NOTES OF MINISTRY

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Quotations from the Holy Scriptures in this publication are usually taken from the Darby Translation

DIVINE COUNSEL

Psalm 32:7-9; Matthew 2:10-12;
Revelation 3:14-19

I read these verses, dear brethren, because they may help us all as to counsel. Counsel, or guidance, is something that we all need. We may not readily recognise it. Laodicea did not think that they needed it, but the Lord very pointedly told them how much they needed it. We are sometimes slow to seek counsel because we are quite pleased with ourselves. We are pleased with our own status, or state, or ability; but counsel is something that divine Persons have especially taken upon Themselves to provide us with. May we be helped to look to Them for it and not look elsewhere.

Scripture says prophetically about the Lord that “unto us a child is born”, Isa.9:6. It is not ‘unto the world’ but “unto us”. That verse goes on to say, “and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace”. I call attention to that word: “unto us” He is a “Counsellor”. It is true also of the Father: the scripture says “enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who sees in secret will render it to thee”, Matt.6:6. There you find the Father, ready to give counsel. Scripture also says about the Spirit that He is our guide (John 16:13). Think of the Lord Jesus, and the Father, and the Spirit being ready to counsel us in our circumstances that we may be preserved for the testimony. That would be the great point in counsel, that we may not lose our way or become unprofitable,

or unserviceable. I believe the object in counsel is to make us increasingly serviceable to the Lord.

In the Psalm, which is an instruction, the psalmist here, David, is speaking, and then God seems to intervene in verse 8. The Psalms refer to counsel in a distinctive way. Psalm 1 begins with "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked" (v.1). The "counsel of the wicked" is all around us, and it may be attractive. The "counsel of the wicked" appeals to your own abilities, your own personality. Such counsellors would make much of you. The church at large, publicly, has been drawn into the world, where the "counsel of the wicked" circulates. The result of such counsel is breakdown and confusion and catastrophe publicly. The church has been drawn into the counsel of the wicked, and as a result other counsellors have been appointed – bishops, for example. Church history is strewn with the counsel of men, and indeed church councils. Very early in the history of the church, in the early centuries, there were these councils set up, and you find all the churches have their councils. They lay down edicts to try to keep things in channels of their own ordering, which may seem to be right, and there may be right motives. I would not say that is the "counsel of the wicked" exactly, but it is not the counsel of divine guidance. As I say, it is all around us and it appeals to man.

That is really how governments work today, and how businesses work too. If there is a problem, or a catastrophe, the first thing that they do is to establish a committee, and recommendations are made and so on. There are bodies such as the United Nations, and they do their best to keep peace by their counsel, but I want to speak about divine

counsel. The man in Psalm 1 deliberately avoids the counsel of men; he deliberately avoids it. It says, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, and standeth not in the way of sinners, and sitteth not in the seat of scorners; But his delight is in Jehovah’s law”. He made way for divine counsel.

Where I read in Psalm 32, it says, “I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee”. Think of divine grace entering into that; you can find sympathy with this Counsellor as with nobody else. The eye can express sympathy; and it says, “I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee”. The Lord knows the end of things; He knows the best way to give us direction in our exercises. It may be in our personal life, it may be about seeking to be more serviceable to the Lord, to make more way and more time for divine things. He says, “I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee”. These are practical exercises. Matters press on us so much that divine things are given less and less time, and perhaps the Lord and His people and His interests have less place with us than they should. But what the Lord is saying is, ‘If you are exercised about these things, I will give you counsel about how to do them’. We all know about the lack of time, but as has been well said, we all have the same amount of time – there are twenty-four hours in a day. That is how it is divided, and the question is how we make use of it. God would counsel; He would guide us about these things with His eye upon us. There is nothing arbitrary about that, but divine compassion enters into such counsel: God sees all our matters, our circumstances.

