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Living Water

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THE MAN OF FAITH AND HIS BLESSING

Hebrews 11: 8-10

Genesis 12: 1-4

8-10

13: 1-13

14: 11-16

19: 27-33

I would like to speak to you this evening about two men, — a man of faith and a man of sight. We read in Hebrews 11 “By faith Abraham, being called, obeyed to go out into the place which he was to receive for an inheritance”. Abraham walked by faith while Lot did not. I draw your attention by way of contrast to the outcome of the lives of these two men. We first see Lot as moving with Abraham. When we come to Genesis 12, when Abraham moves, Lot goes with him; it says in verse 4, “And Lot went with him”. It seems that Lot was not moving by faith but moving in the energy of the faith of another. It is a very dangerous thing to move in the energy of the faith of another. I would so desire tonight that we all move in the energy of our personal faith and as such we come to know God and dwell in the land of promise.

We will not enjoy our spiritual inheritance other than on the ground of faith. “We look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are for a time, but the things that are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18). So I would challenge our hearts. What is your outlook? Where are you looking? Are you looking at what can be seen down here or are you looking with the eye of faith at what is in heaven?

Abraham did what God told him. It was a big upheaval, to leave the land of his birth and the people amongst whom he had grown up, and go into a totally unknown land that he had never seen before. We have never seen heaven, have we? Yet we are called to set out to go there and I do trust that everyone here tonight is moving actively in the faith of their own soul before God, because that is the way of blessing. If you move as influenced by others it may be very good; but you may also follow what is bad, as we will see later on. Lot went with Abraham; there is no mention in scripture of Lot moving on his own faith. Peter records in his epistle that Lot was righteous; “Lot vexed his righteous soul” in Sodom. Lot was a believer right enough; but he is typical of a believer who is not walking by faith. I would trust and desire with all my heart that everyone here, myself included, can be found as Abraham, moving by faith.

Abraham was tested and he made mistakes. He did not always move rightly

but he was characterised as moving by faith. He went on into the land, he did what God said, he journeyed and he got to Bethel. Bethel means 'House of God' and he came to the house of God in Canaan. The first thing Abraham does when he gets to Bethel is that he builds an altar. Building an altar is a way of approach to God. Abraham built an altar so he could offer sacrifices to God. You will not find anything in Genesis of Lot building any altars. It seems he was quite content to go along in the faith of Abraham, in the light of Abraham's approach to God, without any real desire or spiritual exercise of his own soul. Any who are on those lines are on dangerous ground.

After this, Abraham moves on because there is a famine in the land. External circumstances intervene and influence Abraham to leave the position of faith that God had placed him in. God directed Abraham to Canaan and God gave no directions to him to leave it. Notice this – Abraham moved on southwards; God did not tell him to. He took it into his own hands. Circumstances intervene often in our lives and we take matters into our own hands when we would do well to wait on God about them. I would commend this to you because I have made mistakes and taken things into my own hands when there has been no real direction from God and I have had to get back to where I have come from.

Abraham went down into Egypt when he should not have done. He had no guidance from God to do so and he went beyond faith and we can see from scripture that he did not prosper. He had no further communication from God while he was down there; it was not until he got back to Bethel that God appeared to him. So the good thing about Abraham, and the wonderful thing about our lives too, is that if we make a mistake, God will bring us back to the point of departure. Abraham "went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, towards the south". They got as far as Bethel and Abraham called on the name of Jehovah. So Abraham having made a mistake is recovered to where God would have him be.

I am not majoring on Abraham's mistakes, because who of us can hold our heads up on that line, but merely want to show you that while desiring to walk by faith you can slip up, you can leave aside that faith and the level can drop. Now the wonderful thing is that he got back. I notice that Lot went up with him so that he must have gone down with him too. When Abraham went away from the path of faith, Lot goes as well. If Abraham goes rightly, Lot follows in that way as well. That is just as it is; if we are not walking by faith, if we are walking in the light of someone else's faith, whatever mistake they make we will make too. Do not be like Lot; be like Abraham. Do move in faith with God. You will be blest and you will be preserved. If Abraham

had only stayed in Canaan he would not have got into trouble in Egypt. If in patience and faith I wait on God He will come in for me where I am. That is an object lesson to us.

So Abraham gets back to the land and now a further problem arises. It is not the circumstances of the world this time; it is the circumstances of the two men. They are both very rich. They have a lot of cattle, a lot of tents – you can read about it in Genesis 13 – and the land could not support them. A crisis arose and relationships between their people degenerated. Sad it is when such circumstances arise but Abraham takes a good lead in resolving the problem. Effectively he says, ‘Whatever direction you choose I will take the other. I do not mind’. Abraham takes a firm stand here and Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of the Jordan that it was thoroughly watered. He did not see the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah but the nice well-watered plain of Jordan, which would do fine for his possessions, for his sheep, his cattle and all that he has. He sees a nice comfortable lifestyle and he makes a decision and, alas, he makes the wrong one. Firstly, he sees it, he lifts up his eyes – he is walking by sight, not walking by faith.

How easy it is to start walking by sight. You take account maybe of fewness of numbers, maybe of lack of fellowship, maybe problems in your local gathering, and immediately your eye gets off the Lord and on to other things, maybe even things that are good in themselves. Or perhaps someone gets on well and it causes a bit of envy. Things can happen in our lives, in our christian companies, in our relationships together, and it can cause friction. But Abraham says, ‘Whatever you want to do, I do not mind. I will accept whatever is sent along’. Abraham ends upon the high ground; he ends up in the mountains where probably it was more difficult to get a living anyway, but he is quite content to be with God in that area. Lot goes down to the well-watered plains of Jordan and it looks very nice and I guess Lot thought it would be a good life. I do not think for a moment he had any other intention than providing for his family. Now we are tested on that. Make sure that in providing what is right you do not get your eye on the world in order to do it. Keep walking by faith, just as Abraham did. Even if things get hard, even if life is not easy, even if things become more difficult, continue to walk by faith.

