

141

Living Water

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(May – June 2017)

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An address, Belfast, October 2016

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Recent Ministry

A SURE FOUNDATION

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In Psalm 11 David asks, *“if the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do? (v. 11)”*. I have been thinking a little bit about that question and want to speak about foundations today.

We live in a world where the foundations are being destroyed. One of God’s foundations of blessing for mankind is the family. That is under attack from all sides; divorce, abortion, immorality. People do not see the need to be married, today. Even marriage has been redefined from what is set out in the Bible. We have seen in Belfast this week how the law that was once founded upon Judæo-Christian principles has been turned on its head with Christians being prosecuted for standing by the word of God.

Then it is not just the family. The economic foundations of this country and the world are built on sand. If we look at political foundations, things that have been central for generations are changing. New parties are coming up. There is protest. The balance of power is moving from the west to the east. All the things that perhaps we have relied on are changing: the foundations are being destroyed. What are we going to do? David asked that question: *“If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?”*

I have read about some foundations that we can rely upon. The foundations that God has laid down are described variously as *“sure”*, as *“firm”*, as *“God’s foundation”*. I wish to say a few words about these foundations to encourage us because these foundations can never be destroyed. They are foundations that

we can rely upon as Christians and, as I trust we shall see, they are things that we can build on that there might be blessing. The first scripture I read, *“Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I lay for foundation in Zion a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation”*. Isaiah is speaking of a future day, a time still to come when the land of Israel will be invaded by Gentile armies and the rulers of Jerusalem will make a covenant with evil. If you read the detail of the chapter you will see that it is washed away. *“Hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place” (Isaiah 28:18)*. God comes in and the evil covenant is overthrown. But, as always, there is a faithful remnant and for that faithful remnant Jehovah provides a place of refuge, a foundation upon which they can rely in a country that is being turned upside down.

He speaks of this foundation as a *“stone”*. That gives us the character of it – something solid, tangible, and lasting. Then it is also, *“a tried stone”*. We are always more comfortable if something has been tried. In these days of internet shopping we like to look at the reviews: someone else has bought it and tried it. What did they think of it? Well, what does God say about this stone? He says it is a tried, or tested, stone. It speaks of the Lord Jesus. Think of the Lord Jesus; He came here and as He started His earthly ministry we are told that the Spirit carried Him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil (see Matthew 4:1). He was tempted for 40 days.

What did the temptations show? They show that Jesus would not give way to temptation. Those temptations showed what He was. We test things like gold to prove that they are gold. He was a Man in whom *“sin was not” (1 John 3:5)*. He came through those temptations that every other person would have failed. So God could truly say of Him that He was, *“a tried stone”*. Then men tried His patience; think of the many

contradictions that Jesus suffered from men. But everything He did was in obedience to the will of His God and Father. And there, at Gethsemane, in that hour of trial, that hour when Jesus could say, *"this is your hour and the power of darkness"* He did not waver, He said, *"not my will, but thine be done"* (Luke 22:53, 42).

He was not only a *"stone"*, He was a *"tried stone"*, a *"precious cornerstone"*. Jesus was precious to God. Think of God opening the heavens and saying, *"This is my beloved Son"* (2 Peter 1:17). And Jesus is precious to every one who has faith in Him. We think of precious stones perhaps as diamonds and rubies but this is a precious stone because of its character, precious to God, precious to each one of us who loves Him for what He has done for us.

My father-in-law spent many years designing buildings for schools. He would often remind us that builders start with the corners. The cornerstone gives character to any building. It not only gives character, but it gives direction. It is important that a house is built square. The bricklayers will tell you that, too; it is important that things are built straight and things are built solidly. This is a precious cornerstone, it gives character, it gives direction, it gives ornament, as it were, to everything that God is doing.

Then we read of *"A sure foundation"*. (Or as the note in the Darby Bible indicates 'A foundation well-founded') How solid this foundation is. It is a sound foundation that God has established. *"He that trusteth shall not make haste."* Or, 'shall not hasten with fear'. There is much that might make us fear in the world around us. If we are on this foundation we do not need to hasten with fear, we do not need to worry because it is the foundation that will stand.

You might say to me, Well, that is interesting, but this is a future scripture; is this really relevant to us today? Is this not

speaking about Israel in a future day and what God will do for the nation? That is quite true but Peter takes up this verse in his first letter. He starts chapter 2 by saying, *“desire earnestly the pure mental milk of the word”* (1 Peter 2:2). Then he goes on to speak about believers as living stones. He speaks about the Lord Jesus as a *“living stone”* and he speaks about us coming, as living stones, to be built up as *“a spiritual house, a holy priesthood”(v.4)*. God’s purpose is that you and I, as those who have our faith in the Lord Jesus, are coming and are being built according to God’s design and God’s purpose.

