testimony to that is, "in whom I have found my delight", Matt 3: 17. That was all that He ever found there, but is it God's desire that we come to have Christ before us constantly too?

AJMcK I think so. That helps: that is in line with my exercise that He

might be before us, and that we might be attracted to Him and to see all that He is to God and find all that He is to me. God's eye was constantly upon Him. It was never distracted; it was never drawn to another. How could it be?

JSS Pharoah's cup bearer said, “a vine was before me” (Gen 40: 9); do you think that is really the thought, the thought of budding, blossoming bringing forth what was pleasurable to God? That can be our exercise, do you think?

AJMcK And it is our privilege to be brought together into what is bringing pleasure to God

RG It says, “there is no beauty that we should desire him”; that beauty was seen by the Father: “The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand”, John 3: 35.

AJMcK I wondered about that; we do see the contrast, “no beauty that we should desire him”. For unregenerate man, for man after sin, there is no beauty, and that is the contrast to what God could take account of as a tender sapling.

RG Was your thought that we should come into some appreciation of that beauty in Christ?

AJMcK Exactly, as we are attracted to Him, and not only because of what He has done for us, although that is at the root of everything, but as we are attracted to Him for what He is and all that He is in the greatness and the glory of His manhood as the Mediator, as making known the mind of God. If we are attracted of Him in that way we come into the secret of God's thoughts. We see this beauty.

JL I would love to know the significance of the use of the word “tender”: He grew up “as a tender sapling”. Can you say something about that as taken account of by God in relation to the Lord Jesus?

AJMcK If we plant a tree in this world it needs to be staked, it needs something to hold it up; a tender sapling needs to be supported. That is not the thought here, “he shall grow up before him as a tender sapling”. There was softness, a richness about that, and perhaps it speaks about the bond of communion that was there? “He wakeneth morning by morning … mine ear” (Isa 50: 4): the attractiveness of One who was there in the sight of God.

JL It seems such a contrast to the way children of the modern age

are expected to grow up, and I wondered if it had a special connection with the grace that marked the Lord Jesus in all that came into expression right from the earliest moment. The tenderness of the way that that growth took place in the sight of God was obviously so attractive under the Father's eye. The way that it came into expression was so contrary to the normal ways and ambitions of men.

NJH The scene around did not contribute at all to the humanity of Christ; round about was dry ground: in Him was the tender sapling.

AJMcK I think what is coming out is helpful; so there was what was shared in secret in communion between the Father and the Son, but there was something precious about the tenderness and softness of this relationship and the softness of what developed. I was thinking about the fact that it was thirty years, thirty years that we know very little about. Scripture says, “I have found … a man after my heart” (Acts 13: 22); I wondered if that linked with what was tender, “a man after my heart”.

TWL The Lord never drew anything from this scene, but this scene never changed the kind of Man He was either. It never altered Him, the kind of Man that was for God that God took delight in; no matter what the scene put in front of Him it never changed Him. He was the same character of Man in spite of the trial, in spite of the rejection, in spite of the affliction; it never changed the manhood of Christ for God, and the kind of Man that God delighted in. That kind of thing was the tender sapling.

AJMcK I think that is very helpful and helps our enquiry. He was not swayed, He was not diverted; scripture says, “that *he* stedfastly set his face” (Luke 9: 51); “I set my face like a flint” (Isa 50: 7); it was set! Nothing was going to divert Him from what that involved. Even when we come to the expression in John's gospel “Behold the man!” the crown of thorn did not divert Him from His course at all, and it did not detract from the One in whom there was “no fault”.

BWL Before David went out to meet Goliath, Saul clothed him with his dress and gave him certain things, and I suppose Saul's armour would have been the best in Israel, but David said, “I cannot go in these; for I have never tried them”, 1 Sam 17: 39. Then he chose five smooth stones out of the brook, and took a staff in his hand (v 40), that would convey the Lord's dependent manhood and the perfection of His

humanity, do you think?

AJMcK Very helpful, "I cannot go in these"; how blessed! In one sense it is not that the Lord ever considered taking on anything, but the fact is there, "I cannot go in these"; it was inconceivable that He could take on anything of this scene in filling out the mind and heart of God.

AMB We have been speaking of His tenderness; we sing sometimes,

And full of love Thy tender heart. Hymn 328

The brethren have been saying about the Lord deriving nothing morally from this scene and being unaffected by it is right, but He was affected in His heart by the impact of sin on the race. He wept at the tomb of Lazarus (John 11: 35) for example, but that was the Lord's tender heart; it is part of His perfection.