The next thing you find is that Lot is not only in the plain of the Jordan but pitching his tents as far as Sodom. He is getting far too near to a dangerous environment for his own good. What started with a nice idea of providing for his cattle and his family ends up in disaster. The next thing you read, if you trace the history of Lot, is that he finds himself right in Sodom. He is in

the gate of Sodom; he becomes one of the town councillors, I suppose. He gets thoroughly involved in a place where he should never have been. It leads to disaster; he loses most of his family, he loses his wife and it ends with his descendants being an harassment to the people of God in generations to come. That move of Lot was not only disaster to him; hundreds of years later it was a snare and a hindrance to the people of God that had come out of Egypt and were on their way to the land. Balak was descended from Moab, from Lot. You will see that he hired Balaam to curse the people of Israel and it did not work. At the end of the book of Numbers you have two peoples set against the people of Israel and they were both descendants of Lot.

Lot is rescued from Sodom. He is dragged out of the world system and he loses his wife and family on the way. Abraham meanwhile is still up in the high ground and in Genesis 19:27 he went to the place where he had stood before Jehovah. Abraham had rescued Lot once before when he was taken captive (see Genesis chapter 14:14-16). Then, in chapter 19 we find Abraham has been interceding with God on Lot's behalf and God heard his intercessory prayer. As a result Lot was rescued out of Sodom. What a shining example Abraham is. He has the outwardly more difficult life but all the time he is walking by faith.

Abraham went to the land God told him of but he never owned anything there other than a place in which to bury his wife. So we, as christians, are living as strangers in the world and, as such, we too are waiting for a city. What a wonderful city it will be! The day of display will be when Jerusalem from heaven is displayed. Now we are to be like Abraham; we are to dwell, so to speak, in tents. The believer has no abiding place here. Abraham lived in a tent and the tent could be taken down and moved on. He did not settle down here. It is very tempting, isn't it, to settle down in this world? Abraham dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob. He had his family round him and they were dwelling together in tents. It is a wonderful thing to have christian fellowship. We can dwell together, so to speak, in tents. We can be in this world but not of it and we can enjoy fellowship together because of the One who has called us into the fellowship of His Son. "God is faithful, by whom ye have been called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" - that is how Paul begins his first epistle to the Corinthians.

I would like to be like Abraham; I would not like to end up like Lot. He virtually lost everything; he came out with his life only. He lost his wife and he lost most of his family.

I would commend you to study the history of Abraham and be like him and walk by faith. That is how we are called to walk today. There are only two

things in christianity that you can see. One is baptism and the other is the Lord's Supper; the loaf and the cup are physical things that you can see. Baptism is a physical act; you can see it. All else is by faith. You cannot see the church, can you? You can see various ones who belong to the church of God and some are here today but you cannot actually see all who belong to the church. The Lord knows them that are His. That is a wonderful point for faith. The Lord knows everyone; I do not, you do not, we cannot. But we have our responsible pathway here below to walk by faith. It is not an easy pathway; the christian pathway never has been an easy one, because by nature we do not find the walk of faith easy. We like to be able to reason out what we believe, and in christianity there are many things you have to accept by faith. You have to accept what God says; you may not understand it. I doubt if Abraham ever understood why he had been called out of Mesopotamia. He was called and he obeyed by faith. He did not question God or say, 'When I can understand why I have been called, I will go'. He did not query God. He did what he was called to do. When God speaks we are to do what He tells us. There are things in christianity we need to search out; I am not speaking of those things. I am speaking of having to do with God and finding His will in our lives and it is all by faith, not by sight at all. Lot went by sight. He saw that Abraham was called by God and he went too. When Abraham went right he followed; when Abraham made a mistake he made one too. Eventually the point came when he had to make a choice. Lot made the wrong choice and it ended up in disaster.

I feel very burdened, particularly for my younger brethren. You may in your life be faced with some difficult choices. Move by faith, I beg you. Consider well what would be pleasing to God, what God would have you do. Seek His mind and do it in faith, however difficult it may be. You will be blessed. Abraham was blessed; he was materially blessed because that was the way God indicated blessing in those days. As christians our blessings are spiritual, we are blessed "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). We are not promised material blessings or enrichment but we have the richest spiritual blessing made ours and we are to walk in the light of our heavenly calling. We are called from earth to heaven.

Abraham's calling was a type of ours; he was called out of Mesopotamia into Canaan, out of Mesopotamia where there was idolatry and the world's system into the place of heavenly blessing. That is our calling too. We are called to enjoy heavenly things in the company of a heavenly people. That is our portion. May we be like Abraham, moving by faith.

Marcus Chapman

An address at Preston, April 2005.

PRESENTABLE TO CHRIST AT HIS COMING

Luke	10:33-35
Romans	6:14
Colossians	3:1-15
Ephesians	5:25-27

In suggesting this passage in Luke 10, I was especially thinking of the word of the Samaritan to the innkeeper: “Take care of him, and whatsoever thou shalt expend more, I will render to thee on my coming back”. Then the last passage we read speaks of the Lord presenting the church to Himself, glorious. The innkeeper of Luke 10, typical of the Holy Spirit, would have had in mind that the man brought to the inn and taken care of, would be presentable to the Samaritan on his return.

How the Samaritan found the man on the Jericho road was one thing; he found him in a very sorry state. That is very much as Christ finds any one of us. But the Samaritan took him to the inn with the intention that a process might go on in the man so that when the Samaritan returned he would be presentable.

In Luke 10 the area of the inn has been likened to the local christian company and the activity of the innkeeper in it speaking of the work of the Holy Spirit. It opens up to us the possibilities as someone comes under the service of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. We are in the time when the Lord is away, but the Spirit is here and a resource has been left in view of this work of preparation going on in each one of us so that when the Lord comes back there are features that will be suitable for the time of presentation.

The situation described in the parable in Luke 10 has often been likened to the way that Saul of Tarsus was brought among the disciples at Damascus. He was brought into a circle where there was the spirit of helpfulness, activated by the Spirit of God. Saul of Tarsus grew in that area. It was not only spiritual help that Saul received, but there was practical protection; he was let down over the wall in a basket. In Paul’s mind his conversion stood out in his memory, but also the care that the brethren had for him in that they protected him from the enemy. When he speaks of this incident to the Corinthians, he follows it with a short doxology: “The God and Father of the Lord Jesus knows—he who is blessed for ever—that I do not lie ...” (2 Corinthians 11:31–33). That would show how important the practical care was.

