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LIVING WATER

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Recent Ministry

THE POWER OF GOD

Wherefore did I come, and there was no man? I called, and there was none to answer? Is my hand at all shortened that I cannot redeem, or have I no power to deliver? Isaiah 50:2

And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple rent in the midst. And Jesus, having cried with a loud voice, said, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit. And having said this, he expired Luke 23:45–46.

...that by two unchangeable things, in which it was impossible that God should lie, we might have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us, which we have as anchor of the soul, both secure and firm, and entering into that within the veil, where Jesus is entered as forerunner for us, become for ever a high priest according to the order of Melchisedec. Hebrews 6:18–19.

I would like us to consider together God's power. There is a lot made of power nowadays and all kinds of efforts are made to have more and more power available according to man's mind. But the power of God has been shown in the gospel and particularly in the Lord Jesus Himself.

Since the beginning the power of God was there and we are very thankful for the first book of the Bible that tells us faithfully how God created the heavens and the earth and the power that was displayed in that creation. But soon man disobeyed God and sin came in so the question that God puts to man is the one we read in Isaiah. *"Is my hand at all shortened that I cannot redeem?"* It was not the first time that God had asked that question. He had already asked it of Moses when He said, *"Hath Jehovah's hand become short? Now shalt thou see whether my word will come to pass unto thee or not"* (Numbers 11:23). That was the power of God

to redeem His people, the children of Israel that He had chosen according to His own desire and plan.

But, as we know, the children of Israel failed and disobeyed as we have all fallen in disobedience. So the question comes to us, 'Is God's hand short that it cannot redeem us?' That question is a searching one in the heart of each one. If you are not a believer that question should stir your heart — is God's hand shortened? Has it not the same power that it had in creation? Yes, exactly the same power is there. The power that can create is the power that can redeem: it is the same power, a power that is expressed in the way in which God is available today in the Lord Jesus.

The way that God has chosen expresses the wonder of His sovereignty. He has chosen many different ways to show the presence of His power. Think of the miracles with the people of Israel in Egypt. Think of the way in which God spoke through His prophets. Think of the way in which He had servants who could show His power. Think of Elijah, Samuel and Daniel. Think of how Daniel was delivered many times; think of him in the den of the lions and the power of God that was there ready to deliver.

Do you believe in the power of God? It is a power that is not, speaking reverently, shown in authority in the way of judgment but is shown in love. It is a power that reaches the heart in love. It will have a judgment side to it but at the present time, in the dispensation of grace, it is a power displayed in love and grace. It is power to redeem because that is what we need. We are sinners and we need to be redeemed. 'Redemption' means that we are delivered from the power of the devil, the power of the one who wants to rule over us. God intends to deliver us from the power of

Satan and transport us into the kingdom of the Son of His love (see Colossians 1:13).

Now, when was this redemption accomplished? It was accomplished at a time when all unrighteousness was seen. Can you think of a worse legal process than the one that the Lord had to undergo? It was a trial where the judge had to say *"I find no fault whatever in him"* (John 18:38), yet He was condemned to die. Here was a Man who had *"done nothing amiss"* (Luke 23:41); the robber on the cross could witness to that. The Lord was One who had gone about doing good, bringing grace and healing and giving life yet He was condemned to die. What unrighteousness was shown on the part of mankind. But the power of God was there. The power of God was showing itself in the fact that the Lord took a body — became Man — that He might bear in His body the judgment of sin that was due to us. In becoming Man He also accepted that place of a perfect servant in complete dependence on His Father.

Think of His words on the cross. It says that the Lord cried with a loud voice. There was power there. You would not expect somebody dying on a cross to be able to speak with a loud voice. But the Lord Jesus had that power. We speak with reverence about these matters. But it is there. It is witnessed in Scripture. We are very thankful to Luke because there is a unique report of this fact; the Lord cried with a loud voice and He said, *"Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit"* (Luke 23:46). Think of the power that is there. The Lord was able to lay down His life and He was also able to take it up again. Here He was laying it down. Nobody else could do that, they just died on the cross as men die. But the Lord Jesus had a powerful death: although it was a death in full

dependence on His Father — He says, *“Father, into thy hands”* – nevertheless He was able to commit His Spirit to the Father and then He expired. That is the moment in which the power of God was expressed in such a powerful way, in a way that can reach the heart of each one of us. There is no other salvation. There is no other redemption.