AJMcK Yes, so it does not mean that He did not feel anything, because He felt everything.

AMB Because of His perfection, He felt things as we cannot. He felt these sufferings that He knew He had to endure, He felt them in anticipation, and He felt them in actuality. The strong crying and tears that are spoken of the Lord (Heb 5: 7) would include His tears at Gethsemane.

AJMcK The expression of that really comes out in, "if it be possible", Matt 26: 39. We need to be careful what we say as to these scriptures because they are very deep and very profound but, "if it be possible" really brings out all His feelings in connection with what lay before Him. We should hold to it that His tender heart felt all of those things, that was what He was and is.

DCB So as you continue Isaiah 53 it says, "Surely *he* hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" (v 4), and the suffering psalms would be examples of His tenderness especially in respect of the matter of reproach.

AJMcK Yes, and as you say, "Surely *he* hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows", there is an emphatic *"he"*; there is no one else who has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. This glorious Man has carried them all and carried them all in relation to filling the heart of God.

ASP He would particularly have in mind to please the Father: "he shall grow up before him as a tender sapling". He says, **"**it becometh

us to fulfil all righteousness", Matt 3: 15. Do you think that was part of the tenderness too that He was particularly minded to do what was precious to God?

AJMcK "I do always the things that are pleasing to him" (John 8: 29); that characterised every moment and every step of that way; filling the heart of God and satisfying His desires was what occupied Him. This is the moral perfection of One who derived nothing from this scene and could not derive anything from this scene because everything that He was and everything that He is, is fully there and is fully there for God.

SCL So there is nothing that can detract from the Lord's glory; elsewhere it says, "it pleased Jehovah to bruise him", Isa 53: 10. The crown of thorns and the purple robe were done in mocking hatred but for the believer they behold a Man that is lacking in no kingly glory. Every suffering that the Lord endured accentuated the moral perfection and glory that was seen in Him.

AJMcK I think this scripture in John's gospel should really affect the heart of every true believer on Christ. The heart of man would put a crown of thorns on Him, the heart of man would mock Him, but God saw to it that there was testimony borne, although that testimony was drawn from perhaps a most unlikely source: "Behold the man!", to take account of the greatness of this Man and this Man alone, and Pilate says, "I find no fault in him". He had never had a man before him like this before. Here is One in whom is no fault; "offered himself spotless to God", Heb 9: 14. That was what was happening here. Pilate unwittingly became part of the testimony to that. But the Lord Jesus was offering Himself "spotless to God", no fault, nothing that could detract from the greatness and the purity of this sacrifice.

GBG Are we giving the Spirit scope in speaking about these moral features of Christ? I think if we are occupied with Him, it gives the Spirit scope for these features, and in a measure for us be formed by these moral features of Christ. I know the main thrust of your reading is speaking about the Lord Jesus but it must have a moral effect.

AJMcK That was really why I read about the centurion because it has to come to something. I was thinking of what the Lord Jesus says Himself as to the Spirit, "for he receives of mine and shall announce it to you", John 16: 14. If we give the Spirit room and freedom then surely the Spirit will fill our hearts with impressions of Him. He fills our view

with the greatness of the One who is everything to God; “receives of mine and shall announce it to you”; there is something very definite about that. Perhaps the Spirit of God would occupy us today with the greatness and the glory of this Man that there might be a moral effect, that there might be a moral change; “Truly this man was Son of God”. How did that come from a Roman centurion?

GBG We were speaking of tenderness. If we are occupied with Christ and His tenderness, we begin to appreciate that and then the Father works with us as well and discipline comes in; therefore we become more mature and tenderness comes in as we go on in life.

DAB So it would be a good exercise for each of us to ask the Holy Spirit to give us God's view of Christ. We are sometimes limited as to what depth of contemplation we enter into in relation to this wonderful Person, but it would be your exercise that our view would be in sympathy with God's view of this blessed One. Not from a limited view, but to see how God views Him and how God appreciates Christ, and that is really what the Son of God means to our hearts.

AJMcK This centurion does not say, 'Truly this Man was Jesus the Nazaræan' - He was; he does not say, 'Truly this Man was King of the Jew' - He was; but he says, “Truly this man was Son of God”. There is something changed, there is a change of direction, and I feel tested as to this, as to whether in considering this great Man I can reach how God views Him: to see Him as the Son of God! To see Him as this glorious Man who has effected everything for God, what God has proposed He has fulfilled, and that brought me in.