The appeal in the next verse is, “Be ye not as a horse, as a mule … whose trappings must be bit and bridle”. How much of this is familiar to us. The

Lord has had to pull us in at times, and it is quite sore on the horse to be pulled in like this. Such things come into our lives: the Lord may have to come in drastically at times and pull us up. The horse does not know the end of the journey; and with us there may be times when God has had to intervene. The word says, “for restraint”. Perhaps He has had to hold us back on the way we were on. The Counsellor stands in marked contrast to our wills. “I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee”: what compassion! How attractive it is to us that He understands our frame; He knows our weakness: “with mine eye upon thee”. It is an eye of love; there is divine compassion in all that He would say to us. Sometimes it may seem hard, or even impossible, but He says, “I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee”. It brings out the need for confidence in the Counsellor, and surely that would not be lacking with us. The One who is counselling us has given Himself for us, He has gone to lengths that no one else could ever go to, to show how much we mean to Him.

I say these things because there is a need of divine counsel today, when there are so many voices around, and so many exercises within, some of them of long standing. We need counsel in how to move, we need guidance. These men in Matthew found it. What led me to this scripture was the footnote to the word “instructed” in verse 12: it says that “instructed” ‘signifies an answer after consultation’. It says the same thing in verse 22 as to Joseph: “he was afraid to go there; and having been divinely instructed in a dream, he went away into the parts of Galilee”. That is very interesting; it is an answer after consultation. Have you ever had such an answer? Have you had one today, following a consultation with the Counsellor? In your concerns, individually and

collectively, have you spoken to the Counsellor about them? Have you spoken to others about them? Maybe you have spoken to others about things, and know their opinions. But it says here it is an answer after consultation, and it was divine instruction.

These men had learned to consult. They must have prayed about the matter, so that it says, “And being divinely instructed”. They saw this little child; they saw how apparently vulnerable the position was. Do you ever feel how vulnerable the position is? That is what Matthew presents in this section – a very vulnerable position, a little child with its mother. That is how the testimony stands today; it is very vulnerable. But these magi brought out their reserves and their resources of gold and frankincense and myrrh. Heaven is interested in persons like that, persons who see the vulnerability, see how apparently weak the position may be, but instead of being critical they give it their all. That is what they did – they gave gifts of “gold, and frankincense, and myrrh”. These gifts were all offered to the little child. You say, ‘Was it not being wasted?’. That is what Judas said. There was that woman, Mary, and she saw the need, and she gave all that was needed (John 12:3-6). These men here, “they saw the little child with Mary his mother, and falling down did him homage”. There was nothing outwardly to draw out homage; indeed, the whole position outside was against it: the advantage seemed to be with Herod, and with the priests and all these persons. That was so at the cross. As Mr. Darby’s poem says,

> ‘Priests, that should plead for weakness,
> Must Thine accusers be!’[1]

[1] JN Darby ‘The Man of Sorrows’ in A Selection of Poems ed. GHS Price 1953 p.108

Everything seemed against Him, but there were some persons in that day who committed themselves to such a position. Mary committed herself to a rejected Christ, and so did others.

These men got an answer after consultation. I would encourage our hearts, dear brethren, to consult. What an answer it was: it says, “they departed into their own country another way”. The answer to consultation brings in another way. It may be a way that you had not seen before the consultation; but after the consultation they saw another way. It was not the way that they had thought about before. I suppose that they had weighed things up; Herod had told them what to do, and that must have weighed very heavily with them. The great authority of that time had told them what they should do, but there must have been something in their souls that led them to think, ‘This is not just right. Here is this little child; what are we going to do?’ That led them to consultation, and there was another way. May that come into our lives and experiences, dear brethren, that there is another way.