The Lord on the cross can really redeem each sinner. He has redeemed me: He can redeem you if you put your trust in Him. It is such a powerful way in which He acted. And it is as if everything was calm in the Lord; although undergoing such suffering He was absolutely calm in putting His Spirit into the hands of His Father and laying down His life.

As we know, He has taken it up again and we bless Him for that. That is why He is not only a Saviour to us but He is also Lord to us because He has taken His life up again and He can therefore exercise rights upon your heart. He has been powerful in redeeming you and He can powerfully lead you through life in dependence upon Him.

If you have not yet put your trust in the Lord, now is the moment to do so. At the present time God waits in grace. We do not know what can happen in a few moments. We might not be here: time is in the Lord’s hands. Now is the time for you to believe on Him and the gospel is preached so that you may do so. The gospel is being preached because this is a time of grace. Come to the Lord and take heed to His power in redemption, His power to save you. He laid down His life and took it up again that He might redeem you.

When you have trusted in Him you become a believer. And when you become a believer your first reaction is to be filled with joy about what the Lord has done. But following this experience there is a new path to be followed as a Christian

here in the world where Christ is still despised and rejected. For that pathway you have need of the power of God: this is the power spoken of in Hebrews which is available to us in order that, *“we might have a strong encouragement”*.

I have been thinking of this expression lately. There is not much that encourages us in the world. Quite a few things do the opposite and depress us if you think about it because there is no human hope for this world. But the strong encouragement comes from within on account of the power of God expressed in the Lord Jesus.

Where we read in Hebrews it speaks of this hope. It says, *“we ... have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us”*. Do you not think, dear reader, that this is a time in which we can really experience fleeing for refuge? Escaping from all which can overwhelm us and that makes us despair humanly speaking? We have a hope on account of the Lord’s power, power that will change everything and in due time will bring about a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness.

In the present time we have this hope set before us, *“as anchor of the soul”*. Nothing is sure nowadays except what is connected with the Lord Jesus as the Rock. He is the One who can really provide an anchor for our souls.

When the anchor gets a solid hold there will not be any movement, there will not be any loss. This is exactly the power that is available in the gospel — not only to redeem, but to make us sure in our belief, of our pathway here and of our hope.

Then it continues speaking of, *“entering into that within the veil, where Jesus is entered”*. I think this is very fine. This is a glorious part of the gospel. By His death the Lord Jesus has

The gospel transforms the sinner into a believer and the believer into a worshipper

opened up a way whereby we can go into the holiest. He has gone in as our Forerunner as we sometimes sing:

And we our great Forerunner see
In His own glory there;
Yet not ashamed with such as we,
As Firstborn all to share.

Then He has gone in as high priest, to lead the praises. That is the answer that comes from the gospel. The gospel transforms the sinner into a believer and the believer into a worshipper. That is exactly the hope that is within the veil, the hope that we can have in our Lord who has gone in there.

May we be affected by the power of God expressed in the Lord Jesus. You need to know that power while it is available to you in grace. You do not want to experience it when it is a power for judgment for you. It will be a terrible power to those who will have to undergo God's judgment. But at the moment you can avoid that by believing in the Lord Jesus now, today and to experience His power in redemption. May this be your experience and our experience together, for His name's sake.

Piero Casavecchia

A preaching of the Gospel, Worthing, 16 July 2017.

Poetry Selection

CONFIDENCE AND TRUST

O Lord, whose grace and tender love
My faltering feet have onward led,
Protect and help me from above
Through all the years that lie ahead;
Do Thou my every step attend
And guide me to the journey's end.

Not mine with care and anxious dread
The future's unknown ways to see,
For all my path, where'er I tread,
O Lord, is fully known to Thee;
Though dangers loom, I shall not fear
Since Thou, my present help, art near.