God has a purpose for each one of us. If one of us was missing the house would be incomplete. Each stone is needed, each one of us is needed. God has a plan and a purpose in His wonderful ways of grace. That is another thing that comes out in chapter 2 of Peter’s first epistle. He speaks about Israel – and we know that Israel’s blessing was based upon obedience. If they were obedient to the law, if they obeyed what God set out for them in Exodus 19, then they would come into blessing. We know that they quickly failed. But the precious thing that Peter brings out is that despite the failure and the disobedience of the nation God brings in a Man who is obedient, a Man who fulfils His will. Israel’s blessing is no longer on the basis of obedience but of grace. They will be brought in again but they are brought back by grace.

That is true for us as well: Christian blessing is based on grace. Paul says to the Ephesians, *“ye are saved by grace”* (Ephesians 2:5). It is wonderful to lay hold of that, despite all our failings and our weaknesses, God has come in from His side in grace and He is blessing us and He wants us to be founded on this foundation.

I read in Corinthians because this brings in something about our responsibility. In Peter and in Matthew 16 where God reveals His mind to Peter, you remember that Jesus says to

Peter, *"Flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in the heavens"*. There is the side of what God is doing and there is our side too, and our side comes into this scripture here in Corinthians.

How are we building upon this foundation

Paul says that he is a wise architect. There are two words in Greek for architect and the word used here has the thought of not only designing something but building it - it includes both thoughts. Paul says he is this kind of architect; he is a wise architect who is building according to God's plan. The foundation has been laid, *"I have laid the foundation"*. He goes on to say, *"For other foundation can no man lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."* Paul had the whole in mind but there was something particular for Corinth. You remember, when he came he said, *"I did not judge it well to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified"* (1 Corinthians 2:2). That is the foundation that Paul laid in Corinth: Christ Jesus and Him crucified.

That was the foundation, but then he goes on to say that, *"I have laid the foundation, but another builds upon it"*. And he has particularly in mind those who took the lead in the Christian company but it comes down to us individually because he goes on to say, at the end of verse 10, *"let each see how he builds upon it."* So that is a word for you and me. How are we building upon this foundation?

Paul speaks about the materials that we can use. We can use gold, silver, precious stones. And again, I think precious stones does not have so much in mind the thought of diamonds and rubies and such things but things like marble or granite, rocks that are solid and strong and valuable. Or, there can be building with wood, grass and straw. Then Paul shows that what is

built is going to be tested by fire. If you build with wood, grass or straw you can probably build quite quickly because they are quite light and they take up a lot of space. Hay is a bulky material and you can build a haystack quickly. It looks big and solid but it will not last in a fire!

The wood, grass and straw will be tested by fire. There is that side of outward show, the bulk, the volume, the numbers which naturally appeal to us. But then there is the side of the silver and the gold. Silver would speak to us of redemption. Redemption reminds us that there has been sacrifice. God has paid a price because we are precious to Him. He has redeemed us. We have been redeemed by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. Jesus shed His precious blood that each one of us might be bought and belong to God. Gold speaks of the Lord Jesus. It speaks of His glory and His divinity.

The challenge for me is, How am I building? Am I building with things that have an outward show but when they are tested will be consumed? It is not necessarily the thing that I do but it might be the motive with which I do them. I can come to pray, to hear the word, to study the Scriptures with others but if I go home unchanged perhaps all that has been built is wood, grass, straw. If, on the other hand, I get something that leads me to be more like Christ then I am building something that will stand the test in the day of trial. It does not say when that day will be; it says, *“the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire shall try the work of each what it is”*.

Now, importantly, Paul reminds us of the foundation. Whether we have built with silver or gold, which will stand, or built with wood, grass and straw which will be destroyed, if we are standing on the foundation, if our faith and trust is in the Lord Jesus, then we shall be saved. He says, *“If the work of any one shall be consumed, he shall suffer loss, but he shall be*

saved, but so as through the fire”.

I read from second Timothy. It is a scripture that has been misused but I thought it was right to read it. It speaks about a firm foundation, *“the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal”*. The seal is a bit like a coin, it has two sides to it. One side of it is, *“the Lord knows those that are his”*. The other side of it is, *“Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity”*.

This scripture tells us something about our pathway as Christians. We are in a world that is full of confusion. Christianity in its public expression has become very confusing. The Name of Christ and the term Christian is attached to all kinds of things. It can be difficult to tell who is true and who is not. We do not always know but we read here in Timothy: *“the Lord knows those that are His”*. That is a great comfort. Then the other part of the seal to the foundation puts a responsibility upon us that if there is iniquity then we are to withdraw from it. *“Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity”*.

Paul wrote in his first epistle to Timothy about God’s house. In the second epistle he writes about the great house but it has vessels to honour and vessels to dishonour. If you were to read on you will see that we have a responsibility to separate ourselves from vessels to dishonour. We are not in a sense separating ourselves just from bad doctrines but we have to separate ourselves from the vessels as well that we might be, *“sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work”*.

As we are drawn closer to the Lord we find other Christians are close to the Lord too and that we can share fellowship with them. Paul goes on to say, *“pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart”*. Very simply, that is what the scripture sets out for us here:

that we have the responsibility but then we find other Christians with whom we can share things. As we walk in the light of scripture we are vessels serviceable to the Master.