What a way it was. The same was true with Joseph later in the chapter: “and having been divinely instructed in a dream, he went away into the parts of Galilee”. That might not have seemed a very wise thing to do; probably it would have been much more attractive to remain where he was. But Joseph was divinely instructed, and he went away into the parts of Galilee; how beautiful it was, and it was all fulfilling Scripture. It says, “and came and dwelt in a town called Nazareth; so that that should be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets, He shall be called a Nazaræan” (v.23). That was the effect of consultation, that he took a way associated with

reproach. It is counsel that says, as it were, “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the ways of death”, Prov.14:12. Joseph was divinely instructed and he was prepared for reproach; and the way he took fulfilled the Scriptures. It was very precious to heaven that these wise men, and Joseph, made their way and were preserved through following an answer given after consultation.

The Lord appeals to the company in Laodicea as a Counsellor. It is clear that they did not feel the need of counsel, and the Lord awakens them to the need of it. The Lord says to them, “Because thou … knowest not that *thou* art …”. A striking feature of these addresses to the assemblies is that the Lord says, “I know”. He knew this company and He knows each of us; He knows the matters in the local company. He says, “I know”, but they did not know. It is fine to have the Counsellor who knows everything, and who has all the qualifications. He is in that position in the worth of His Person. His credentials to be a Counsellor are unmistakable. He says, “I know”: He knows the things that trouble us. He says to Smyrna, “I know thy tribulation and thy poverty” (chap.2:9), but He also knows what we are thinking and saying. He says to Laodicea, “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and am grown rich”. They thought they were rich, but in His eyes, they were “poor, and blind, and naked”. The Counsellor would give us to know His estimation of things.

Have you ever had that from the Lord, His estimation about *you*? It may relate to what you think about yourself. A very successful preacher in the 19th century, Charles Spurgeon, had many converts. At the height of his ministry, he had a dream. A person in the dream told him that he had come to

assess his service. Mr. Spurgeon thought, in his dream, 'you could not have come at a better time. I had many converts last night, the church is prospering, the funds are good'. Then the man in his dream took all that he had done and analysed it; and at the end of it he counted up his zeal for God and the score was very low. He said he realised then how much of himself had entered into his ministry, and how much other things had affected his life. From that point on, his ministry took a new character. He said, 'It was Christ instead of me'.

I bring that in by the way. What is Christ saying to you? In His words to Laodicea, He was providing His assessment. It is not what *you* think about yourself that matters, but what *He* thinks. May we each have some sense of what the Lord thinks. He gave His estimation to each of these assemblies, and He says, "I know". What He says to the assembly in Laodicea is particularly humbling: He says to them, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot"; He says, "Because thou sayest, I am rich". But what does the Lord say? He says, "*thou* art the wretched and the miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; I counsel thee". He is not writing them off; the Counsellor is not doing that; there has never been a case yet where He says it is hopeless. He says, "I counsel thee", and He counsels them "to buy of me gold purified by fire…". He is saying that you have to buy it; it involves expenditure.

What currency would poor people like that have? The Lord had already told them that they were poor, although they said they were rich. He says, as it were, you have not got any currency; yet He counsels them to buy. What would they use to buy gold, and white garments, and eye-salve? The only

currency that will be effective in this situation with God is the currency of self-judgment. That was the currency the Lord wanted them to bring when He says, “I counsel thee to buy”. He did not want their gold or their riches or anything that they could bring of themselves. The Lord says, ‘I want you to buy’, “that thou mayest be rich; and white garments, that thou mayest be clothed”. It is not what we would clothe ourselves in: what the Lord has in mind is what divine love would clothe us in. The Lord has wonderful clothing for believers. It says, “Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness”, Ps.132:9. Another scripture says, “for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness”, Isa.61:10. The saints will be decked with the garments of salvation in a day to come. It is very beautiful to see, at the end of Isaiah, how He will clothe Israel with those garments of beauty. But here He is counselling these persons to buy what is valuable to Him. Among these is “and eye-salve … that thou mayest see”. They would see things differently: instead of seeing what *they* thought they were, they would see what *God* thought about them, and they would be there in new clothing, in white garments.