Be Thou my Anchor, Shield and Stay,
And let me call upon Thy Name,
Jesus the Saviour, yesterday,
To-day and evermore the Same;
And thus across life's stormy sea,
O Lord, my Guide and Pilot be!

Gilbert Brown

Testimony Section

MY TESTIMONY

Today is my 50th birthday, my spiritual birthday. Fifty years ago on the Lord's Day, July 2nd, 1967 I was brought into the family of God. I was 15 years old, a confused, moody and mixed up teen, of little value to the world, but precious to God.

The day before, July 1st, all eyes were on Ottawa. On Parliament Hill, thousands gathered to watch the Queen commemorate Canada's 100th birthday. Bands played, choirs sang and people cheered as the Queen congratulated us on attaining 100 years as a nation state.

But the very next day, something a lot more significant would take place in Seattle, an event in which, the Bible says, all heaven will rejoice. That was my conversion, the day God breathed His Spirit into me, making me His child.

I remember that day as if it was yesterday. I was spending the weekend in Seattle with family friends, my first time away from home on my own. On Sunday, they took me to their church, similar to the one I attended in Victoria. That afternoon, standing outside the church, I silently committed myself to the Lord. All around me, people were laughing and chatting, enjoying the sunshine. Nobody knew what was going on. I myself did not fully understand the significance of the moment. All I knew was that with all my heart and soul and being, I wanted the Lord Jesus Christ.

A few minutes earlier, I had been listening to a preacher who had earnestly entreated us to give our hearts to the Lord while we were young. His Bible text got my attention: *"Remember your Creator in the days of your youth."* (Ecclesiastes 12:1)

I was 15 years old – a youth – and through that verse I heard the Lord say to me: 'Now – as a teen – surrender yourself to Me.' I knew God was speaking to me. Only the day before, I had confided to my friend: 'I don't want to get serious with

God until I am much older.’ I had not come to Seattle to be saved; only to have fun. But that Sunday, God made it clear He had other plans for me.

Raised in a Christian family, I knew the gospel: I knew I was a sinner. Only the blood of Christ could wash away my sins. There was a heaven to be gained and a hell to be avoided. So I always wanted to be saved, but later, much later – always later.

Thankfully God intervened that wonderful day on July 2nd, 1967. If He had not, I am convinced the road to “Later” would have led to a lost eternity in hell. I told no one what happened. A while later, back at my friend’s home, I silently crept up to my room.

I remember thinking: ‘If I am really serious about this – I should start to read my Bible.’ Despite family Bible readings every day at home, I never voluntarily read my Bible. To me, it was a dead book. But that afternoon, the Bible became alive. As I started to read it, the words leapt off the page, living, breathing, pulsating with life. It was as if the Lord Himself was in the room, speaking directly to me. In fact, He was. Because a half an hour earlier, an eternal transaction took place between heaven and myself. When I gave the Lord my heart, He breathed new life into me, enabling me, through the Holy Spirit, to understand His Word.

So this is the story of that long ago day, on Sunday, July 2nd, 1967, and how, at age 15, that day became my spiritual birthday.

In closing, I would like to share a Bible verse that has been a great help to me, enabling me through sad times and bad times, as well as the good times, to focus on my Lord and Saviour:

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not depend on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him and He will make plain your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Sarah Clarke
2nd July 2017.

A Voice from the Past

THE LAMENTATIONS OF A SINNER

Catherine Parr (1512 – 1548) was the sixth and last wife of Henry VIII, king of England. She married Henry in July 1543 and was Queen for 3.5 years up to Henry's death in January 1547.

The Queen's book, "The Lamentations of a Sinner" was written while she was queen but it was kept secret since much of what she wrote would not have met the approval of her dangerous and unpredictable husband who had already divorced two wives and beheaded two others.

Catherine appears to have been a godly woman who devoted some time each day to the study of the Bible. She lived in a world of intrigue and a time of political and religious turmoil and this coloured her writing. She comments for instance, 'Where worldly wisdom most governs, there sin most rules' for, as she put it, the wisdom of the world 'is adverse to God.'

The book was published on 5th November 1547 and carried an introduction by William Cecil, later to hold some of the highest offices of the State. He wrote:

'William Cecil having taken much profit, by reading this treatise following, wishes unto every Christian, by the reading thereof, like profit, with increase from God.'