The Lord said to His own as He was going away, “I will beg the Father, and he will give you another Comforter” (John 14:16). During the Lord’s absence the Comforter is here. Christ serves on high but the Comforter is here

preparing persons like us and many, many more for that day when we will be presented suitable to Christ in every way.

The Spirit has come to fill our hearts with Christ. Think of it practically; what would the conversation be about in the inn? Is it not going to be about the blessedness of the Samaritan, the wonderful character of Christ? It is interesting that Mary listening to the Lord's word follows this section in Luke, and then, at the beginning of chapter 11, we find the Lord teaching His disciples to pray. These are things that lead to an enhanced appreciation of Christ. The Spirit of God would use the resources of heaven in nurturing the work of God in our souls so that we are presentable to Christ. Sometimes people try and keep Christians going with worldly entertainment and things like that. There is nothing at all of that envisaged here.

When the Lord was about to leave His own He says: "I leave peace with you; I give my peace to you" (John 14:27). Later He speaks of leaving His joy with them. The Lord left certain things that the Spirit of God would take up in view of supplying all that was needed by Christ's own in the time of His absence.

If the innkeeper in the parable represents the Holy Spirit, as we are applying it today, it would present a challenge to us as to how this would work out in conditions today. Each local Christian company is to be an area where way is made for the Spirit of God so that persons are cared for effectively. In the Acts we see how the Holy Spirit operated in persons and companies to bring about blessing, help and formation according to Christ. It is a challenge for us in relation to our own companies.

The innkeeper was left with two denarii and there have been many applications of this, but it is certain that they speak of the resource available for the care of the man. Two such resources that the Christian has are those mentioned earlier – prayer and the word of the Lord. Mary was sitting at His feet and listening to His word. If we are going to grow and develop, surely it is by listening to His word. Then there is prayer – a link with heaven. The disciples say, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).

Paul speaks to Timothy of being, "nourished with the words of the faith and of the good teaching" (1 Timothy 4:6). Those things would be characteristic of the inn. It should be characteristic of our local meetings. What is in the innkeeper's vision is the day of the coming back of the Samaritan. Quite often we lose the vision of the return of the Lord but if we have it, there is a desire to provide conditions where souls are nourished and are suited for Christ's return.

The innkeeper would want to get this man on his feet, want to have him standing up and walking in the Lord. That is why I read from Romans because the letter to the Romans provides the elements of the fundamental truths that go into being able to stand up and walk “in newness of life”. The believer is given a new standing as trusting in Christ, but the challenge is, ‘How am I going to walk?’

Romans 6 teaches us that this walk is to be different from the world’s walk. The light of Christ as having come out of death is to influence the walk of the believer here so that we walk in the Lord. We might have seen the man spoken of in the parable in Luke 10 walking down that road to Jericho, but now his walk would be entirely different. We get a view in Romans 6 of Christ raised from among the dead by the glory of the Father. That is to take hold of the believer. The glory of the Father that raised Christ is really a great attraction to help the believer in his walk here. Things are difficult. Paul says at the start of the chapter, “should we continue in sin that grace might abound?” There is still the potential to fall prey to sin and to the world, but he says, ‘Have your eye on the Man who has come out of death and it will help you to walk in newness of life’.

“Newness of life” would have been seen in Joshua and Caleb in the wilderness; their walk would have been different. They walked as having seen and tasted something of that which God had promised to bring them into.

The teaching of Romans is very interesting. The foundation on which the believer stands is the work of Christ; His blood is the sure foundation of the righteousness of God: the believer stands on that. Therefore in God’s eye each one is covered with the righteousness of Christ. That is our standing. What an incentive that is to us to walk here and reflect that.

In Romans 6 we read, “We have been buried therefore with him by baptism unto his death...” It is the realisation that Christ has died, and that if I am to be associated with Him, that morally involves my death as well. It is to be evident that I am identified with Him in His death. It is the appreciation practically of what Christ’s death means as far as this world is concerned. Christ has no place here and the believer is to recognise that in relation to our path through this world

In Colossians we find the exhortation to “Put on bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness...” It is a reflection of the features of Christ. In the epistle, Paul points us to the Head of the body. The features that belong to the Head in heaven are to be reflected in the body here. We are told to “Put off the old man with his deeds” (Colossians 3:9). The only way to do that is to keep

looking at the Lord Jesus. We see the features of lowliness, kindness and the like in Him and it makes each of us realise that we are not like that, yet we have the desire to be like that. That leads us to pray.

The things that we are to put on do not mix with what we are exhorted to put off. Paul says: “put off, ye also, all these things, wrath, anger, malice, blasphemy, vile language” and so on; then he says, “put on ...”. It is like the christian’s dress. It has been said that the body here should be a description of the Head above.

Verse 13 speaks of the relations between christians. We are to be, “forbearing, forgiving, if any should have a complaint against any...” It is beautiful to see the way the Lord handled difficult situations amongst His disciples and the skill He used. Something of that was to be found at Colosse. The spirit we demonstrate towards one another shows the measure of appreciation that we have of the grace of Christ that has met us. It is, “even as the Christ has forgiven you, so also do ye”. How many times am I to forgive my brother? What was the answer? “Seventy times seven”. “If any should have a complaint against any”. I believe that if that had been followed a lot of our problems would have disappeared.

It is interesting to see that the same thing comes into the epistle to the Ephesians: “as God also in Christ has forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32). Paul then goes on to speak about being imitators of God as beloved children. All this enters into being ready for presentation to Christ.

What a matter it is that Christ loves the church and serves it. In Ephesians it says, “that he might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of water by the word”. That goes on all the time, “that he might present the assembly to himself glorious”. The background to it is the Spirit’s work.

This is to have an impact on our lives. Paul gives a very practical list of features in Ephesians 5 showing how we are to behave in our natural relationships and then he brings it up to this tremendous level: “even as the Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it”. If you get a sense of this, of what the Lord is doing, what a difference it would make to our relationships down here.