May we be encouraged, dear brethren, to make room for divine counsel, to make room for God’s guidance. As I say, it is in the Father, it is in Christ and it is in the Spirit; but it is outside of ourselves. May we have grace to listen to divine counsel, for Christ’s name’s sake.

Word in a meeting for ministry, Kirkcaldy

21 September 2004

Bert Taylor

GOD'S PERSONAL APPEAL TO YOU

Acts 2:22-24,32-41; Revelation 1:17,18;
Romans 10:8,9

God is speaking tonight in the glad tidings to every man, woman and child. Wherever they may be, God is announcing glad tidings to men. He is not speaking to the mass of men: He is speaking to people individually. In the glad tidings it is you, individually, to whom God is speaking. I want to impress upon you the need for each one of us, young and old, to have a link with the Lord Jesus as our Saviour. I quoted the line of the hymn we sang:

'The Saviour, Jesus, who is He?' (Hymn 34)

Do you know Him? You might say, 'I have heard the story of the gospel many times'. But can you say, 'He is the One who died for me'? The gospel is intensely individual, and each one of us must have to do with the Lord Jesus. He does not turn anyone aside. Look through the gospels, and you will find that He was there for every one. When the children were brought to the Lord Jesus, the disciples pushed them away, and Jesus says, "Suffer the little children to come to me", Mark 10:14. Oh, what an appeal tonight, to every one from the youngest to the oldest: the Lord Jesus wants to have to do with you. He wants to have to do with you about your salvation.

You may say, 'There is the matter of my sins', and that must come up, because God is a holy God, and He will not bypass one sin, not one. You take account of Adam and Eve in the garden. They were told by God not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But Satan enticed Eve and she took the fruit and ate, and gave it to Adam and he ate. That was disobedience; that was sin. We all have our own

thoughts as to what sin is, but sin is really your mind against God's mind. Man's mind has certain things in view, and when people pursue their own mind, their own will, that will end up in what is contrary to God's mind, which is sin. There are other sins – there are serious, heinous crimes; but it all comes under one title, 'sin'. The Scripture says, "by one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death", Rom.5:12. We have been speaking about "The first man Adam" (1 Cor.15:45), and that is all he has left us: sin and death. The whole matter of sin and death must be met in the glad tidings, because sin is what separates you from a righteous and holy God, and the result of sin is death, which is upon all. But in the glad tidings we learn of how that whole matter has been met.

I read these scriptures in the Acts because they deal with facts, undeniable facts. It is very important that we lay hold of these facts, because God is drawing your attention to them, so that you might respond to what God is saying and come into the joy of salvation. In the passage we read, persons were pricked in heart. Is your heart pricking you tonight, in the glad tidings? These persons were pricked in heart because of what Peter had announced – "This Jesus has God raised up". They had put Him to death, and – although we know that it was by the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God", and that death could not overtake the Lord Jesus, that He laid down His life – nevertheless it is also the case that the whole race was responsible, and so you and I are responsible for the death of the Lord Jesus. It was by wicked men that He was slain. It is an awful thing to carry that burden of guilt, but the Lord Jesus has met every liability; He has met the whole matter of sin and sins to God's entire satisfaction.

For the Lord Jesus to meet that matter, He had to go to Calvary's cross. How He suffered on the cross! You think of the nails in His hands and His feet, you think of man's wickedness; and He was made the object of scorn. They did that to my Saviour, but these sufferings at men's hands did not save you or me. But think of the hours of darkness when He was made sin, at the hands of a holy and righteous God who would not pass by one sin, when the Lord Jesus had to suffer in these three hours of darkness, and at the end of it there was that cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", Matt.27:46. There He was, truly alone, the great Sin-bearer, the sinless One, "Him who knew not sin … made sin for us, that *we* might become God's righteousness in him", 2 Cor.5:21. He has met the full weight of sins, and sin. Sin is never forgiven, it is condemned; and is set aside and is finished in the death of Christ. But your sins and my sins can be forgiven. Is that not a wonderful thing? They can be forgiven because the price has been paid. We sang as to the blood being shed: that was the price that was paid. What a cost! I ask the question, Are you under the shelter of the blood of Jesus? What a wonderful matter to come under the shelter of the shed blood of Jesus.