The extracts in this article are taken from the Harleian Miscellany (1808). Amendments have been made to conform to current spelling and some minor changes have been made to clarify the meaning to the modern reader.

Catherine begins by telling us why she wrote such a book.

I am partly by the hate I owe to sin, which hath reigned in me, and partly by the love I owe to all Christians, whom I am

content to edify, even with the example of my own shame, constrained with my heart and words to confess and declare to the world, how ungrateful, negligent, unkind and stubborn, I have been to God my Creator, and how beneficial, merciful and gentle, He hath been to me His creature, being such a miserable and wretched sinner.

Truly I am forced to write thereof, to my own confusion and shame, but to the glory and praise of God. For He, as a loving Father, of most abundant and high goodness, hath heaped upon me innumerable benefits; and I, contrary, have heaped manifold sins, despising that which was good, holy, pleasant and acceptable in His sight, and choosing that which was delicious, pleasant and acceptable in my sight.

The Queen then expands on what she was as a sinner away from God

I little regarded God's word but gave myself to vanities and shadows of the world... I would have covered my sins with a pretence of holiness. I called superstition, "godly meaning" and true holiness I called "error". The Lord did speak many and sweet words to me and I would not hear. He called me in many ways, but through frowardness I would not answer.

I would not come to Him but sought to hide from Him, seeking many crooked by-ways... I had a blind guide called Ignorance who so dimmed my eyes that I could never get any sight of the fair, goodly, straight and right ways of His doctrine; but continually travelled in foul, wicked, crooked and perverse ways; and because they were followed by so many people I thought that I walked in a perfect and right way, having more regard to the number of the walkers than to the order of the walking, believing also most assuredly with such company to be walking to heaven, whereas, I am most sure that they would have brought me down to hell.

I, most presumptuously thinking nothing of Christ crucified, went about to set forth mine own righteousness, saying with the proud Pharisee: `Good Lord, I thank Thee I am not like other men...' with such like words of vain glory extolling myself and despising others.

As God in His grace began to open her eyes, she began to see her life in the light of the perfection of Christ

- Christ was perfect and without all sin; and I wallowed in filthy sin and was free from no sin.
- Christ was obedient to His Father, even unto the death of the cross; and I disobedient and most stubborn, even to the confusion of truth.
- Christ was meek and humble in heart; and I most proud and vain-glorious.
- Christ despised the vanities of the world; and I made it my god because of the vanities
- Christ came to serve His brethren; and I coveted to rule over them
- Christ abhorred worldly honour; and I much delighted to attain the same.
- Christ was gentle and merciful to the poor; and I hard-hearted and ungentle
- Christ prayed for His enemies; and I hated mine.

By this declaration all creatures may see how far I was from Christ, and without Christ; yea how contrary to Christ I was, even though I was called a Christian. If any man had said I was without Christ I would have stiffly denied and withstood the same; and yet indeed I neither knew Christ nor why He came. Concerning the purpose and effect of His coming I had a certain vain and blind knowledge, both cold and dead, which may be had with all sin, as doth plainly appear by this my confession and declaration.

At last Catherine found that she could truly trust Christ. She asks, "Where will I fall in desperation" and answers:

I will call upon Christ, the Light of the World, the fountain of life, the Mediator between God and men, and the only health and comfort for all true repentant sinners.

I have neither hope, nor confidence in any creature neither in heaven nor earth, but in Christ my whole and only Saviour. He came into the world to save sinners and to heal them that are sick... Behold, Lord, how I come to Thee, a sinner, sick and grievously wounded... Cast me not out of Thy sight, though I deserve to be cast into hell fire.

If I should look upon my sin, and not upon Thy mercy, I should despair, for in myself I find nothing to save me and a dunghill of wickedness to condemn me. If I should hope, by mine own strength and power to come out of this maze of iniquity wherein I have walked so long, I should be deceived. I am so ignorant, blind, weak and feeble that I cannot get myself out of this tangled wayward maze. The more I seek means and ways to wind myself out, the more I am wrapped and tangled therein... It is the hand of the Lord that can and will bring me out of this endless maze of death.