Earlier in the chapter Paul speaks about *"vain babbling"*. There is much vain babbling about Christian things today. Many claims are made in many ways about all sorts of things. Paul says those that are engaged in this are in danger of overthrowing the faith of some (vv. 16, 18). There are dangers out there, there are things that are promulgated, propagated as Christian but which are not based on scripture. They are vain babblings. We need to be aware of that and we need to separate ourselves from them that we might be on this firm foundation.

What I would really like to leave you with from this scripture is that *"the firm foundation of God stands"*. Confusion is in this world but what God has established is firm and it stands. Now in Isaiah 58 God is challenging the people. He said that they are hypocrites. He says that outwardly they are serving Him but inwardly their heart is far away from Him and it has resulted in the ruin and overthrow of what their fathers established. But He also speaks about foundations *"that have remained from generation to generation"*. It is a great comfort to me, that there are foundations that have remained in that way. There are waste places and ruin has come in but those foundations have remained from generation to generation.

Then there is opportunity for things to be repaired: *"Thou shalt be called, Repairer of the breaches, restorer of frequented paths"*. That looks on the Lord Jesus Himself but it can also find expression in individuals. I suppose this particularly relates to Nehemiah. Nehemiah was a man who was concerned that the walls of Jerusalem were in ruin. Despite having a comfortable job and a comfortable life in Babylon, he came back to Jerusalem to repair the walls. He became a repairer of

the breaches, restorer of frequented paths.

I was thinking of another man, though, a man in the New Testament, a man called Barnabas. We tend to remember Barnabas because very warm feeling arose between him and Paul and they went their separate ways (see Acts 13:39). But Barnabas was a man who throughout his life until that incident was used for bringing people together. He was a Levite. He was a man who had money but he did not feel he was the best judge of how to use that money so he brought it to the apostles. He was a humble man.

When Paul first went to Jerusalem and sought to associate with the Christians there they were afraid of him because they knew him as a persecutor of the church. Barnabas was the man who was prepared to take the risk of meeting him and on finding that there was a real work of God with him to introduce him to the apostles. He was a man that brought people together.

Then in the dispersion that followed the death of Stephen, believing Jews went preaching wherever they went and, as a consequence of Cyprian and Cyrenian believers speaking to the Greeks, a Gentile assembly was formed in Antioch (see Acts 11:19-26). The Jewish believers back in Jerusalem were not quite sure what to think about this new assembly of Gentiles in Antioch and Barnabas was the man that they chose to go down to Antioch. We are told that he rejoiced at seeing what God was doing. He was not concerned about the fact that they were not Jews. He rejoiced that God was working there. He started labouring amongst that company and then he realised that it was, in a sense, beyond his capabilities and he was quite

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what we
need today**

happy to bring Paul into the situation. Paul comes to Antioch and became a blessing to that assembly.

Brethren, the spirit of Barnabas is what we need today. Are you, am I able to bring people together? Are we able to be a repairer of the breaches? There are breaches today. Perhaps we have looked to others to heal the breaches. Perhaps we have thought, 'It is their fault, it is their problem, they need to sort it out'. But the scripture is here and I would encourage all of us. Is there something I can do to be a repairer of the breaches? Where distance has come in can I do something to repair the breach?

There is what Christ will do in perfection ultimately but things can be done today. Things that were once well taught and well known, are not so familiar today. I look at some of the older brothers and I think of the truth that they know and the blessing that they are and I think how little I know. But is there something I can do that these paths might be frequented once again? That they might be more familiar, that more might be able to walk down them?

Well, these are just simple impressions that I wanted to share with you. The foundations I have spoken of are foundations that will stand. The firm foundation of God stands. Here we have these foundations that have remained from generation to generation. I would like to leave that thought with us. What God has established through the Lord Jesus will stand. It is a sure foundation, a firm foundation, foundations that have remained from generation to generation.

We can have our part in building on these foundations. They are there that we might be sure of where we stand before God, that we might be sure of our path of fellowship, that we might be sure about how we are building on the foundation, that we might be a blessing by being a repairer. Barnabas was a son of consolation, that is what his name meant. These are sad days

and we need consolation. We need those who are able to repair breaches and to restore frequented paths.

Well, brethren, may we be encouraged, for His name's sake.

Peter Wallach

An address at Belfast, October 2016

Poetry Selection

JESUS RAISED AND GLORIFIED

O the brightness of the glory
Shining in the Saviour's face!
Telling all the blessed story
Of the ways of God in grace:
Lowly, hated and rejected,
In the world He came to save;
By the glory of the Father
Raised triumphant from the grave.
Now we see Him crowned with glory,
Glory in His unveiled face,
And in peace and rest before Him,
In that glory learn of grace:
For it shineth in the visage
Of the One who for us died,
Bore our sins and all their judgment –
Jesus Christ the crucified!

Janetta Trench (1843 – 1925)

Testimony Section

SORROW TURNED TO JOY

When I was 18 I was caught by a wave and swept into the sea. As I struggled in the water two thoughts came in my mind:-

- It's too early for me to die and
- If only I could get two minutes to bid goodbye to my family.