John in his epistle says, "if any one sin, we have a patron with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous", 1 John 2:1. That is the One who never sinned. Do you know Him? Only persons who know Him as their Saviour can say that He is their advocate, or patron, with the Father. But John also says, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin" (chap.1:7). Have you ever thought about that, thought about the fact that His blood cleanses us from all sin? That stands for all eternity, that we come into blessing in the value of the blood of Jesus.

Where we read, it says, “ye, by the hand of lawless men, have crucified and slain”. Then it says, “Whom God has raised up”. Then it is put even more clearly, “This Jesus has God raised up, whereof all *we* are witnesses”. The resurrection is not a fable. I once met a clergyman, and I spoke to Him about the resurrection, and he said, ‘It is a nice story’. It is not just a nice story. Your salvation depends upon it: “if Christ be not raised … ye are yet in your sins”, 1 Cor.15:17. That poor man was still in his sins; he did not know the value of the resurrection.

God’s valuation of the work of Christ is witnessed to in the resurrection. The work of Christ on the cross was completed, and the Lord Jesus bowed His head and delivered up His spirit, and entered the realm of death. The matter of sins was one thing, but the penalty was another thing. Death was the penalty for sin, and He met the penalty in full by entering into death. What a glorious Person: He is the One in whom sin was not. There was no germ of sin there, and it is only where sin is that death can occur. And here the Lord Jesus in His grace took on every matter, including the penalty. You remember the words of God, “in the day that thou eatest of it thou shalt certainly die” (Gen.2:17); and the judgment: “For dust thou art; and unto dust shalt thou return”, Gen.3:19. That penalty stands against every sinner, but the Lord Jesus has met it, and if you accept the Lord Jesus tonight, you come into the good of it. Death has no claim over you as a believer in Christ; death takes you right into His presence. Is that not wonderful? The believer, if he dies, is immediately in the presence of Christ.

How great is the work of Christ. He has met every outstanding matter to God’s entire satisfaction.

Is it to your satisfaction? Does it meet your need? If you are still in your sins, accept the Lord Jesus tonight. Do not delay: there is an urgency in the glad tidings. Let me tell you something that bears on what we are speaking about. In London, many years ago, brothers used to arrange special gospel preachings, and they were held on a Friday night. A hall was hired, and brethren asked work colleagues and relatives to come to hear the glad tidings. The name of the brother arranging the gospel preachings was on the card that was given out to invite people to them, and the address was care of the brethren's meeting room. One night, the police arrived at the meeting room and asked if the brother named was there. He was, and he explained that the cards had been handed out to invite people to gospel preachings. The brother asked the policeman why he was interested in the card. The policeman said, 'Well, there was a young woman who must have been at one of these preachings, because this card was found among her possessions. On her way home on Friday night there was a traffic accident – she was struck by a bus and was killed'. The brother asked to see the card. On the back, at the bottom, these words had been written – presumably by the young woman after listening to the glad tidings: 'I'll take my chance'. Oh, the horror of having an opportunity to come into blessing, but deciding to take your chance. The gospel preacher cannot give you a second chance: "behold, now is the well-accepted time; behold, now the day of salvation", 2 Cor.6:2. There is urgency in the glad tidings to accept Jesus as your own personal Saviour. And if you accept the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, sitting in your seat, you are fit for heaven. Whatever may happen, you are fit for heaven. What a wonderful thing! Such is the greatness of the work

of Christ, He has satisfied God in regard of sin, and He is available as the Saviour now in the glad tidings.