Well, it is a long journey, you might say, from the inn in Luke 10 to Ephesians 5. I was just impressed with it. May we all be more ready for the time of presentation.

Alex Mowat

Based on a Bible reading at St Annes, 18th July 2004.

**A SELECTION OF THE POEMS OF E. H. CHATER
(1845-1915)**

CHRIST JESUS ONLY

As born in sin, I lived for years,
Like many thousands do;
Unconscious of my lost estate;
Of Christ I nothing knew.

But blinded by God's enemy,
I lived as I was born;
My soul scarce caused me once
a thought
Till light began to dawn.

I knew I sinned, but what of that?
My neighbours did the same.
I thought I was as good as they;
I had as good a name.

I injured no man wilfully,
I tried to do my best;
But still I felt a dread at times,
I was not quite at rest.

I should have gone on longer still,
And never could have known
The blessed truth I now enjoy,
But for His grace alone.

So hearken now, turn not away,
But hear what God has done;
For one who was an enemy
Is now, by grace, a son!

Yes, Jesus, long, long while ago,
For sinners came to die;
Through weakness He was crucified,
By power raised on high.

As Lord and Christ He's seated now
At God's right hand in heaven;
By faith in Him I know I'm saved
And all my sins forgiven.

I do not think, or hope, but know,
For all there was to do,
God's word declares was done by
Him;
I rest there, will not you?

With me then you will share the joy
Of pardon full and free;
For God's salvation is like God –
It's life and liberty.

And soon the Lord Himself will come,
And call us to the air,
With mighty voice and trump of God;
When we shall meet Him there.

In glory bright we then shall see
Our Saviour face to face;
Be like Him – share eternity –
Through works? No! wondrous grace.

1873

HIS RICH GRACE

Trusting in the glorious Saviour
I have rest;
Peace which passeth understanding:
Oh! How blest!
Soon to see the glory beaming
In His face;
With Him share eternal blessing:
Oh! what grace!

Now to trace His blessed footsteps
Till that day:
Till He comes and all His loved ones
Calls away.
May we ever find our joy then
In His will.
Though we're tried, and Jesus tarry,
Waiting still.

Learning, now, in sweet communion,
How to live;
Sweeter joys than earth affordeth
He doth give.
Known when He's our only object
There above;
And our hearts find all their treasure
In His love.

Soon our Lord Himself is coming
In the air,
And His joy on high for ever
We shall share.
Dwelling there to endless ages
Through His blood,
We shall own the grace unbounded
Of our God.

1885

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Lord, how blest as on we journey,
Blest to hear Thy gracious word,
Bidding us Thyself remember,
Touching our heart's deepest chord.

To break bread we come together,
Oh, how blest the assembling
place!
Heartfelt praise to Thee outpouring,
Fruit of Thy rich-flowing grace.

Lord, our souls in worship ponder
Thy deep agony and woe;
Thou hast suffered for God's glory,
And hast overcome the foe.

Seated, Lord, in rest, we thank Thee,
Feasting on the bread and wine,
Joying in Thy blessed presence,
Happy, for we know we're Thine.

With adoring hearts we worship,
Bow before Thee, Jesus, Lord,
Now on high, Thou, Thou art worthy,
By Thine own to be adored.

Now the promised glory waiting,
Blessed hope of all Thine own,
Thy victorious death announcing,
Lord, till Thou Thyself shall come.

1889

THE DRAG NET

At a pretty watering place in Wales*, I became acquainted with John P..., an old seaman who following an accident that had unfitted him for seafaring had become the harbour master. Often we had John's expertise to manage our boat when we went to explore the natural wonders of the surrounding coast. John was a devoted christian as well as a good sailor. The accident that had made him lame for life had been blessed to his soul. During the weeks of inactivity following it he had come to know himself as a lost sinner, and to know that there is one way of salvation and only one; namely, the precious blood of Christ shed on the cross. John had asked God for forgiveness on account of what the Son of God had suffered and done to save those that were lost.

Having thus come to the cross of Jesus and trusted in His precious blood, he had found peace to his soul; from that day forward he had walked in God's ways, rejoicing in His love, and hoping for the glory that shall be revealed at the coming of the Lord Jesus.

Now among the many thousands of sailors and landsmen, soldiers and civilians who may read this story, I know that there are many in the state of poor John P... before he had his accident.

My friends, let me advise you to consider your danger; you are under the sentence of eternal death because you have broken God's holy laws; indeed you were born under condemnation because you are children of Adam; and "In Adam all die". You know this is true respecting the body and God says that it is "appointed unto all men once to die, and after this the judgement"

Now John P... felt this; and if you feel it as you ought you will ask with true anxiety of mind, "What shall I do to be saved?" The answer to this question is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved".

This is the way that John P... was saved; he came to Jesus trusting in His blood and the work He had done; he found peace with God.

Can you not imitate the conduct of John P...? Trust wholly in Jesus for salvation; forsake your evil ways and seek grace to walk in God's ways. This is the plan to pursue if you wish to be happy here and hereafter.

We were going to explore some part of the coast one morning and were anxious to get there before the turn of the tide. The morning was calm and one of the party had taken out a small muslin net, hoping to catch some of the delicate and beautiful marine creatures that come to the surface in bright weather. Our progress was slow as the tide was against us. 'If you wish to reach the rocks by noon, sir' bawled out John at length, 'you must haul in that there net!'

'Such a small thing as that cannot affect the speed of the boat', I said

'Indeed it does', replied John. 'A piece of rope hanging over the side of a

**Probably Tenby in Pembrokeshire.*

ship retards her progress very perceptibly, and I have seen a Captain quite lose his temper, on seeing a piece of line dragging overboard.'

This is a picture of what many christians are doing. They have by faith commenced the voyage of a new life in Christ; they put up the sails, they row manfully, they strive to steer their course aright; and yet, perhaps, before long, they suffer themselves to be retarded by a hindrance as trifling as a little insect net. They must be "catching crabs", and amusing themselves with the light tenants of the surface of the water, instead of making all speed through it to the haven where they would be. Yet if such things often retard the child of God, they still more often prevent the unconverted from ever entering on the way.