DAB Pilate says, “Behold the man!”, but I have it in my heart that God is saying, 'Behold Christ' to us this afternoon.

PAG Do you get an impression with the way things are expressed in John's gospel of God's appreciation and protection of Christ? It says after where we read in John 19 as to the body-coat it “was seamless, woven through the whole from the top. They said therefore to one another, Let us not rend it”, v 23-24. It was said of the cloak of the ephod which was all of blue “that it should not rend”, Exod 39: 23. God would not allow the cloak of the ephod to be rent by man, and then it says, “Not a bone of him shall be broken”, John 19: 36. God would not allow man to invade what belonged to Him. He protected Christ even in death and such was the value He attached to Him.

AJMcK I think that is fine. It has been on my heart as to the cloak of the ephod, “that it should not rend”. From God's side there is nothing that can be lost of this glorious Man. And not just that it cannot be lost, but there is everything for us to go in for and everything for us to appreciate and lay hold of all that He is to God. The centurion reached it, “Son of God”. Divine workmanship placed that thought in his heart and brought about that moral change in that man so that he could bear testimony to the One who was none less than the Son of God.

Dundee

8th November 2025

List of initials:-

A M Brown, Linlithgow; D A Brown, Bo'ness; D C Brown, Edinburgh; R Brown, Linlithgow; A P Grant, Dundee; G B Grant, Dundee; M B Grant, Grangemouth; P A Gray, Linlithgow; R Gray, Peterhead; N J Henry, Glasgow; J Laurie, Brechin; B W Lovie, Aberdeen; S C Lock, Edinburgh; T W Lock, Edinburgh; A J McKay, Witney; A S Pittman, Grangemouth; J S Spiers, Grangemouth; D Spinks, Bo'ness

THE BELIEVER'S CALLING

Robert I Webster

Romans 8: 28-30
Hebrews 3: 1-2 (to "him"); 1: 1-5; 4: 14-16; 5: 5-6; 6: 20; 7: 1-28
Ephesians 4: 1

It is perhaps evident from the scriptures read that I have in mind, with the Lord's help, to speak of the believer's calling. I think the thought of a calling would suggest that which properly belongs to a person. Men use that expression in human things - they have found their calling. I think too that the thought of a calling is that which is set before us, so that there might be exercise with us as to how we reach out for it and answer to it.

I began in Romans because it traces our calling to its source. Paul speaks of "those who are called according to purpose". I feel, certainly for myself, the need to become more established and settled in relation to the purpose of God. I think in many ways our enjoyment of divine things largely rests on our apprehension of how we stand in relation to it. It is immensely settling. It speaks here not only of the source of our calling, but the end God has in view. He takes us up with a definite end in view: He is going to conform us to the image of His Son. You think of that, God will have a universe filled with the glory of His Son that will include a company of persons. Now, I can understand that God would want to have everything speaking to Him of His Son. If any of us have come to an appreciation of that One, we can understand why it is that God is going to have everything, and everyone, conformed to His image. What I cannot explain to you - other than to say it has pleased the heart of God to do so - is that He has chosen *you,* dear brother, and dear sister, to be amongst that company of persons that are going to shine in His image. I think the wonder of it should bow our hearts.

God has thought of us before the foundation of the world. How great the people of God are! Men try to trace everything back to the foundation of the world; the people of God go back before the foundation of the world. Ephesians brings out that He has chosen us in Christ "before the world's foundation", Eph 1: 4. Oh that my affections and spirit might rise to the grandeur of it! How immensely establishing it is. Satan would seek to bring in that which may unsettle us, and perhaps raise questions hard to answer. But lay hold of the fact, dear brother and sister, that you have a place in the purpose of God. It gives

you a settled disposition in relation to everything that is of God. "We *do* know that all things work together for good to those who love God": what that makes the people of God! You think of the company here: before even God commenced His work in creation, He had us in mind. It is something we must lay hold of because, whatever Satan may do (and we know how active he can be), we can lay hold of this blessed truth: He had us in mind before the foundation of the world to be conformed to the image of His Son.