Peter continues in his preaching to these people in Jerusalem and says, “having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which *ye* behold and hear”. Then further on it says, “Let the whole house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him, this Jesus whom *ye* have crucified, both Lord and Christ”. That is a wonderful thing: Jesus having completed the whole work of salvation, primarily for God, God is offering it to you as a way out, a way of escape from the guilt and power of sin, and a way into blessing. Jesus has been made “both Lord and Christ”. As Lord, you come under His sway, His direction; and as Christ, He is God’s anointed, He is there in glory and having been raised from the dead, meaning that He is living, He lives to die no more.

Where I read in Revelation we have a judicial scene. John the writer says, “And when I saw him I fell at his feet as dead”. What do you think of the grace of the Lord Jesus speaking to John? It says, “he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; *I* am the first and the last”. That is the grace of the Saviour; He would say that to you tonight if you accept Him: “Fear not”. Think of Him putting His right hand on you; He is claiming you; He says, “*I* am the first and the last”. He is the beginning and the end. He is “the first”: no-one comes before Him, and as “last”, no-one comes after Him. He is the only One, He stands in all His distinctiveness; He has been into death; and now He is the living One. He says to John, “I became dead, and behold, I am living to the ages of ages”. The glad tidings, and your salvation, depend on Him and they last while Jesus lives. He is

living in the power of indissoluble life (Heb.7:16), and as a believer that is your prospect – an eternity with Christ. What a future! It can start today if you accept the Lord Jesus as your own personal Saviour.

As I look round the room, I see many who have taken the Lord Jesus as their personal Saviour, and they have also received the gift of the Holy Spirit. There are great gifts in the glad tidings; there is the forgiveness of sins: that is what is said where we read in the Acts: "for remission of sins". By the forgiveness of sins, you are set free, all your burdens are gone, because the Lord Jesus has borne them. He is the One who has given Himself for me. He has given Himself for others, but tonight in the gospel preaching it is *you* who are the object of the appeal; the glad tidings are towards *you*. I would appeal to you to accept Jesus as your own personal Saviour.

It says, "and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". You need the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Luke 11 the Lord says that the Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him (v.13), and in Acts 5 Peter says, "the Holy Spirit also, which God has given to those that obey him" (v.32). Praying is one of the first features in a believer – ask the Father for the gift of the Holy Spirit. What a wonderful thing that is – a divine Person who takes up residence in you: "for he abides with you, and shall be in you", John 14:17. Then the Spirit guides us into all the truth (John 16:13). You need the Holy Spirit; the believer needs the Holy Spirit, and He guides you into all the truth.

To return to our scripture in Revelation, the Lord says of Himself, "and have the keys of death and of hades". The Lord Jesus entered into the realm of death. It did not overtake Him; He went into death and there He was, for three days in the heart of the

earth (Matt.12:40). He took the keys of death and hades out of the hand of Satan, so to speak, and He now has them, and Satan is a defeated foe. Through all these four thousand years up to Christ coming in, man was living in fear of death all his life – "those who through fear of death through the whole of their life were subject to bondage", Heb.2:15. But now the fear of death has been removed because Christ has the keys of death and of hades. The Lord has control of it. In John 5, every one is going to hear the voice of the Son of God (v.25). The believer has part in the first resurrection; then there is the second resurrection when people will be raised for judgment. Oh, flee to the city of refuge; flee to the Lord Jesus tonight, and be safe, free from judgment. He has the keys of death and of hades, and "all who are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall go forth" (vv.28,29). How blessed to have part in the first resurrection.