Alas, it was too late. The fear of death gripped me. Terror rippled down into my soul. In what seemed the final moments of my life a sudden thought flashed in my mind. Someone had said when I was a small boy "Call Jesus when you are in danger and He will help you". Though I wasn't religious, I had no other thought to cling on to. So there came the desperate cry from my sinking soul – "Jesus". As soon as the Word was uttered in my heart, two of my friends came and caught me. I don't know where they came from. No one outside knew I was sinking. They tried to pull me out but alas all three of us started to drown together. Apparently we were caught in an ocean current. Whilst we three were struggling for life, suddenly we saw light. Hurrah, we were close to the surface of the water. My soul gulped a breath of hope of life. Others came and pulled us out to the shore.

I had shivers that night. I was in trauma for over a week. During that time one of my friends invited me to an evening gathering in college. Given my situation, I joined him that day. As I walked in a young lady was speaking about "the fear of death". I was taken aback by the topic since none of the people there knew about my tragic experience. I came to know that the fear of death comes because there is something frightening after death. She told us that after death there is judgement for all the actions we have done in this world. If we are questioned about our daily work by our managers and made accountable, how much more will God hold us accountable for all our actions, thoughts and motives in life? "My conscience" she said, "often told me not to do things that were not right but I seldom listened. I did what I wanted to do. I did not care about right or wrong. But then I found there was hope".

She explained that those who have their wrong actions, thoughts and motives “forgiven” will be spared from judgement. The only Person who can forgive all our wrong doings is Jesus. The young woman continued with her testimony, saying, “Jesus died in my place. He was punished for all the wrong things that I did. Just as a parent may have to pay a fine for the wrong things a child does in school, Jesus who created me sacrificed His own life to make me live. The blood He shed on the cross paid the price to forgive all my wrong doings and so clears me from God’s judgement”.

I was deeply moved and when later there was an invitation that anyone who wanted forgiveness of sins could offer the following prayer, I gladly did so:

“Lord Jesus, I accept all my wrong doings, thoughts and motives. I understand that You took all my wrong doings upon Yourself and died for me on the cross. I’m in need of Your forgiveness. Please forgive me and cleanse me by the blood You shed on the cross. I accept You into my heart.”

As I said that prayer a wonderful joy descended on me, a joy that cannot be expressed in human words. My trauma vanished in a moment. I felt like a new human being. I sang my way home that day.

I gave my life to Christ over 20 years ago and the joy in my life hasn’t vanished and the knowledge that I’m cleared of judgement has given me the ultimate peace in life. Thus my “sorrow turned into joy”. I don’t know what you are going through in life. But all that I know is that, today, if you do what I did, “your sorrow will turn into joy” indeed.

Enoch George
India

A voice from the past

A MEDITATION ON PSALM 107

This psalm, along with the others in the 5th Book of Psalms, gives us the moral circumstances of Israel on their return to blessing. The psalm looks at them as gathered back, but traces the various scenes through which they had passed and God's ways with them in it. It is a description of toils and trials, as a result of which the Lord was looked to, and answered and interfered on behalf of the tossed and tried soul, so men are exhorted to own and praise Him.

The psalm brings this blessed truth to the forefront: *"His mercy endures for ever"*. God's unchanging love and goodness is celebrated from the first fully proved failure of Israel onwards. Man fails; God's mercy to His people does not. It is His redeemed and gathered ones that bear witness to this. Strangers and pilgrims where there was no resting place, no home and hungry and thirsty, their soul fainting in them, they cried unto the Lord and were led in a *"right way"* (v. 7) to where their foot and heart found rest.

Two characters are given to the soul in this condition. It is a *"longing soul"* and a *"hungry soul"* (v.9). We have craving and want, but these are brought before the Lord. This is mercy. It is not the case of holy desires here, but God meeting wants. The wearied and fainting soul wants, but this turns into a cry to the Lord. Mercy is surely there even where their affliction and distress was due to God's chastisement due to their

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rebellion. But where the heart is turned to the Lord, mercy met it and there was deliverance. The gates of brass and iron which shut them in are broken (v.16),

though it was their own iniquity and the folly of departure that had brought it all on. He sent His word that they might be healed, and so delivered. When men were venturesome and braved dangers and found themselves at their wits' end through the storm of the sea which gives no footing for them, the Lord comes in and gives peace and leads them to their desired haven (v.30).

In the very place of the habitation of His people, in the place of His promises, there His direct government comes in: because of the misdeeds of the people rivers dry up and a fruitful land becomes a plain of salt (v.33 & 34). Then in mercy He turns the wilderness into pools of water and show mercy to the needy soul, satisfying the hungry who lean on Him. Even in such circumstances persons may become careless and lifted up and they are brought down. He pours contempt on princes, but the poor and needy He sets on high (v.40 & 41). It is not the order of a world blessed of God, where evil is not, but the government of God where evil is, where God overrules the evil to the purposes of His own government, to hide pride from man, and comfort and encourage the poor in spirit who look to Him, who trust not in pride and human strength but rest in the Lord. In all the ways too, where their will has brought them, where their sins have brought them, if He is looked to, His mercy and goodness are found.