But now, what makes me so bold to presume to come to the Lord with such boldness, being so great a sinner? Truly, it is nothing but His own word, for He says: "Come to me all ye who labour and are burdened, and I shall give you rest". What gentle, merciful and comfortable words are these to all sinners!

If I should look upon my sin, and not upon Thy mercy, I should despair

Is there any worldly prince or magistrate that would show such clemency and mercy to their disobedient and rebellious

subjects? But even as Christ is the Prince of princes and the Lord of lords, so His charity and mercy exceeds all others.

I know, O my Lord, that Thy eyes look upon my faith. Paul, the apostle says, `We are justified by faith in Christ and not by works of law, for if righteousness came by law then Christ have died in vain'. When Paul speaks of faith here, he means a living faith which works by love. This living faith does not set aside good works; for, out of this faith spring all good works, yet we may not impute to the worthiness of faith or works, our justification before God, but ascribe and give the worthiness of it wholly to the merits of Christ's sacrifice... Thus I feel myself to come, as it were, in a new garment before God.

Catherine goes on to speak of the effect of having a loving relationship with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

With how fervent a spirit ought I to praise the Lord and to regard the inestimable love of God in sending His Only-begotten and dearly beloved Son into this world of misery to suffer the most cruel and sharp death on the Cross for my redemption. Yea, I never had this unspeakable, most high and abundant love of God printed and fixed in my heart till it pleased God of His grace, mercy, and pity to open my eyes, making me to see with the eye of living faith, Christ crucified, to be my only Saviour and Redeemer... When God in His goodness made me to see Christ, the wisdom of God and the Light of the World with the eye of faith, all pleasures, vanities, honour, riches, wealth, and aids of the world, began to be bitter unto me. Then I knew it was no illusion of the devil, nor a false or human doctrine that I had received.

Then I began to perceive that Christ was my only Saviour and Redeemer, and the same doctrine to be all divine, holy and heavenly; and infused by grace into the hearts of the faithful. This is something that cannot be obtained by human doctrine,

wit or reason. Then I began to dwell in God by love, knowing through the remission of my sins, that God is love, as John, the apostle, says. So that through my faith (whereby I came to know God, and, whereby it pleased God, even because I trusted in Him, to justify me) sprang this excellent love in my heart.

I have certainly no great learning to put forward this matter, but a simple zeal and an earnest love to the truth, inspired by God, who promises to pour His Spirit upon all flesh; which I have, by the grace of God (whom I most humbly honour) felt in myself to be true.

The contemplation of Christ crucified

Let us now I pray you by faith behold and consider the great love and goodness of God in sending His Son to suffer for our redemption. First it is to be considered, and by faith believed, that God sent Him to us freely. He did not send a servant or a friend but His dearly beloved Son. He sent Him not in delights, riches and honour, but in suffering, poverty and slanders; not as Lord but as a Servant, yea, and with most severe and painful sufferings to wash us, not with water but with His own precious blood; not from mire but from the filth of our iniquities. He hath given Him, not to make us poor but to enrich us with divine virtues, merits and graces. In Him He hath given us all good things. Therefore inwardly (in mind and heart) to behold Christ crucified is the best meditation that there can be.

- We see in Christ crucified the most high and abundant love of God in sending Christ to shed His blood, to lose honour, and lay down His life and all for us. Greater love could not be shown.
- We see in Christ crucified how vain and foolish the world is. We see how blind it is because it knows not Christ, but

persecutes Him. We see how unkind the world is by killing Christ at the time when He did show it most favour.

- We see in Christ crucified the weight of our sins as in a Divine balance. We see how grievous and weighty they are for it needed the weight of the precious blood of the Son of God to remove them. We shall never know our own misery and wretchedness but in the light of Christ crucified. Then we shall see our own cruelty, when we feel His mercy, our own unrighteousness, when we see His righteousness.

If we look further we shall see Christ's great victory upon the cross which was more noble and mighty than any other before or since. If the victory and glory of worldly princes were great because they did overcome great hosts of men, how much was Christ's victory greater, which vanquished not only the prince of this world but all the enemies of God, triumphing over persecution, villainies, slanders, yea death, the world, sin, and the devil and brought to confusion all human wisdom.