The scriptures we have read speak of the Lord Jesus as Son; the Son is presented here as God's ideal, and the thought of conforming would mean there is a work going on with an ideal in view. The moment is soon upon us when that work will be complete; I think that is on the hearts of the brethren. You do not need to speak to a lover of the Lord Jesus for too long before the conversation very quickly turns to His coming. The Lord puts it in the hearts of His own when His coming is near, and when He does come, all that is being worked out will be complete; and it says, "we shall see him", 1 John 3: 2. We are going to see the One we love. We are actually going to see Him! Then it says that, when we see Him, "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is". There were those who saw Him as He *was* - the One down here as the lowly Man of sorrows (Isa 53: 3), bearing the physical effects of all that He bore in His spirit. We are going to see Him as He *is* - a glorified Man. God will have completed His work, but in the meantime, He is conforming us to the image of His beloved Son. If we have any sense of what our calling is, let us open ourselves to allow God to work. How He does it is His matter - He may use discipline in it, He may bring in His word, but all with a blessed end in view that He is going to conform us to the image of His Son.

Hebrews 3 brings out the character of our calling; it is a heavenly calling. The writer here was writing to Jewish believers and from what we read in the epistle it seems there was a danger that they were falling back - he uses the word "drawers back" (Heb 10: 39) - into what effectually had become earthly ritualism. He reminds them of the character of their calling. Dear brethren, ours is a heavenly calling. It raises a test with us, does it not, whether we would consign what we think our Christianity to be to purely what is earthly? Perhaps there is a tendency, I know from my own experience, to do that. I am thankful for the care and help that enters into my circumstances and needs here, but our calling goes far beyond that. I often think one way I can measure my apprehension and enjoyment of things is how I speak to

God. What do we speak to Him about? Of course we thank Him for His providential blessings; the Lord when He taught His own to pray taught what was of that character in Matthew, chap 6: 9. The Lord there was on earth and He was bringing in the blessed truth of the kingdom; He taught His own to pray in relation to all that they would receive from above. I do not want to be misunderstood - we can be thankful for that, but that Man is now in heaven, and the Spirit has come as witness to that glorious fact; and things now take a heavenly character.

How thankful we can be for what has come to us; I am thinking especially of Paul's ministry. His prayer in relation to those in Ephesus was that they "should know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the surpassing greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of the might of his strength, in which he wrought in the Christ in raising him from among the dead, and he set him down at his right hand in the heavenlies", Eph 1: 18, 19. Have you ever prayed like that, that you might know those things? It is a test, is it not? Well, if you have not, try it; you will not be disappointed. So the writer in Hebrews calls upon those he wrote to "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession". Consider Him. That is not a passing thought or a cursory glance at what we may have presented to us. That is the deliberate application of our minds, because it strikes me that when God wants to attract our hearts in relation to something He has in mind for us, He tells us what Christ is in relation to it. So the writer says, "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession".

As I was thinking about this occasion recently, we sang a hymn to the Son of God -

Thou hast come in on God's behalf
To crown His wondrous ways (Hymn 171).

It occurred to me that what the epistle to the Hebrews presents to us is the crown of God's ways. The Jewish believers who were accustomed to God's ways of old would have thought of God speaking in the prophets, then the way in which He would set up the priesthood so that things might be held for Him and that He may be served, and then in relation to the kingdom where His rule and sway would be known. Hebrews appears to present the Son as the One in whom God gathers all those things up. We are to consider Him, and in the consideration of Him no doubt our affections would become engaged as to the character of our calling.

In the first chapter the writer speaks of the Apostle: God always had in His mind to put Himself in touch with His people through His speaking. I am reminded that in the garden of Eden, He provided congenial conditions in which that might be so, because it says of Adam that He heard the voice of Jehovah in the cool of the day. The fall meant that the character of communion which that suggests was all lost to man. God then used intermediaries to convey His word - the prophets, many of them great men of faith. Now faith always connects itself with the crown of God's ways. Abraham was spoken of as a prophet; he was given the promises, and he laid hold of them. He never came into the full good of them. Hebrews says later on from where we read that he "died in faith, not having received the promises", chap 11: 13. It brings out the privileged character of the present day; the Holy Spirit now connects itself with what faith lays hold of. So, we lay hold of something in faith, and the Holy Spirit makes it good to us and gives us the present reality of it. We have a great advantage. Think of Abraham; the Lord said he rejoiced to see His day (John 8: 56); he had been given light as to the crown of God's ways. Why is it he went out not knowing where he was going? He never received the promises, but he held them because he was given precious light as to how they were all bound up in relation to One who was going to come in beyond his own lifetime. What a reward for that man's faith!