Thus God deals with the heart – turns the state of things and the ways of men into the means of their hearts knowing Him. The righteous rejoice; oh how true that is! How much truer it will be when the fruit of God's goodness to the humble waiting soul which has put its trust in Him is seen! In the end evil will be put down, but in the meantime the way the Lord meets, comforts, and justifies the path of the humble soul is to be seen. The wise and observant soul will see (however busy, however pretending, however successful man's will may be)

the loving kindness of the Lord made good before him to his joy and gladness of heart. *“Whoso is wise, let him observe these things, and let them understand the loving-kindnesses of Jehovah” (v.43).*

The Lord teach us to walk softly before Him, and leave the results in His own gracious hand. It is sometimes difficult, but always wise. Painful no doubt, to see the wicked and wickedness prosper, it is a world of evil, but God works in it, and His way will work out in blessing, and show the fruit of His goodness and righteous power.

J. N. Darby

A word for today

THE LORD’S FEET AND OUR FEET

I desire, with the Lord’s help, to speak a little about feet, tonight. The first two scriptures speak of the feet of the Lord, they remind us of His movements in wonderful grace and would also speak to us of His suffering.

Then there are two scriptures about our feet. One speaks about feet washing - what need we have on our journey here of refreshment and cleansing. The last Scripture speaks about joy, that our feet may be made strong. I am not speaking literally; but every Christian’s feet may be made strong so that they might be able to walk here and praise God.

Luke 24:36-40 - Jesus in resurrection showing His hands and His feet to the disciples

This first Scripture is a wonderful one. It is a wonderful thing to start with the Lord as living. I challenge myself and everyone here, have you thought today that the Lord Jesus is alive? Now, as Christians, we all know that Jesus is alive. Yet we need to meditate upon it. Our Saviour is in the glory and He is living.

He is interested in each one of us. His desire in the scriptures was to be in the midst, to be in the centre of His own. We should not be looking at each other but be looking where He is. He is alive and at God's right hand. We can joyfully sing:

Christ is risen, hallelujah!

It is a wonderful thing to think that Jesus is alive. Think of all these people in the world who are following what is dead, talking about what is history. Dear brethren, we have been called by One who is living. We have heard His voice, the living voice, the voice from heaven. And we are waiting – I trust we are all waiting like those in Thessalonica long ago - waiting for Him to come, waiting to see Him, to be with Him and like Him. How hard it is, sometimes, to appreciate what the Lord has done for us but when we are with Him there will be no sin, no

Every Christian has doubts, fears and anxieties

restraint, nothing to hinder our being occupied with Jesus alone.

Jesus came to His disciples in that upper room and He said to them, *"Why are ye troubled? and why are thoughts rising in your hearts?"* I suppose all of us at times have doubts and fears. Every Christian has doubts, fears and anxieties: worries about how things are going to work out, worries about the testimony, about whether things are going to be carried forward. Some of us were speaking in the break about Eli. The days of Eli were a very, very difficult day but the lamp of God had not gone out and neither will it, dear brethren, until the Lord comes. I remember reading about some American Christians going to Russia after the Berlin wall fell. They were going to take the word of God into Russia, but they were surprised to find that it had been kept alive in the gulags. The lamp of God will not go out until the Lord comes. We might

worry about the state of things in Britain today – open a newspaper and read that church attendance is declining. Well, the Lord knows those that are His, the newspapers do not. The Lord knows His people. He knows where they are.

We should grieve in our hearts and souls about the state of what we see around us and we should pray that there might be revival in the closing days, that the Lord might work mightily that there are those drawn to Him. The Lord Jesus is living and His power is from on high.

When He showed them His hands and His feet there was an immediate effect. Think about His feet, think of where they took Him - miles all around Galilee and elsewhere. Think of that great journey to meet the woman by the well in Samaria. Think of the Son of God walking every day to meet needy sinners. I think of the steps of Jesus to meet me in my need some forty years ago – in some ways it seems like yesterday that Jesus found me in my need and so many here today can look back with joy and remember that Jesus came to them and spoke to them and drew them to Himself.

His feet were once marred. Think of the cruelty of man, men nailing Him to the cross. I sometimes think about the cross and the horror of it. We are so familiar with the cross, we are so familiar with, in some way, talking of the Lord's sufferings. The violence of it, the shock of it, sort of passes us by. Many years ago when I started work I saw an armed robbery. A man had been beaten with a gun and it was a horrific thing to see. It stayed in my mind about the violence of man. Jesus was treated so much worse than that – think of the scourging, think of the nails being driven through His hands and His feet: feet and hands that were marked by such grace - the gracious movements of the Lord and yet man's estimation of Him was to nail Him to the cross. Yet what He suffered in His spirit in being made sin and bearing God's judgment far exceeded any

physical suffering.