The princes of the world never did fight without the strength of the world. Christ, on the contrary, went to war against all the strength of the world. He fought as David did with Goliath, unarmed of all human wisdom and scheming and without all worldly power and strength. Never the less He was fully furnished and in this one battle He overcame for ever all the enemies. There never was so glorious a triumph, nor any more rich and noble than Christ was upon the cross. His victory delivered all His elect from a sharp and miserable captivity.

Now therefore we may see how great the victory and triumph of Christ is who hath delivered all those who believe in Him from the power of the devil, cancelling upon the cross the debt of our sins. He hath delivered us from the condemnation of our sins, from the bondage of the law, from the fear of death, and from the present evil world. Then He hath enriched

us, made us noble, and most highly happy, according to such a glorious and triumphant way as cannot be expressed. Therefore we are forced to say, 'His triumph is most marvellous'.

Seeing then that the triumph and victory of our Captain, Christ, is so marvellous, glorious, and noble, let us follow Him, taking up the cross, that we may have fellowship with Him in His kingdom.

Truly it may be said that in spirit to behold Christ crucified is the best meditation that can be. I am of this opinion, that if God would suffer me to live here a thousand years and I should study continually in the same matter, I should not be filled with the contemplation thereof.

I never knew my own wickedness, nor repented my sins truly until the time God inspired me with His grace, that I looked at the cross; then I began to see perfectly that mine own power and strength could not help me, and that I was in the Lord's hand, even as the clay is in the potter's hand; then I began to cry and say: 'Alas! Lord that I ever have so wickedly offended Thee, being to me, from the beginning, so gracious and most specially now has declared and showed Thy goodness unto me, when at the time I have done the most injury, Thou didst call me and also made me know and take Thee for my Saviour and Redeemer.'

Such are the wonderful works of God, to call sinners to repentance, and cause them to take Christ, His well-beloved Son for their Saviour. This is the gift of God. For except this great benefit of Christ crucified be felt and fixed surely in a man's heart, there can be no good work done, acceptable before God; for in Christ is all the fullness of the Godhead and in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Even He is the water of life, whereof whosoever shall drink,

he shall never more thirst, but it shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

The apostle Paul says that there is no condemnation for those in Christ, which walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Moreover, he also says, If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, seeing we are reconciled, we shall be preserved by His death.

It is no small benefit we have received by Christ, if we consider what He hath done for us. Wherefore I pray the Lord, that this great benefit of Christ crucified may be steadfastly fixed and printed in the hearts of all Christians that they may be true lovers of God... The sincere and pure lovers of God do embrace Christ with such fervency of spirit that they rejoice in hope. Further, they are not wise in their own opinion but humble and gentle. For they know by their faith that they are all members of one body and that they have one God, one faith, one baptism, one joy and one salvation. If there were more of these pure and sincere lovers of God there should not be so much contention and strife growing on the fields of our religion as there is. Well, I shall pray to the Lord to take all contention and strife away and send Godly unity amongst all Christians, so that we may serve the Lord in true holiness of life.

Catherine Parr (1512 – 1548)

A Word for Today

THE LORD'S SUPPER – 4 IN RELATION TO THE ASSEMBLY (CHURCH)

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

In the last article we were occupied with what we might call the outside effect of the Lord's Supper, that is, the conduct which should characterise those who are in the fellowship of Christ's death here in the scene of His rejection. In coming to

1 Corinthians 11, we are entering upon different ground altogether. It is now the inside circle, and what is enjoyed there; not the scene where Christ is unwelcome and His love unrecognised, but the circle where His love is known, where He can find hearts faithful and true to Himself, and where He can minister the joy of His own presence to those who are fitted and ready for it.

It is worthy of note that here, as on many other occasions, the Apostle is led to bring out the fulness of the truth in connection with failure on the part of the saints to maintain what had been already taught by word of mouth. It is evident that the Lord's Supper in the earliest days had been taken during, or after, some particular meal; but the sanctity and meaning of it had, at least at Corinth, become so completely lost sight of that Paul could not recognise what was carried on there as being the Lord's Supper at all. *"When ye come together therefore into one place, it is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating everyone taketh before others his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken"* Verses 20 and 21.