You think of Moses: he was used in an outstanding way by God to speak to His people. He said, "God will raise up unto thee a prophet … like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken", Deut 18: 15. What blessed light these men of faith had in relation to all that God was going to gather up in His Son. I suppose John the baptist was the last of that long lineage; a faithful man he was, he was one who was going to prepare the way for the One that God was bringing in. He appeared to have some impression of the greatness of the walk of that One who was coming after him: "he who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to unloose", John 1: 27. He had his reward - there was a moment where it says of John the baptist, "looking at Jesus as he walked" (John 1: 36), and I know that was used of God to secure disciples for the Lord, but I love to think of it as a blessed reward for that man's service. He was given that view, the One in the way which he had prepared. But great as all those men were, they were just men.

Then, "at the end of these days has spoken to us in the person of the Son". That is God speaking Himself. Does that arouse your

interest, dear brother and sister? That God has deigned to speak Himself, and immediately the Son is introduced. The writer here speaks of what is great to convey something of the greatness of all that he was going to set before his readers; he introduces the greatness of the One who speaks using these superlative expressions. He says, "whom he has established heir of all things". Sonship involves heirship. The title of Son belongs to One - the Son; He inherited that title. We come into sonship by the "spirit of adoption" (Rom 8: 15), but there is one who as Man has that title, it belongs to Him; He inherits that name and as such, everything belongs to Him. You think of the greatness of such a One!

If you want to be enlarged in your thoughts of Him, think of Him in relation to all things. The scripture tells us that He "ascended up above all the heavens, that he might fill all things" (Eph 4: 10): who but God could go beyond the created sphere? Such is the greatness of the Person. Elsewhere it says, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand" (John 3: 35), that brings out the blessed mediatorial glory of the Son, that He takes everything up that is put into His hand; everything is safe and sure there. Here He is the One to whom all things belong, the Heir of all things. Men look around, they take account of the created sphere, they look into their telescopes and see the vastness of it. Even the created sphere is beyond them. They look into their microscopes to see the detail of it; what is it all for? It is for the glory of the Son. It all belongs to Him. How great the Person is who speaks; and it says, "by whom also he made the worlds", and that brings out the oft-repeated truth that Colossians helps us with ("all things have been created by him and for him", chap 1: 16): that what He creates as God, He inherits as Man.

Then, "who being the effulgence of his glory and the expression of his substance". We need to apply our minds to these verses so that we get the good of them. Who but the Son could be spoken of in such a way? God has a world which is marked by glory, the centre of which is His Son. It emanates from Him. There was a time when He appeared here as a light, "And the light appears in darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not", John 1: 5. There were those who were given eyes of faith to see it. John says, "we have contemplated his glory" (John 1: 14); that is a bit like considering. He had rested his gaze on that One, "contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten". It is as if he says, I cannot quantify that glory for you, but if I were to give you a sense of it, it would be like this "an only-begotten with a father, full of

grace and truth". That brings out the expression of what was there. One in whom "dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily", Col 2: 9. You think of all that was expressed. Everything that is seen of God is expressed in the Son. That is a blessed truth to lay hold of. So not only does He create all things and inherit all things, but He upholds all things by the word of His power. Men study the created sphere and apply laws of physics to it; however there was a time that we can read of in the scriptures when one of the most impressive forces in creation - the seas - was turbulent and the company the Lord was with in a boat was at its mercy. But the word was, "Silence; be mute … and there was a great calm", Mark 4: 39. I am not sure how men could apply any law of physics to that. It goes beyond man's tiny mind and what it can conceive.

Then Hebrews says, "having made by himself the purification of sins, set himself down on the right hand of the greatness on high". The writer moves very quickly to establish His present position. He is sat down there, He has gone up, "having made by himself the purification of sins", and when the Son does something it never has to be repeated. He sits down there, "on the right hand of the greatness on high", to show us that everything now is established in Him. The thought is of greatness and elevation, all that now is in the heart of God that He unfolds to us is established in this blessed Person.

And then God says, "*I* will be to him for father, and *he* shall be to me for son". What I have in mind as to our calling is that it is the place that properly belongs to sonship. Sonship is God's highest thought for man, and what we have presented here is not only that He had title to that name, but He filled out that relationship perfectly. We have been given these relationships, speaking on a human level, and how wonderful it is that God has given us these relationships so that we can begin to understand what is filled out in that blessed relationship. We all know what a father does; the motives behind it are always love. He always did things for His Father, filled out that relationship in all its fulness. We can trace it all the way through His life; as a boy of twelve He says, "did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?", Luke 2: 49. You think of that, a boy of twelve, when even the strongest natural claim was asserting itself, One who always had His Father before Him! And that is the character of the speaking: it relates to what is truly ours in order that it might be filled out. The speaking of old was mainly providential and provisional, but this

speaking relates to all that properly belongs to us.