It does not matter much what the thing is that we are doing; if it keeps us from Christ, it will be our destruction. It may be a very small thing. I have seen a sick man at the very borders of the grave; the world seemed shut out – he could not go to it, but it came to him in the shape of the novel, the magazine and the newspaper and when someone came to him with the gospel of God's grace the word was drowned by the love of light reading which choked the word and made it unfruitful.

The jovial companion, the glass of grog, the foolish song, are among the insect nets and pieces of rope hung out, to keep the poor sinner from reaching the haven of rest.

These things seem so pleasant, the sky is so calm, the day so fine; they think not of the future; but a time is coming, a time of storm and darkness, when no vessel will be able to ride out the tempest, unless she be in harbour.

There is an anchor that ought to belong to every man who makes the journey of life. It is spoken of in Hebrews 6:19: it is nothing less than a firm trust in Jesus. This hope is "an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast". One end of the cable is held by the believing sinner on earth: the other is fixed to Christ in heaven. Thither He has gone on behalf of His people; and while He is safe in heaven, and His people put their trust in Him, no storm can part them, no hurricane drive them out to sea; as a ship that has an anchor fixed in a good bottom gradually warps up to it, so the christian is making his way surely to the place of rest, where Jesus is already as Forerunner entered.

Do you enquire how you may get hold of this blessed anchor? God freely offers it to your grasp. Do you ask, 'What title have I to take hold of it?' You have the very best of titles, namely that you are a sinner. That is the peculiarity that qualifies you to put in your claim to Christ. If you could truly say that you were not a sinner, then Christ would indeed be nothing to you, for He declares, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners". But seeing that you are a sinner, and a great one, you are just the one for Jesus; for "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners".

Emily Gosse

HAVE FAITH IN GOD

How prone we are, in moments of pressure and difficulty, to turn the eye to some creature resource! Our hearts are full of human confidence and earthly expectations. We know comparatively little of the deep blessedness of simply looking to God. We are ready to look anywhere and everywhere rather than unto Him. We run to any broken cistern and lean on any broken reed; although we have an exhaustless Fountain and the Rock of Ages ever near.

Yet we have proved times without number that, 'Creature streams are dry'. Man is sure to disappoint us when we look to him. "Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" (Isaiah 2:22) and again, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited" (Jeremiah 17:5-6).

Such is the sad result of leaning upon the creature – barrenness, desolation, disappointment. Like the heath in the desert, there are no refreshing showers, no dew from heaven – nothing but drought and sterility. How can it be otherwise when the heart is turned away from the Lord, the only source of blessing? It lies not within the range of the creature to satisfy the heart. God alone can do this. He can meet our need and satisfy us. He never fails a trusting heart but He must be trusted in reality. What does it profit my brethren, though a man say he trusts in God, if he does not really do so. A sham faith will not do. It must be in deed and truth. Of what use is a faith with one eye upon the Creator and another on the creature? Can God and the creature occupy the same platform? Impossible. It must be God — or the creature and the curse that ever follows creature confidence.

Mark the contrast. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

How blessed! How bright! How beautiful! How delightful to find oneself wholly and absolutely cast upon Him! To be shut up to Him. To have Him filling the entire range of the soul's vision. To find all our springs in him; to be able to say, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be moved" (Psalm 62:5-6).

Note the little word "only". It will not do to say we are trusting in God, while all the time we are actually looking elsewhere. It is much to be feared that we

frequently talk about looking to the Lord, while, in reality, we are expecting our fellow man to help us. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings” (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

How needful to have the heart’s deepest motive, its springs, judged in the presence of God. We are so apt to deceive ourselves by the use of certain phrases that, so far as we are concerned, have no truth whatsoever. The language of faith may be upon our lips, but the heart is full of creature confidence.

Let us be honest. Let us walk in the clear light of God’s presence, where everything is seen as it really is. Let us not rob God of His glory, and our own souls of abundant blessing by the empty profession of dependence upon Him, while the heart is secretly going after some creature stream. Let us not miss the deep joy, peace and blessing, the strength, stability and victory, which faith ever finds in the living God. Oh! Let us have faith in God.

Charles H. Mackintosh

GOD IS NO RESPECTOR OF PERSONS

In this world there is much respect of persons, pride of heart, and the assertion of superiority. These are some of the marks of the flesh; but our Lord Jesus has said, “the flesh profiteth nothing,” Believers in the Lord Jesus need to be warned that they be not overcome by the insidious and subtle attacks of the enemy. In James 2:1-4 we find the following warning: “My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons ... are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?” If our eyes are upon the Lord of glory we shall be preserved from the pride of the Pharisee (the religious man), the glory of the Sadducee (the learned materialist of this world), and from the leaven of the Herodian (the politics and rationalism of this world).

In this day of grace God does not make any difference between one person and another or between nation and nation. All in the natural state are sinners before Him; all are dead in trespasses and sins; all are in the flesh. There is no such thing as ‘good flesh’ or ‘better flesh’. The person who considers themselves to be civilised is as much in the flesh as those they may regard as un-civilised. All are as much condemned before the holy God.

Those who are saved through grace have ceased to belong to this world or to the nations of this world; they belong to the Lord Jesus, and all believers

form, as the apostle Peter says, “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9). It would be very fatal to soul prosperity for believers to shift the ground that God has given them, and be in admiration for that out of which God has delivered them.

The attitude of God at the present time is of blessing for all. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). It is not said in connection with this dispensation of grace that God loved any particular country, continent, nation or people, or that He loved any particular country more. “Whosoever”, the word says, so that all are favoured, and it is open to every one to come and accept this favour. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:4-6, “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all”.

Again, Peter says in Acts 10:34, 35, “of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him”. Some have greater opportunities of hearing and knowing the gospel of God’s grace, and in so far as this is so the greater is their responsibility, “for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more” (Luke 12:48).