The wonderful thing in this Scripture is that the disciples realised that His sufferings were over. The Lord went that way for us, but now He is out of death and He showed them His hands and His feet. The marks were there as we know from John's gospel, the marks of the nails that remind us of the way He has been and we should never, as Christians, forget the sufferings of the Lord Jesus.

It is wonderful to think about the glory to come and the joy and peace of heaven but think about the cry in the Revelation, *"Worthy is the Lamb that has been slain"* (Revelation 5:12). Think about what the Lord has done – wonderful things that will never be forgotten. He showed them the marks in His hands and His feet and they realised then that He was living. It took a moment to enter their souls but it filled them with joy.

He says, *"Handle me and see"*. I wonder how much we, as believers on the Lord Jesus, have really grasped the greatness of His Person, really grasped who He is: the Son of God, the Son of Man, how great He is. Is that to fill my head? No, it is to fill my heart because it will give me wonderful assurance that in a world which is so troubled and so violent and going on to destruction, the Person who has me safely in His hands is someone who is so great, so infinitely greater than I am, that I am sure I am safe in His hands. He speaks to them very gently, *"Why are ye troubled? and why are thoughts rising in your hearts?"*

The hymns that we sang at the beginning were both written by Isaac Watts three hundred years ago. It would encourage those here who are younger to know that Isaac Watts was a very young man when he wrote many of his hymns. He wrote well over six hundred hymns some of which we sing and we love such as *"When I survey the wondrous Cross"* and *"Join all the glorious names"*. That hymn has several other verses

and one of them says:-

But O what gentle terms,
What condescending ways,
Doth our Redeemer use
To teach His heavenly grace!
Mine eyes with joy and wonder see
What forms of love He bears for me.

What wonderful gentleness there is in the Lord Jesus! When we have wrong thoughts, when we have doubts the Lord would gently correct us and set us on our way. Every believer I have met I think has had doubts, fears and anxieties in their life: the Lord would encourage us. He is unchanging, He is living and He is at God's right hand. Think of the power that is in heaven - power that stopped a violent man like Saul. That power is still there today. Nothing is diminished about the Lord's Person in glory. *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come"* (Hebrews 13:8). Praise be to His name.

Luke 7:36-38 –

A woman who anointed the Lord's feet

This scripture in Luke seven, it is a very familiar one, often used in the gospel because it speaks of an enormous debt that was forgiven. I want just to draw attention to this woman. The Bible tells us she was a sinner, she was known to be a sinner, she was someone who was, perhaps, despised by those around her, someone who led a life that other people would know was wrong.

We are all sinners and we may forget that we are sinners. We may start to think we are respectable. But we would be reminded of how much we have been forgiven. This woman showed affection for the Lord Jesus, an appreciation showed

through her weeping and the anointing of His feet. Do you remember the word about the feet of the Lord to Thyatira? *"His feet are like fine brass"* (Revelation 2:18). Think of the judgment that speaks of. How could it

How could it be that someone who was a sinner was not afraid of Him?

be that someone who was a sinner was not afraid of Him? Yet she poured out her affection upon Him and she received the assurance that her sins were forgiven.

Think of the greatness of Jesus yet we do not need to be frightened of Him. The thought is to be drawn close to Him, to know Him as your Friend, to know Him as your Saviour and Lord. She showed her affection for the Lord Jesus. That is a challenge for me. She showed her appreciation that those feet had brought the Saviour to where she was. We have not rushed off and found the Lord, dear friends: the Lord Jesus found us. He came to us. At a moment in our lives, the Lord drew very close to us and we heard His voice and answered to it. She showed her affection and she poured out what was precious.

It does not matter how young or old you are, everyone here who has heard the call of the Lord Jesus will have something in their hearts of appreciation of Him. It does not have to be complicated; she did not say anything. If the Lord has touched our hearts (and surely He has touched every heart here) the challenge for us is to answer in affection to Him. What He longs for is an answer to the loneliness of the cross, the loneliness and suffering of Calvary. There was joy lying before Him, the joy of going back into His Father's presence but the joy too of knowing you, dear friend, knowing those who trust in Him.

Think of where His feet were going from here; they were going

towards the cross. There was a Pharisee there with a critical spirit. Well, we live in a world like that today. We live in a world that has not room for Jesus, has no room for what He has done. There is a critical spirit there and in the middle of that the Lord found wonderful appreciation of Himself. He speaks of it here and He says, *“Thy sins are forgiven”* and then He says, *“Thy faith has saved thee; go in peace”*.

I challenge myself - have I shown my appreciation of the Lord Jesus? She showed it by anointing His feet; she took a very low place in relation to Him. She appreciated His greatness. She appreciated His love. She appreciated in some perhaps small measure what it cost Him and was going to cost Him to forgive her sins. I wonder about myself. What can I do? The Lord Jesus is not here, I cannot do what she did – He is in the glory. But from my heart I can express my love towards Him and as appreciating Him it can have an effect upon my life. She expressed her deep appreciation and we can too. We can show our appreciation of the Lord Jesus. She kissed His feet and anointed them with myrrh..