Then we have the thought of the High Priest, in chapter 4. It says, "Having therefore a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God". That is another thing that marks the epistle: how the writer interweaves the personal name of Jesus with His titles. I always think when that name is referenced in Scripture the Holy Spirit knows it will have our attention, that One that we love. It immediately arrests our affections. It goes on to speak of the sympathy of the High Priest. How real are the sympathies of the Jesus! We can prove them. If we feel that things are perhaps beyond us, or if we feel that the condition and circumstances we are in tend to hinder our enjoyment of the greatest of all that God would give us, that does not draw out the disapproval of Jesus; it draws out His sympathies. He is presented as "Jesus the Son of God". I have in mind His priesthood in its most elevated character, and that is how He holds everything good for God. Jesus is the One who does things for us; the Son of God is One who does things for God, and He always holds His people at the true height of what is proper to them. If you want proof of that, read that precious chapter in John 17: you will see how the way in which He speaks to His Father about His people involves nothing as to failure. He always holds them in relation to divine purpose. So if things seem overwhelming for us, there is One, our High Priest, who holds everything good for God.

It goes on to say, "Thus the Christ also has not glorified himself to be made a high priest; but he who had said to him, *Thou* art my Son, *I* have to-day begotten thee. Even as also in another place he says, *Thou* art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedec", chap 4: 5, 6. He has title to that office because He is Son. The high priests amongst men obtained the office through their lineage, all according to man, but this is a Priesthood of a completely different order, "the order of Melchisedec". It speaks of Melchisedec being "assimilated to the Son of God". We read of Melchisedec when he appears almost mysteriously on the scene long before God assigned the priesthood to the tribe of Levi. This high priest does not trace his qualifications from man. At the time of the conflict of those nine kings, it is almost as if he comes from a different sphere and he brings that which is from that sphere with him. He blesses Abraham, he ministers to Abraham, and then he blesses the Most High God. As a result Abraham becomes morally superior to the circumstances in which he was. The king of

Sodom says, give me the souls and you can take the property, but Abraham says, 'I am not going to take it from you'; he had had to do with Melchisedec and says, “I have lifted up my hand to Jehovah, the Most High God”, Gen 14: 21-24. He became morally superior to the circumstances around and was able to bless God without needing to take anything from the world. The result of the Lord's service in this way is that we become elevated from the scene around us and become occupied with what is for God.

The high priest would also suggest one who represents the people; it was only the high priest that could enter the holy of holies, so that the whole position of the people depended on the high priest. Now our High Priest has entered in: “Jesus is entered as forerunner for us”, showing He has entered in not only as having title to that office (and when He takes the office, He has it forever), but He has entered there on moral lines, as Jesus in all the perfection of His manhood. So we see the two thoughts again - the greatness of His own Person, and the moral perfection of what He is as Man. It says He “is entered as forerunner for us”, and that is where we come in. He brings His people in; He is “bringing many sons to glory”, Heb 2: 10. The “glory” there seems to suggest what is the true place of sons. We know as a blessed truth that where He is He desires His own to be with Him. So that we approach with “boldness for entering into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus”, Heb 10: 19. And there He has laid an immutable basis for His own to enter in, “having found an eternal redemption”, Heb 9: 12.

It goes on to say, “who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God”, Heb 9: 14. My impression is that “the eternal Spirit” conveys that it was not just that He was meeting us in our need in His precious sacrifice, but in the shedding of His blood He was giving efficacy to thoughts that went all the way back into eternity. So as entering in, He sits down there and things are made perfect. He Himself has been made perfect. That is not a moral thought; I think the sense there is that He Himself has arrived at the place that is properly ours. Now that is the gravity of the moment, dear brethren, that we come into the gain of that which the men of faith of which we have spoken never had - there is One there who not only has given expression to all that is in the heart of God, and the glory of the thoughts that He has in His mind to bless us with, but He Himself fills out that place. O that we may rise to the greatness of it! There is One there, and He is there forever! The priests here were marked by infirmity and

death, and death brought in decline to the point where it was extinguished in the days of Samuel. Jesus is there in "power of indissoluble life"; let us lay hold of that, dear brethren; that is the blessed truth. However sparse we may feel our apprehension is of our calling, there is a Man in the immediate presence of God filling out all that truly and properly belongs to us; that is our High Priest. He is a Priest forever. In due time we will arrive: Romans says of those who are sons that they are "awaiting adoption, that is the redemption of our body" (Rom 8: 23), when we will have bodies of glory like unto His own (Phil 3: 21), but there is a Man there who holds everything good for God. That is the character of the Son of God, taking up the office of High Priest. May we be established in that, as we see things as they stand in relation to Him.