However, the gospel might be preached every day next door to a person’s house and still it is possible for the person to be without the gospel, but the gracious God is also converting the hearts of men in forests and deserts away from the vaunting civilisation of man. Wherever there is a soul convicted of sin and in sincere search for salvation, God makes His Son available unto him. In Colossians 1:23 the apostle Paul says of the gospel that it “was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister”. Again in Romans 10:18 he speaks of them that preach the gospel of peace that “their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world”.

In Acts 16:6 Paul and Silas “were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia” (that is, the region at present called Asia Minor), but it is nowhere said that the word was to be preached only in Europe (the term “Europe” does not occur in the Bible), nor is it said that all the servants of God were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. The services of these two servants of God were for the time being immediately required in Macedonia, the harvest there being ready. Because of the work of our

Lord Jesus Christ, God is offering salvation to whosoever will and wherever there is a response in the heart of any one, be they in Macedonia or Uganda, in the north or the south, on sea or land, the gracious God makes His Son available unto such a soul through His own means and in His own way.

Our Lord Jesus has purchased this world, or the “field” of Matthew 13:44 because of the treasure hid in it. He has found this treasure, although it is at present hid from the world; the treasure is not hid in any particular country, continent or nation. It is hid in this world-field; but it is complete before and in Him who loved the church and gave Himself for it. The nations of this world and the flesh have no part or share in this treasure. Neither can any principle of man or of man’s world ever find entrance into that which composes the bride of Christ.

The world at the present moment is surcharged with national pride and claims of political supremacy; in short, the manifestation of human selfishness is rapidly progressing along these and many other channels. It will be headed up in the Antichrist “who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4). The Lord would keep His saints so that they might be on the watch that these elements do not hold their hearts in any measure, but that their affections might be maintained unimpaired in the separation into which the death of Christ has brought them. “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Galatians 6:14).

W. S. Desai Mumbai (Bombay)

REAL OR UNREAL

John	12: 4-6
Acts	8: 9-24
Luke	10: 38-42
John	11: 20-27

Of the three persons of whom I have read Judas was an apostle. Simon was a convert nominally and consorted with the great evangelist, Philip. Then Martha was known to the people of God. She invited the Lord Jesus into her house. She is an interested person, and she has a sister who is a real lover of Christ, and not only a lover of Christ, but one who loved to listen to what Christ said.

Judas

Judas was an outstanding person in the profession. Judas was an apostle. He was an outstanding christian from the ordinary point of view, but he was a thief. Think of a man passing muster amongst the most outstanding of the servants of God and yet he was a thief. He needed the gospel more than anybody and yet he could preach it. May I not venture to say that Judas had converts. I believe he worked miracles. He was one that had immediate access to Christ.

Now why am I speaking like this? Because of the possibility of persons — I am not accusing anybody, nor have I any particular person especially in mind — but we may be among the front ranks of the followers of a servant of God and yet be lost. Take that word into your heart. Paul says, “Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Corinthians 9:27). I do not think Paul ever thought he would be a castaway. He says, “For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Timothy 1:12). He committed his soul to Jesus. Jesus spoke to him from heaven when he was an out-and-out persecutor of believers, and he says to the Lord, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6) That is how he began. Is there anyone in here who though, not a persecutor like Paul, but who would speak evil of those who belong to Christ? The Lord would say to you tonight, “Why persecutest thou me?” You are persecuting Christ in speaking of the Lord’s people, traducing them.

Then as speaking of the reality of his conversion, how real it was! — Paul says, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day”. Paul, as a convert, would come out triumphant in that day. “That day” is a familiar term. It is the day of divine discrimination. Are we all ready for it? Are we sure that we have committed to Him what He will keep against that day? Paul knew that. He had no question about it, but he is speaking about others. He has said elsewhere, “These things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes” (1 Corinthians 4:6). “Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway”. That word “castaway” means that you will never see God, will never see Christ, but will exist with the devil and his angels. Surely there is no love in us christians to have persons in our midst claiming to be christians, and yet not really so. It is no love at all not to warn them. Why should it be left in that way? Let us tell them, and that is what we are doing now.

Now, Judas was a preacher. He was reckoned among the apostles. Many of you are saying, ‘I would like to ask questions about Judas. Why did the Lord

ever take him on?’ If you were to ask the Lord, He might say, ‘Ask me something about yourself’. A man said to the Lord once, “Lord, are there few that be saved?” The Lord says, ‘That is no question for you. You see whether you are saved’. Often such questions are mere diversions. The Lord says, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate”, because there is a wide gate. If you ask such questions, you may be just going in the wide gate, down the broad way to destruction. Do not ask why Judas became an apostle. Ask yourself the question, ‘Am I going to be like Judas, doing something among the people of God, and yet a castaway?’

God would impress us with the reality of things and the danger of getting into the broad way and never getting out of it. It leads you to the lake of fire. Do not say to me, ‘Do not use that word, the lake of fire’. It is a good word, a warning word for the light-hearted people who are glib enough in talking about certain things, and yet they are neglecting their own precious souls. You are neglecting the matter of forgiveness of sins without which you will never see God. If you die, you will die in your sins, and you will be raised, too, in your sins, and you will be sent to eternal damnation in your sins. You will be suffering then, and you will never be without it.

Judas was a thief. I do not need to go over the history of Judas. I suppose you all know that he was lost and yet he was not really a hater of Christ. You may say, ‘Well, I have respect for the Lord Jesus and for believers’. I have no doubt Judas did. Judas was remorseful when he found that his thirty pieces of silver led to the Lord being crucified. Hatred of Christ was not his sin. His sin was that he was a thief. The Lord said he was a devil, but when the actual concrete thing comes to light he is a thief. He has his eye on money. I am warning you people about money. There are great opportunities now of earning big salaries and the devil would use that to allure you to get big salaries and to use the salary to make much of yourself in the world. Lust! Judas was a lustful man. He was a luster after money and that brought him into eternal perdition. He was so fond of money that he sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver. He did not hate the Lord. He was remorseful when he found that his wretched conduct led to the Lord being crucified and he killed himself.

What an awful thing sin is in people. It is the product of lust. Lust, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. It brought forth death for him. He hanged himself by his own hand. Let us not trifle with these things. Young people, do not be lustful. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (1 John 2:15). Judas was a characteristically lustful man and he lusted after money, but he slew himself with remorse. He was never saved. He never will be. He is one of the most solemn characters in the scriptures.