It is under these circumstances that Paul is led to place the Lord's Supper once for all in its true position, and this he does with great point and force, as we shall see.

He is now occupied with the conduct of the saints, not as individuals, but as forming the company here on earth gathered out for Christ. We have already looked at this company in its earlier history. Here at Corinth we notice that such confusion existed amongst the saints as gathered together that the Apostle has to repeat in writing those elementary principles of the assembly, which would surely have been treasured up and preserved in living power in their hearts if they had only remained true to the fellowship of Christ's death. It is humbling to think that it should have become necessary to present

afresh such simple and obvious instructions as those we get in these chapters. One or two essential points in connection with the assembly may be mentioned here as preparatory to our meditations on the Lord's Supper.

The assembly, as such, could not be, and in fact was not formed until after Christ had been raised from the dead, glorified, and the Holy Ghost sent down. The materials to form the nucleus of the assembly were prepared by the blessed Lord Himself while He was here upon earth. He gathered around Himself those in whom, after He had taken His place in glory, the Holy Ghost was to dwell.

The steps which led up to the formation of the assembly are beautifully set before us in John 20. Christ's death had met the whole question of sin, and God was now free to come out and make Himself known fully according to the purposes of His love. Hence, the first message to His disciples after the Lord's resurrection is: *"Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God" John 20:17.* This is a remarkable fulfilment of the word in Psalm 22, speaking prophetically of the Lord in resurrection: *"I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee" verse 22.* It opens up the great and wonderful fact that it is in resurrection that we are Christ's brethren, of the same order and stock as Himself: *"He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee" Hebrews 2:11,12.*

The Lord proceeded to make this good to the original company of His disciples on the evening of His resurrection. (John 20:19-22). After fully assuring their hearts by showing to them His hands and His side, He brings them into association

with Himself on a wholly new footing by breathing on them, and saying to them, *“Receive ye the Holy Ghost”*. It is evident that this is not the same thing as the descent of the Holy Ghost personally on the day of Pentecost, but its meaning has often been made simple by connecting it with Romans 8:2: *“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death”*. The point for us to lay hold of is this: that when we are indwelt by the Holy Ghost as the result of our faith in Christ, we are by the same Spirit brought into association with Christ in resurrection-life, that is, a life where sin, and death, and judgment, must evidently be for ever excluded.

There is much—very much—more to be learned in connection with all this, but we limit our consideration of it to its bearing upon the subject now before us. The Scripture we have quoted, and the further fact that we are formed into one body by the Spirit, make it plain that when we come together, as forming part of the assembly here, we for the time leave the ground of our own individual needs, failures, and circumstances, and enter upon a scene where Christ alone is everything and in all; we shall look at this a little more fully presently.

We can come back now to the passage referred to at the beginning of this article and we would repeat what was said before, namely, that when Paul sets himself to unfold these valuable teachings as to the assembly, he is careful to commence with the Lord's Supper. This not only gives to the Lord's Supper the prominence which it deserves, but seems to indicate, as has been so forcibly pointed out by others, that the Lord's Supper is the introduction or stepping-stone into the enjoyments of the assembly. So evident is this that in one passage (Acts 20:7) the brethren are described as coming together to break bread. It was their first object, and whatever

there was to be, in ministry or worship, would follow upon this. We venture to quote a few words just here which will make this plain:

‘The Lord's Supper, properly apprehended and carried out, has the effect of putting saints in touch with Christ and with one another. In assembling together, each coming from his engagements and home, saints are not for the moment free in spirit to enter into what is proper to the assembly, but they sit down for awhile, and partake of the Lord's Supper, and so get in touch with Christ and with one another; they are thus brought into the spirit and tone of the assembly, and are as different as possible in mind and spirit to what they were at first’.
F. E. Raven.