So then there is that which we have to do. Ephesians brings out the height of our calling as a present reality in the divine mind; it is done and settled as far as God is concerned. Hebrews, however, brings out more of our side; it says, "let us approach with a true heart, in full assurance", chap 10: 22. Well, that is our calling, dear brethren. We can have full assurance because there is One there who has not only conveyed everything that is true and proper to what belongs to us, but He holds it all good for God Himself personally.

I finish in Ephesians because this is where the test comes in. It says, "*I*, the prisoner in the Lord, exhort you therefore to walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye have been called". That is the practical test for us - our walk. Our walk is down here, and it is a reflection of what we are, where our interests are; and so Paul says, "walk worthy of the calling". That is in every provisional setting, our relationships, in our households, in our local assemblies, in our responsibilities. Look at all that belongs to you, how does it affect your walk? There is a soon coming moment where everything that is set before us will no longer have the character of a calling; it will be a present reality: things will be realised. It is very soon and in relation to that moment, I am reminded of two persons in the Old Testament who were taken out of the circumstances in which they found themselves. There was one man Lot; it speaks of "righteous Lot", 2 Pet 2: 7. It says he "tormented his righteous soul" (v 8); he was found in a system of things he was not fitted for; it was not becoming of him. And effectively he had to be dragged out; that is a very sobering thing. But there was another man, Enoch, who it says, "walked with God", Gen 5: 24. It says of him that he

“was translated”, Heb 11: 5. What is going to be true of us when that calling on high comes? Does our walk take its character from all that will soon be our present portion? Or will we be taken from the scene in which we do not belong as those that have found a home here? The walk of the Lord Jesus here was heavenly in character. It has been said it was a walk out of this world. That should mark the believer's walk, that it is a walk leading out of this world. So that when that moment comes and we are called to be with Him, we will not only be morally conformed to the image of His Son, but our walk here will have been in keeping with that blessed truth.

May we be encouraged as to these things, dear brethren; they are very challenging but let us have full assurance as to these things. May it be so for His Name's sake.

Sidcup

28th February 2026

“THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD”

Peter S Barlow

John 9: 5
2 Corinthians 4: 3-6

I was thankful for the way attention was drawn in yesterday's reading to this verse in chapter 9 of John's gospel. What came out was helpful, “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world”. We touched on the Lord Jesus as no longer in the world, but in glory. I may have thought that means that the light is not here, but that is not the way the scripture reads, it was whilst the Lord was in the world, that He was the light of the world. It got me thinking a little as to what the light of the world is now.

In the reading, we got help to see that there would be light here through the Spirit's operation in persons, in the assembly. It would be that outshining that the scripture in Corinthians draws attention to and which will be seen in that vessel, the holy city, coming down out of heaven, “having the glory of God”, Rev 21: 10. As thinking over the verse in John, beloved brethren, a remark of Mr Raven's came to mind, when he was asked what he understood by the "glory". He said it is the moral effulgence of God that shines out in the gospel, FER vol 5 p143. I do not think it is helpful to reduce divine things to definitions, but what I do find with definitions is that you stop to consider what the speaker, or the person that communicates it, may be trying to bring out. That is where I found the help. You think of the moral effulgence of God outshining in the gospel: that is light.

I love that passage in Hebrews 1: 3, which speaks of the Son, “who being the effulgence of his glory”. The footnote, *b*, says that effulgence is, 'That which fully presents the glory which is in something else'. What the gospel presents is the glory of God as expressed in it. My thought is that is what Christ was, what the Lord Jesus was when He was here; He was the effulgence of God. He was shining out and everything that was seen in that glorious Man was the perfect expression of what God is. That thought of the moral effulgence of God touched my heart as to the greatness of it, the depth of the gospel, the dignity of it. It speaks to us of what God is in His nature and in His attributes; that is what the gospel presents. I might only think that it is presenting salvation as relief. Beloved brethren, it is presenting the depths of God, because the gospel preached is to be spoken in the power of the blessed Holy Spirit. As we have elsewhere in scripture, “the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God”, 1 Cor 2: 10.