You may say, 'How do I accept the Lord Jesus as my Saviour?' I remember wanting to accept the Lord Jesus as Saviour and I did not know how to do it, or what to say. I was eight years old, and after a preaching a brother spoke to me; he just gave me a nudge. He said, 'Make it tonight, lad', and I accepted the Lord Jesus as my Saviour, and He has never let me down. Oh, what a Saviour He is. But what is the way of salvation? The verse of scripture that I read in Romans sets it out very simply: "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord" – a very simple thing, accepting Jesus as Lord and confessing Him as your Saviour – "and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from among the dead, thou shalt be saved". Oh, dear friend, it is so simple tonight to believe in your heart that God has raised Him from among the dead. Not only has God raised Him, He

has seated Him in glory; and you are to confess Him as Lord. Confess Him tonight, come out and say, 'I accept the Lord Jesus as my Saviour, I believe that God has raised Him from among the dead'. And what you find is that you are saved; it is conscious knowledge because you are believing in your heart.

I would appeal to every one, young and old, that if you have not yet accepted the Lord Jesus as your own personal Saviour, do so tonight, and come out in confession. Your heart will be filled with joy; the saints will be filled with joy; all heaven will be rejoicing. You remember in Luke 15, when the lost sheep was found, what rejoicing there was; there will be rejoicing in heaven over one repenting sinner (vv.7,10). That is what Peter said in his preaching in Acts 2. They said, "What shall we do, brethren?" Peter did not say, 'Do nothing; just sit and it will come to pass'. No, he says, "Repent". What is repentance? Repentance is a complete change of mind: you become like Job, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (chap.42:6). Dust and ashes shows that he had come to a thorough judgement of what he was as a sinner and also accepted God's judgement on the one that had sinned. The Lord Jesus met it all at the cross and God is entirely satisfied. It is a finished work that we are presenting tonight; God is satisfied with the work of Jesus and He is offering it to you on the basis of you accepting the Lord Jesus as your Saviour.

May you do so tonight, for His name's sake.

Preaching of the word of God, Dundee
21 June 2026

Alex Mair

“THE GOOD WAY”

Jeremiah 6:16 to “your souls”; John 14:6

I would like to speak about “the good way” as it is put in our scripture in Jeremiah. The verse gives God’s words; “the good way” is set forward from God’s side. God also speaks of “the ancient paths”. This verse was on the daily calendar a few weeks ago and I was struck by it. There are many ways in the world, numberless ways. Many ways are put in front of us, whatever we do or wherever we go, or whatever we occupy ourselves with. People like to have options, but in this verse, God is putting before us “the good way”. It is presented as something we are to ask for: “Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the ancient paths, which is the good way, and walk therein”. We are to prove what it is to walk in this “good way”, and then to “find rest for your souls”. I believe that doing so requires us to go through a process.

The scripture in John speaks of “the way” that is in our Lord Jesus: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life”. For us, it is a fundamental thing that “the ancient paths” and “the good way” are in Christ. They must be in Him. Everything that is for our blessing and for our rest, and everything that is for the pleasure and delight of God, is in Christ. The way of salvation is in Him – we know that. The scripture in Acts says, “And salvation is in none other” (chap.4:12). The way of salvation is in the Lord Jesus. That scripture goes on to say, “for neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved”. It is clear that the way of salvation, both for our eternal salvation and our present salvation, is in the Lord Jesus. He is “the way, and the truth, and the life”.

We can see how this applies to our pathways here. We need to seek the presence of the Lord Jesus, and prove what it is to be in Him. We spoke recently about John 15, as to abiding in Him (vv.1-10). It conveys the sense of being connected to Him. Surely we have proved the blessing of that, of abiding in Him. In Jeremiah, God in His word is exhorting us to "Stand in the ways and see". It is good to have an assessment of the way, to have a right view of the way. In the history of the nation of Israel, at times many different paths were taken, and the result was very sorrowful. At the end of this verse we have, "But they said, We will not walk therein". The people chose their own way. It was self-will; God's word was "Stand in the ways and see … and walk therein". But the people said, "We will not walk therein".