Now the form in which Paul had received from the Lord the teaching as to the Lord's Supper, or as it is familiarly and lovingly called in Scripture, *“the breaking of bread”*, is very much on a line with what we have in the Gospel of Luke; and as we have already considered Luke's account pretty fully, we will not occupy the reader again with it in detail, but will just add a few practical remarks. Our attitude and position at the breaking of bread are lucidly summed up in the following brief quotations, which the reader will do well to meditate upon:

‘In the Lord's Supper, man is nothing, but Christ and His love everything’ J. N. Darby.

‘It is Christ taking His place with us, and taking us into the light of the Father's love... That is why the breaking of bread should be the first thing in the meeting. It is then Christ is realised on our side, and He conducts us, as we are attached to Him, into the Father's love’ F. E. Raven.

...there is really no place at the breaking of bread for occupation with our own state, or sins, or circumstances...

'We have nothing to do in this retreat, but to sit down and enjoy what the Lord is... If we are brought into the presence of His death, we must go down to our own nothingness, and then, sitting under His shadow, we should find Him opening out to us all that He is' T. H. Reynolds.

If all this is true, it follows that there is really no place at the breaking of bread for occupation with our own state, or circumstances, or sins, or our own past history. We are there on the distinct footing of being part of Christ's company, associated with Him in resurrection, all question of sin having been settled and done with, and it is as those who are on such a footing that we can enjoy the presence of Him who is the Living One, "*alive for evermore*". At the same time we are made sensible of the love which led Him even to death itself in order that we might thus be suited to be of His company. "*The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep*".

Now the occasion of the Lord's first meeting with His disciples after His resurrection, in John 20, is most helpful to us in this way. He had promised to come to them, and there He was. Can we suppose that those disciples did not appreciate or would ever forget the agonies of the garden of Gethsemane, or the deeper agony of the cross itself? Or, on the other hand, had they forgotten their own utter failure and breakdown in the presence of the sorrow and rejection of Jesus? Not at all; but that was not the moment to be occupied with it. It was a moment of deep joy and gladness, and no doubt that blessed One Himself for the first time found His own heart fully

gratified in the sense that now at length there was a company to which He could come, and where He would be appreciated to the full, though as a matter of fact it was His own perfect grace which had drawn them together.

That scene in John 20 is in some respects a picture of what the breaking of bread should be to-day. It would be impossible not to be subdued in heart as we think of the details of what the Lord entered into, or of the extent of our own individual failure. It is not, however, to be occupied with all that that we come together, but rather to be engaged with Him who is there to lead us, as in risen life with Himself, into fresh and fuller unfoldings of the Father's love.

There are one or two other points in the passage before us which claim just a brief notice:

(i) *"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" verse 26.*

This showing, or announcing, of the Lord's death is more especially connected with the fact of His rejection here. We have already looked at it in a previous chapter. It is not exactly the question of His death meeting our state before God, but that the Lord's Supper is in itself a perpetual witness before the world that Christ has been refused, and that we have taken upon ourselves to have fellowship with Him in it. It is a solemn thing, this *"bearing his reproach"*, and a path not to be entered upon lightly. How beautifully do the words *"till he come"* fit in here! There will be no reproach then, but sharing with Him all the joy of the Kingdom.

(ii) *"Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth*

and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" verses 27-29.

These verses point out the inevitable result of not being in the practical power of that which we have already been looking at. It came out in the Corinthians most strikingly. Instead of taking up for themselves practically the fellowship of Christ's death, where flesh and all its outcomes were once for all judged in God's sight (see Romans 8:2), they were just allowing the flesh to act, giving room for the very thing for which Christ died. Professing to call Him to mind, they were giving full rein to the indulgence of their own fleshly desires. No wonder that with such things allowed to go on unjudged, many were weak and sickly amongst them, and that some had even been cut off in death.

Perhaps we may not be in circumstances where it is possible for that particular form of the flesh's activity to be manifested, but who would deny the necessity of our judging, or discerning ourselves, and maintaining all through our path here that refusal of everything which would tend to bring in weakness and disaster?

Dr. Thomas Willey (1847 – 1940)

In the next issue (DV) The Lord's Supper and the Father's love.

Scripture references in this series are taken from the Authorised (King James) Version as given in the original publication.