I was affected by what was brought into the reading last week too, as to the Spirit hearing what is said and announcing it to us, John 16: 13. A lovely touch was suggested, that what the Spirit announces is not necessarily what we can give expression to. It may be beyond us, but we find that glorious power dwells in our hearts and forms something in us after the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what the gospel is, and it is wonderful, beyond measure. We are so privileged to hear it week by week, beloved brethren; that is just what affected me. We had the gospel mentioned in a number of prayers tonight and I felt encouraged from that.

We have here in Corinthians, "Because it is the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". The gospel, as we find at the beginning of Romans, is "God's glad tidings … concerning his Son … Jesus Christ our Lord", v 1-4. I have missed out the parentheses to see the beautiful encapsulation of what the glad tidings are, what the gospel is, God's glad tiding concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. What we see in the Lord Jesus in perfection when here was truly the outshining of all that God is. It is no less so, now, where He is in glory. The light that shone upon Saul was the outshining of what God's attitude is in the gospel.

I find increasingly as I come across these beautiful scriptures, that they are things to be contemplated. That is what John did, he contemplated. I seek to leave some impression of the glorious greatness of what the glad tidings are, for the light that is still shining in this world now and it is available to all men. We have been brought into it, and we are very privileged, beloved brethren, that the gospel has found an answer in our hearts; how blest we are. It should be outshining in us; what should shine out is that we have something very precious in our hearts that cannot be touched, and it is of God Himself.

These are a few fragmented thoughts, but maybe they will give some encouragement to us as to the greatness into which we have been brought and the greatness of the glad tidings.

For the Lord's name's sake.

Sunbury

15th December 2025

“THE TRUE LIGHT”

Roland J Flowerdew

1 John 2: 8

In the previous word, our brother has been speaking about the verse that we read in John's gospel yesterday, and the Lord Jesus as the One who is “the light of the world”, John 9: 5. In thinking about that a little, I wanted to occupy us for a moment with Him who is not only “the light of the world”, but also as the One who is “the true light”. It is seen in what our brother brought before us, in the question that he raised, that there is a distinct sense in which the Lord Jesus was a light amongst the children of Israel when He was a Man here amongst men. In the previous chapter of this epistle, we have presented to us that “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all”, 1 John 1: 5. We have the absolute sense in which God is light. Here in chapter 2, we have the presentation of the Lord as the One who is “the true light”.

As we contemplate these things, we recognise that there are different presentations of light in the Scriptures. What we have been considering is very much light compared to darkness. Our brother has been discussing the glad tidings. He reminded me of what the apostle wrote to the Galatians, that, as having heard the gospel, some of them changed very quickly: “I wonder that ye thus quickly change, from him that called you in Christ's grace, to a different gospel, which is not another one; but there are some that trouble you, and desire to pervert the glad tidings of the Christ”, Gal 1: 6, 7. We would see that that is not just the perversion of the message, but a desire to pervert the true character of God Himself. Therefore, it is very serious.

I do not want to be occupied with the negative side of things because this verse that we have in 1 John 2 is like that verse that we were contemplating in John 8 yesterday: something that shines in all its glory, that “the true light already shines”. You might think of the Lord in His pathway here as representing a particular character of light, but He is the One who is “the true light”. Again, thinking of the negative for a moment, we can think of Satan; one of his names is Lucifer, which means light-bearer or 'Brilliant Star', Isa 14: 12, note *c*. There are these different presentations we have in the Scripture of the character of light. Sometimes we have light presented as something that is distinct in contrast to everything else being darkness. However, I think what we have here is a very different presentation. There are other lights that

come to mislead and misdirect. Against all that, we have the Lord, the One who is the true light, which “already shines”. I rejoice in that. We think of the Lord as the One who passed through the realm of death and broke its power; as the One who is ascended, the One who has passed through all the heavens; the One who is glorified. That character of Him as the true light ***continues***.

John in writing this epistle says that that light “already shines”. It is not something that awaits a future day. It is not something that only pertains to life after death. We were speaking yesterday in conversation about the character of eternal life and how we can and should enjoy it now. I think, in the same way, the character of this “true light” is something that is to be appreciated and enjoyed right now. John puts it in the simple words of his writings. It is not a light that will only appear in a day that is yet to come, but it is a “true light that already shines”. The question is whether it shines for us? Do we have a growing appreciation of Him who is “the true light”? Does that light shine into our hearts?

May we be encouraged as we contemplate these things. It is so good to be occupied with the preciousness of divine Persons and the glory of the Father; and, here in particular, the Lord as the One who is “the true light”. May this be for the blessing of each of us, for His Name's sake.

Words in meeting for Ministry, Sunbury

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