One of His titles is the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ speaks of God’s anointed Man: how great Jesus is, how distinctive in every way. I wonder whether we, as believers in Him, realise and reflect on how great He is. The hymn writer says:

How brilliant the glory where Christ is enthroned!

How wonderful the glory that is there. This woman not only anointed His feet with myrrh but with her tears. Her heart was broken down by how much she had been forgiven. She was not going to let anyone stand in the way. She did not want to hear the views of the people around her, people trying to stop her, people looking at her in a bad way. She did not let any of that get in the way. I would encourage you and encourage myself to show our affection for the Lord Jesus.

John 13:1-15 – Jesus washing the disciples’ feet.

In John’s gospel we see the Lord Jesus washing the disciples’ feet. I do not know if any of you have been in the Middle East but I have been there a few times in my work and it’s very hot. My feet grow weary in the hot atmosphere and need to be refreshed. But the idea of feet washing in scripture is not only about refreshment but the removal of day-to-day defilement that we encounter in a world where Christ is rejected and despised.

Earlier this week I was sent by my company to a conference and every person that spoke blasphemed. They did not think about it, they just took the Lord’s name in vain. There was no need for it but it is just so normal. We are surrounded by sin in what we hear and see. Go down the road and you see advertisements that appeal to the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. They are appealing to what is sinful. We see things that are wrong; we read things that are wrong. We are affected all the time by what is around us. It has a sort of drip, drip effect on us. There is day-to-day defilement as we go through this world.

Well, the Lord Jesus, graciously, washed the disciples’ feet. We see His place of wonderful service and lowliness. You can almost understand Peter’s objection. He was shocked by the greatness of the Person washing his feet, something that would normally have been done by a slave.

How little we, perhaps, understand the Lord Jesus. How great He is and yet how lowly. He does not lose anything of His greatness in His lowliness. The Bible tells us that He made Himself of no reputation (see Philippians 2:7) - here He served washing their feet. Then He tells us, *“ye also ought to wash one another’s feet”*. You might say, well, how do I do that? Well, first of all I would encourage all of us to appreciate and enjoy Christian company.

If you are on your own – and some Christians are upon their own and are not privileged to have the ability to meet together, the Lord will come in for them in His own way. But thankfully we are able to meet with others. The wonderful thing about meeting together and praying together is that it would elevate our thoughts and help us to lose sight of the things around us. In the epistle to the Philippians it tells us to think about the things that are of good report, things that are noble, to lift our thoughts up (see Philippians 4:8).

When I was a bit younger I used to sometimes think that in our Bible readings we ought to talk more about practical things. And yes, there is that side of things and we need to be practical. But I learned a lesson when a man started coming to our Bible readings and he was always talking about the dreadful things going on in the world. I thought, 'I have heard that all day, I want to get away from that and I want my thoughts lifted up. I want to think about the things that are beyond this earth, to think about the coming glory'. We need our thoughts to be lifted up to where Christ is.

As we read God's word together and talk about it, we are helped to, as it were, wash each other's feet. You might be encouraged by a word from someone else as we read about Philemon and how he received a word of encouragement from Paul (Philemon v 4 -7).

I would just say a personal thing; some ten or more years ago I was a bit discouraged because those where I meet became much smaller and I wondered if we could go on in the work with children. At that time a brother wrote to me and encouraged me to continue. I have never forgotten it; when I think about it now I think of his washing my weary feet and helping me to go on. Sometimes, weary with the way, we need encouragement and refreshment. As well as dealing with what is sinful and wrong we need what is soothing to help us in our

life. The Lord Jesus tells us, *“I have given you an example that, as I have done to you, ye should do also”*.

Much of the Lord’s life we cannot enter into, the blessing of the Son of Man, the Son of God here. But in many things He left us a model, an example. He asks us to do what He did. To do that we have to be lowly. We live in a world that does not value humility. It is about pride and status and glory. People want to be known, all that sort of thing. And it can come quite close, I speak for myself. We are told in the Scripture to *“bind on humility” (1 Peter 5:5)*. How easily it falls off!

How attractive it is when you see it in another Christian, a humble spirit. It is a wonderful feature since it is part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (see Galatians 5:22-23). There should be humility and out from that comes love and joy and peace and other wonderful features of the fruit of the Spirit. The scripture in Philippians would help us - the mind to go down, *“each esteeming the other more excellent than themselves” (Philippians 2:3)*. Put simply it is looking at those around and thinking of the wonderful work of the Lord in them rather than being occupied with failures, weaknesses and irritations. It is a word to us, if we want to serve the Lord we are going to have to put on humility in a greater way.

The Lord has charged us with this thing. It is not really an option. We may try to deflect it on to those with greater gift but really it is for each one of us. There are lots of pressures on believers. There are the ones we can see, in Syria, in Iraq, in Pakistan, North Korea and so on, obvious pressures, violence against Christians. But here, in our own country there are other pressures on those around

We live in a world that does not value humility

us that we can think about too, pressures of ill-health and weakness, anxiety and all those kind of things. It is a challenge for us.