In my circumstances, my will may take me in many different ways, but God's word is, "Stand in the ways and see". We are to assess these ways, and we know that God has given resources for that. Our consciences would help us, but greater than that, we "have the unction … and ye know all things", 1 John 2:20. That is, we have the gift of the Holy Spirit within us to help us to discern. Surely the Spirit helps us to "Stand in the ways and see". It is attractive. Then it says, "and ask for the ancient paths". That is, we are to enquire as to this way. We will receive the Spirit's help, but we are to ask, ask for confirmation and guidance: "ask for the ancient paths". These things are not new; they exist and they do not change; the ancient paths are not subject to modification. We were noticing recently that the people were to "walk in the law of God, which had been given by Moses the servant of God, and to keep and do all the commandments of Jehovah our Lord", Neh.10:29. The standard that the people were to

follow is given by God: it has not changed. In Old Testament times, the law was God's righteous standard. It all pointed forward to the greatness of the Lord Jesus; everything points to Him. And everything for God is found in our Lord Jesus.

These "ancient paths" do not change day by day. The word comes to us currently, freshly, but its import is the same: it points to Christ Jesus; it is in Him: "ask for the ancient paths, which is the good way". There are many ways in this world, as I have said, but "broad the way that leads to destruction", Matt 7:13. The enemy would love to tempt us into paths that are wide, things that are appealing naturally, things that are easy. But the wide gate and the broad way "leads to destruction". We must enter in through the narrow gate. That might refer to our eternal salvation; and once our souls are saved, it remains true that "the good way", the way through which we find rest for our souls, is "narrow … and straitened" (v.14). That is for now, for the present time; it is for our present salvation.

What is "the good way" that God is setting before us? We must find it, and then the exercise is to "walk therein". Perhaps sometimes we have known the way that God has set before us, the way given by God, but have we walked in it? We must do things for ourselves: we have to find the way, and we have to walk in it. Scripture exhorts us to "walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye have been called", Eph.4:1. Where does that pathway, that calling, lead? It leads to our eternal home; the calling is not related to some destination on this earth, but it is to the glory, to the soon-coming day when we will have bodies of glory. What a prospect that is. We are to walk in the way and walk worthy of our calling.

Then “ye shall find rest for your souls”. I think it means that as we walk in the way, we will prove blessing; we will find rest. The passage in Matthew warns that “broad the way that leads to destruction”, but the exhortation is to walk in the straitened way that leads to life. What a privilege it is to know that way; and as we prove it, we will find rest for our souls. We will not find rest in the ways of this world, but we will find rest in the way that God commends.

The Lord says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life”. It is all in Him. What I have said might sound difficult, but it is in Christ Jesus, in the One whom God has set forth as the Object for faith. He is “the leader and completer of faith”, Heb.12:2. The Lord Jesus has gone before, He walked this scene and faced every opposition, and was tempted in “all things in like manner, sin apart”, Heb.4:15. He faced every circumstance that we could face in this world, and was superior to it all. He has completely conquered the devil, and He has done that for us. In Him is “the way, and the truth, and the life”. I cannot really speak of the depth of these things, they are a far greater subject than I could speak of, but it is appealing that all of this is in Christ Jesus. The way, the truth and the life were in Him when He was here, and they are in Him where He is now, where He is honoured, where He has His place of glory. That surely is the way that God sets before us; it is in Christ where He is given His place.

We want to be where Christ is given His place, where He is honoured. In the Old Testament, there are references to the “place which Jehovah your God will choose to cause his name to dwell there”, Deut.12:11, and also to “the place which Jehovah your God will choose out of all your tribes to set his

name there, his habitation shall ye seek" (v.5). We would desire to provide an area where Christ is given His rightful place. I think we have proved something of that together, a circle where He loves to come and present Himself. If we are truly in "the good way", if we abide in Him who is "the way, and the truth, and the life", we will find the rest for our souls of which God speaks.

We can be thankful that, in the grace of God, as believers we have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit, we have the unction, there are these resources given of God so that we can "Stand in the ways and see". May we prove the greatness of what God has given so that we can "ask for the ancient paths, which is the good way, and walk therein".

May it be our portion, for His name's sake.

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