Simon Magus

Well, now, Simon, about whom I read in Acts, had money. He was not lustful after it. He already had it, maybe from his magic arts. Palm readers and the like make money. They get money for what they do. Anyway, he had money. His lust was the lust for power. He wanted to be a great man, and he was. The devil made him a great man, but it is wonderful to see that a preacher of the gospel came into the town and preached the gospel, and Simon became a convert. He believed Philip. Scripture says that.

It also says of Simon, "To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptised, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done". Well now, surely he is the outstanding convert from this preaching of Philip. That is what most people would say. The newspapers would maybe take account of him, this man whose name was great. He was "the great power of God" in the community and, if you please, he is converted. Surely he is becoming the talk of the town. Simon is converted; he is baptised and is wondering at the things that are being done by the Spirit of God in Philip. Can there be a question about him? That is what most people would say. Many people would make a thousand times more of Simon's confession than the confession of the others.

Simon is at Philip's preachings, and he is wondering at what is happening. Surely he is a saved man, but is he? Does the fact that you consort with the Lord's people, attend christian meetings, and profess to enjoy what is said prove that you are a christian? It does not. God alone knows what the motives are behind your attendance at the meetings of christians. You are making a point of it that you are in every way like them. What they are enjoying, you are enjoying. You cannot make any money at that, but he is hoping to. He has been a great man and he hopes to be one again in another way. He says, 'This is greater than the thing I have had, and maybe I will get into it'. Well, the other christians did not get the Holy Spirit and Simon would say, 'They are not much different from me'. Nobody is talking about the Holy Spirit. It is a question of listening to Philip and rejoicing in the light that came from the gospel so far.

Jerusalem hears of this and Peter and John came down from Jerusalem. Samaria had heard the word of God, but that does not mean that everybody in Samaria had heard the word of God, nor does it mean that everyone in

this town has believed, but Simon had. Jerusalem did not hear about Simon. They are concerned about the work of God in Samaria, and they send out two men, Peter and John, to see about this matter of the Holy Spirit. Those who are really subject to the gospel will get the Holy Spirit. That is what the scripture says, that God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him. You may not get it automatically as you believe, but you will get it. You should not be without it.

Peter and John come down and they pray there. It is a question now of the Holy Spirit. He had not come on any of them. This is a serious matter. Philip would be praying constantly about this matter. Why are these converts not getting the Spirit, and why is not this great man, Simon? What a fine preacher he will be when he gets the Spirit. The most spiritual of us may fail to discern you. You are among the people of God perhaps for other motives than genuine ones. Peter and John, when they came down, “prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for he was not yet fallen upon any of them, only they were baptised to the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Spirit”.

What about Simon? Did he get the Holy Spirit? Well, now, listen to the next verse. “But Simon, having seen that by the laying on of the hands of the apostles the Holy Spirit was given, offered them money, saying, Give to me also this power, that on whomsoever I may lay hands he may receive the Holy Spirit”. He did not ask for the Holy Spirit in the ordinary sense of the word. He was concerned in the bottom of his heart all the time about power to give the Spirit to other people. ‘What a great thing this would be’, he says in his heart. That is to say, he has the lust for power in his heart — power to make himself great in this world. That is what he had in mind — the desire to give the Holy Spirit to other people. Think of the distortion, the darkness in his mind. Peter says, “Thy money go with thee to destruction”. It is a most solemn thing that he should be imposing upon the people of God, careful to be just like them, and yet when Jerusalem comes in in prayer, there is a real uprising of evil in his case. The rest of the saints apparently get the Holy Spirit. It is in the saints. It belongs to believers. It is a certainty that those who believe in the Lord Jesus and get forgiveness will receive the Holy Spirit. It is your portion. God gives the Holy Spirit, it says, to those who believe.

Simon wants to be a great man. He wants power and he is hoping that he will get it on these lines among these christians. He is behaving as one of them, but Peter says, “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money”. He might say to Peter and John, ‘I will give you money. You need it for travelling’. Peter had been using money. It was the Lord’s money. Barnabas had been putting his money,

donations, at Peter's feet, and he had been using it for service but not that money. "Thy money perish with thee". That is a most solemn thing. It shows the awfulness and the reality of God's operations among His people when anybody assumes to be one of His people who is not and is governed by other motives.

Well now, there is a considerable difference between this man and Judas. There is no hope for Judas at all. He is a son of perdition and there is no hope for him, but there is hope for Simon. Peter says, "Thy money perish with thee". Let us just say (I would like to be fair to everybody) there is a question now and there is hope. So Peter tells him his money is to go with him to perdition, because it is defiled money. It is a terrible thing he is thinking of. He says, "Because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money". It is an insult to God, an apostate idea. Then he goes on to say, "Repent". If there is anybody here within the range of what I am saying, there is hope for you, bad as your case is. I would say now to you in grace, 'There is hope for you'. I am far from saying that a man like Simon will never be saved. Peter says to him, "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee". He is not a devil. He is not called a devil. He wants power. But Peter says, 'Repent. There is hope for you'.

That is what I would say to anybody here tonight, that the real way out of that terrible condition is repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. You will be brought into the christian circle and get the benefit of it. Peter said, "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me". That is all. That is where Simon is left, and I cannot tell you whether Simon was ever converted, but I can tell you that there is hope for him. He says to Peter, "Pray ye to the Lord for me", and the Spirit of God says no more. It is a questionable case. He disappears from the pages of the Bible at this point. Whether he will appear again as one of the saved in the future who can tell? Let us hope he will. I speak of it thus so that, if there is anyone who is exercised here, there is hope for you on the line of repentance.

Martha

Now, just a word about Martha. You can see how she is with the people of God; she is not like Judas or Simon; she has a sister and a brother whom Jesus loved, and John tells us that He loved her too. John tells us that, Luke does not. If we were just to read Luke, we would have to say that Martha's

case is also questionable. If there are any here like her, you cannot afford to risk John coming in to tell the final tale.