We need to find the grace for this, we need to pray. We will not do it by saying, Well, I am going to do a bit of feet washing today; and grit our teeth. That is not how you enter into this. You have an impression about the love of the Lord Jesus for yourself and you desire to express it to others.

Peter took the word of the Lord to heart and you can read about that in the Acts. And so did some of the others. You read the epistles of John and see the character of feet washing in his ministry. He appeals to our love for one another, love for our brother and so on. They are aspects of feet washing. It can only be done through affection and with humility.

Our feet touch the world, I am not speaking literally, I am speaking about the way we are affected by the things of an evil world around us: we need feet-washing so that we might enjoy the wonderful things that God has given us in Jesus.

Acts 3;1-11 – Feet and ankle bones made strong

So I just go on to close with this Scripture in Acts. This man had been waiting at the gate of the temple and through the wonderful work and power of God his feet and ankle bones were made strong. I do not think of this in a literal sense but just apply it to our own lives: as having received of the Lord Jesus, as it were, our feet and ankle bones are made strong. We are given strength to walk here for the Lord Jesus, not to walk just to please ourselves.

You wonder, in the New Testament, why there are all these letters to Corinth, Ephesus, Philemon and the like? They are to help us about our walk as believers here. Very little is spoken about heaven and what is to come. Much of it is practical

instruction for the Christian for now, walking day by day. Not next year, five years time, when I retire or when something else might happen but day by day now.

There are some things I want to draw attention to about this man. First of all he is *“walking, and leaping, and praising God”*. He was set on his way and then he was praising God. Some twenty or twenty-five years ago I came out from my parents’ house on Christmas Day. There was no one on the street – it was a very busy road where I used to live – but there was no one on the street. I walked out to get to my car and a man shouted at me across the road. I looked up as in London people do not talk to each other a lot. I looked at him a bit nervously and I went across to speak to him. He said, ‘When does the church open across the road?’ I said, ‘I do not know, why?’ He said, ‘I have just been let out of prison. I used to steal cars but I met the Lord in prison and I want to give thanks’. This was a man with a changed life and he wanted to praise God. And he did say something else to me; he said, ‘Whenever you think about me, pray for me’. I have not seen that man since but I know I will see him one day. He belonged to the Lord, the Lord had saved him. He will be in that company in heaven, a changed man, and his first thought of being let out of prison was to want to go and praise God.

This man in Acts was set on his way. He was walking and leaping, he was moving. Christians are not saved just to sit back. You might say, ‘There is not much I can do’. Well, every Christian can pray. Every Christian can pray for others. Every Christian can worship and praise God. You might not be able to do anything else but everyone can do something. So he was walking, leaping and praising God.

There is just this last thing, *“as he held Peter and John”*. Now, he did not hold onto them because he was unsteady on his feet! When we are saved we are set together with other

believers. It is one of the wonderful blessings of God that we should be set together with others who love the Lord and wait for His coming. Do value that, dear fellow believer, it is a wonderful thing to be set together with others who love the Lord Jesus, have the same joy in Him and look for His coming.

I met someone through work a year or so ago, a young woman, starting work in a big company. She had asked if there were any Christians in the company and someone told me. So I said she could contact me and I thought I would never hear anything more about it. But one morning she contacted me and I met her. And just in an hour I had the most amazing experience of meeting someone who had the same joy in the Lord, the same thirst for the scriptures. She loved and valued the scriptures. She spoke about the Lord freely. Some Christians hold back and make you wonder where they are at all. She was a real joy to meet and a joy for her to know she was not on her own. I could tell her about other Christians where we work. But it was a joy to me to meet someone who was like-minded. Someone who loved the word of God, looked for the Lord's coming, loved the Lord and wanted to serve Him.

We are set together. He held Peter and John. Now, Peter and John would move on but this man would not forget that. He would not forget that there were others. He got blessing but he was set together with others at that moment.

I trust that we might all be encouraged by the Lord Jesus: His feet would speak to us of His wonderful grace. They speak to us of a life of serving, of love and grace that took Him all the way to the cross. We ought to think about our appreciation of that.

Then let us remember how the Bible speaks of our walk here, about how we live our life as Christians day by day, our service

to others, our need to be washed from the pollution of the world around us and to give refreshment to each other by drawing attention to the Saviour.

He is coming soon. I feel sure He is coming soon. But we have to walk each day; we cannot just sit back and wait for the coming of the Lord. There is a charge to us in that word *“go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37)*. There is a model for us to follow.

We have the privilege tomorrow of remembering Him together, be set together. May all our souls and hearts be liberated in thankfulness to Him and to have our thoughts free to glorify His name. He deserves everything that we can say about Him.

Isaac Watts, so many years ago, as a young man, says in his hymn:-

Join all the glorious names
Of wisdom, love and power,
That mortals ever knew,
That angels ever bore;
All are too mean to speak His worth,
Too mean to set the Saviour forth.

All are too mean, but we can say something about the Saviour's worth. Our thoughts can be raised, each one of us, to appreciate Him, to honour Him and to seek to walk here for Him until He comes.

Simon Burr

An Address at Yeovil, 19 March 2016