Martha criticised the Lord, and yet she received Him into her house and closed the door, and said in effect, 'Lord, You are not right'. "Dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?" She is impeaching the Lord Jesus, and the Lord says, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful". He did not say, 'You are insulting Me after inviting Me into your house'. He says, "Thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful", and I would say to anyone here tonight who is given to criticism of the people of God, 'Do not forget the beam that is in your own eye'. I would say to anyone in that category, 'Be careful whom you are dyeing with a questionable reputation'. People will say they are not sure whether she has gone to be with the Lord, but John comes in to save the position and tells us that the Lord loved her, and that He loved Mary and Lazarus, and he tells us that when the Lord Jesus came to Bethany after Lazarus had died. When death takes place in a family, it stirs us all up. It is intended to. Did the Lord have in His mind that Martha might be saved through the death of Lazarus? He stayed away two days that Lazarus might die. Was it not to save Martha? How far the Lord goes, how much pains He takes with us to take away that stigma of positive unbelief of heart. The Lord knew better. He knew that Martha had something and He stayed away two days for Lazarus to die. How many husbands have been taken that wives might be saved, and the loss of a wife so that the husband might be saved, the loss of parents that children might be saved.

So the Lord had been to Bethany before, and He came to Bethany in His own time, and Martha is the first to go to meet Him. There is hope for her now. When she heard that Jesus was coming into the village, she went out to meet Him. John is delighted to tell us about this sister — she is no longer in question. In his next chapter he says she was one of those that served when the Lord Jesus came there the second time. Now she comes and she meets the Lord. What does she say now? She does not say to the Lord, 'You are letting Mary sit there when she should be helping me', but there is a little bit of criticism yet in her. It is a habit. How long the habit of criticism takes to die. It is an antichristian habit. And so she says to the Lord, "If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died". Why did she not say, 'Lord, I am glad You are here'. Well, the Lord took the blame. It is John's account of things. I want everybody here who may be under question through criticism, or the like, to learn how the matter worked out. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died, but I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee".

What does all that mean? That means that the Lord Jesus is just the same in

her mind — a man who would pray to God and God would answer him. It is a poor thing if that is your estimate of Christ. You are in a dangerous way. But the Lord is ready to help her when He answers this sceptical remark of hers. “Lord”, she says, ... “I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee”. You think that is very pious, but it is not pious. It is infidelity. Our hearts are full of infidelity. ‘You can just pray to God and God will do it’. The Lord can do it Himself, He is God. She did not believe in His deity so far. She said, ‘You are a pious man’. Well, the Lord says to her, “Thy brother shall rise again”. That is what was dearest to her heart, that her brother should rise again. But undoubtedly what was to become dearest to her heart was that the Person who raised her brother was the Son of God, that He is God Himself. This knowledge eclipses all. Let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he believes that I am He, that he believes and knows Me. Is there anyone here that does not hold dearest in his soul the deity of Christ? John’s whole story here is to bring out that He is more than a pious man. He is God Himself. So the Lord says to her, “Thy brother shall rise again”. That would touch our hearts. She needed to know that He was before her, and every one of us here needs to know that Jesus is our God. He is “declared to be the Son of God with power” (Romans 1:4).

Let us not be ignorant about this and without the great thought of the Lord Jesus in our souls, for our enjoyment and salvation and deliverance, for our everlasting pleasure in heaven. So He says to Martha, “Thy brother shall rise again”, and Martha says to Him, “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day”. She is just an orthodox person. The Lord is dealing with her as to her faith in Christ, “If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins”, is what He says. Get into this truth, the truth of the Son of God. Martha says, “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day”. It is a mere orthodox truth. The truth is that christians will rise before the last day. The dead in Christ shall rise first, and those that are here shall be changed, but the rest of the dead shall remain for a thousand years after that, and that will be the last day. If you want to be assured now in your soul of God and Christ, get the truth of the Son of God.

Martha did not have it yet, but she is going to get it. So the Lord says to her, “I am the resurrection and the life”, This is light to her soul. Not, ‘I will raise people’, but “I am the resurrection”. He is the resurrection Himself. There is no resurrection without Him, nothing but hell. This is infinitely important if we are to be in salvation. So He says to her, “He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live”. This is you, Martha. You are not up to this yet, but you are coming to it. So the Lord says, “Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die”. You say, ‘I don’t quite understand that’. I often said that myself, but I think I understand it now.

The Lord is not always concerned to teach us just by the rule of A, B, C. Martha is now taking in light. The Lord knew it. She was a good case in spite of her scepticism. She is no Judas, she is no Simon. So the Lord says to her. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die". First He says, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live", and then, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die". That is the first word she gets. The Lord is establishing the truth in her soul. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live". That goes back to Abraham, to David. They lived and believed. "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness". "Though he were dead, yet shall he live". That is the first truth. He got faith before he died. "Though he were dead, yet shall he live". Get into that class, the class of people that, although they die, they shall live. Most of us that are here, if we die, we shall yet live. Then the next statement which the Lord makes is, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die". That is another class. That is a class of people that will never die. If the Lord Jesus were to come tonight, most of the people in this hall would never die. Living and believing in Him, we never die. What a glorious thought that is! Myriads will be in that class. When the Lord Jesus descends from heaven with a shout, the dead in Christ shall rise first. They will come out of their graves first, before we are changed, and then we which are alive and remain will be changed. That is part of the gospel, that there are people that will never die. If the Lord came now, none of us christians would die. I hope you will always keep it in your hearts. But if you do die, the first statement covers you. You shall be raised because you have believed. Well now, the Lord simply seals this matter of a soul here. He says to Martha in verse 26, "Believest thou this?" What I have been reading — do we believe it? That is the challenge. The gospel always comes round to that — the question of faith. On the principle of faith to faith, do we believe? Well, she says, "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world", and when she said that she went her way. She is a changed woman. It is a finished matter. It is one of the great confessions of faith in the Scriptures.

Face this matter. I would urge each one here to come to the decision that she came to and make a confession clearly and definitely. "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world"

James Taylor

Extracted from a preaching of the gospel, 5th July 1942, Berkeley, USA.