

No.
43.

"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS
WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE
RIGHT HAND OF GOD." COL. 3. 1.

J O H N I I I . 1 4 - 3 0 .

An Address (revised) at

FOREST GATE, E. 7.

21st April, 1912.

by

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Correspondence welcome:

Scriptural literature for Believers

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An Address by Mr. P. W. Heward,
Forest Gate, 21st Apr. 1912.

Eph. 5. 8-20 read.

Verses 14 - 18 are frequently taken out of their context. It is often forgotten that they were addressed to one who was still proud and pharisaic, even to Nicodemus, to shew him that God saved the UNLIKELY:- those that Nicodemus thought would not be saved; and that God saves from GENTILES as well as Jews. There is no thought in John 3. 16 of preaching God's Gospel in a careless and free and easy way. The precious thought of God SO loving the WORLD is, as we know, a special suggestion of the fact that His love includes despised Gentiles; and thus it is beautifully free to us. But there is nothing in the verse to make the unbelieving world careless. No, there is nothing to suggest a free and easy preaching of a universalistic Gospel. Never have all been saved, never will all be saved. Most were outside the ark; most were destroyed in Sodom and Gomorrah. Most of Israel rejected Christ, and most at the present time go their own way.

These words then are peculiarly solemn, for we realise that John 3. 16 has often been misused. Its wonderful freeness, and that of John 3. 17, have been perverted in such a way that the careless world has been made more careless, and under the guise of declaring the Gospel there has frequently been the encouragement of a fuller indifference. It is true God DID NOT send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but it is true that the Son of God SHALL come back to condemn the world. It is true that the Lord Jesus CAME to be (as the Gentile Samaritans expressed it) "the Saviour of the world"; but it is equally true that the expression "the world saved through Him" contains nothing in contradiction to the declaration elsewhere that on those who believe not the Son, the wrath of God ABIDES. Moreover the whole world lieth in ^{the} wickedness^{one}. He Who spared not the old

world, will again have multitudes in "the Valley of Decision", and the vials of wrath will be poured out. We know that the JUDGMENT of God is according to Truth. Beloved friends, it is not kindness but actual cruelty to hide this part of God's teaching. It is not kindness to let men regard themselves as fit for eternity, or able to turn to God just "as" and "when" they will. The putting off of salvation - putting it off to a death-bed or to the last moment, and indifference to salvation, - these things are a wicked presumption against God, and we need to realise in the power of the Holy Spirit that He Who is the God of all grace is the only One Who has any grace at all; and if there is no coming to Him along the pathway of His cross, no grace can be found elsewhere, - nothing but judgment, nothing but wrath, nothing but doom!

Verse 18 makes a striking statement - "He that hath faith into Him is not judged, but he that hath not faith ~~to~~ already hath he been judged because he hath not had faith into the Name of the Only Begotten Son of God". Here we behold two classes; but there is an individual definiteness. We do not believe in mass but individually. "He that believeth"; and not merely about Him, but "INTO Him", is not judged; as John 5. 24 puts it "Does not come into judgment". Romans 8. 1 witnesses to the same deliverance "There is no judgment against those who are in Christ Jesus". You know the reason. Christ took the judgment, and God will not demand payment twice. It has been met by the Son of God's love, for all who cast their absolutely worthless and helpless selves on Him; and it is by grace that they cast themselves on grace. "But he that believeth not hath been already judged". Notice this striking statement "He hath been judged already". Does that mean that by the action of not believing he has been judged, and his sentence is passed? Is this the thought? that his action has MANIFESTLY brought his doom? he does not believe and his doom is manifestly settled? There is a measure of teaching in that, but we may and must go further.

"He that does not believe". Scripture does not add here "into Him". This is a much wider expression "He that does not believe". O how comprehensive are those words. The verse is not merely viewing here the one who is without faith INTO Christ, but it tells us something more, that if one has not faith into Christ, he has not ANY FAITH at all; he is unbelieving and is judged for his disbelief which makes God a liar. This is the first thought that comes into our minds; - the awful crime of unbelief. It is making God a liar. He that believeth not hath been judged. But I think there is a further thought, - he that believeth not in the present, has been judged in the past. What does THAT mean? All of us would have remained judged ones if we had remained in Adam, for Adam was dealt with, and since that we are all signers; and if we do not believe by grace OUT OF the Adam position into Christ we remain in a sphere of judgment. "He has been judged and remains judged". He was in the judgment position. He that is saved has come out of death into life, - out from the judgment sphere into righteousness (Rom. 10. 4). He was in Adam even as others, a child of wrath even as others, - he was then in the sphere of judgment, but he is not being judged now, because he has by grace been brought to believe out of the sphere of judgment into the sphere of grace, and there is no judgment in the sphere of grace. There is no judgment in the sphere of righteousness, for righteousness is beyond judgment, and those who have received the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ do not come into judgment! Otherwise that very righteousness would be brought into judgment and the whole work of Christ swept away! Man would be exalted, and God would be brought low. But THAT is impossible. The work of Christ STANDS, and those who believe in Him are not being judged. THERE IS NO JUDGMENT against them. He that believeth not hath been judged in Adam, and with Adam, and he remains there and continues there, as the tense implies, because he has not believed INTO the Name, out from the sphere of wrath - into the Name of the only Begotten Son of God.

But this is the judgment (here is an added statement), this is the judgment, "BECAUSE the light has come into the world, and men love the darkness rather than the light, for their deeds were evil". Christ is the Light. Man's treatment of Christ shows the CLIMAX of man's sin very clearly. When the Light came, men HATED it. You do not know a man's character until you bring him near to absolute Truth, absolute righteousness, and absolute holiness. Then you see what "man" is. If you want to understand the character of humanity, view it in the way Christ was treated. Do not say the world is better than it was then. You cannot tell what the world is until it meets Christ. It will always appear better when Christians are worse. Believers often become deceived on this. They think they are making the world better, -they are making it appear better by becoming worse themselves. The world has nothing, or at least little, but peace and flattery until believers take Christ's position. But if they take that position, this will show the world its awful iniquity. The perfectness of Christ showed the rottenness of religious Israel.

Verse 20 adds "For every one that doeth evil (or who practises that which is good for nothing) hateth the light"- does not come to the light, lest his deeds should have been REPROVED". Men did not and do not like Christ because He shows up their deeds. The one great cause why Christians are popular at the present day is because they do not show up the evil. They flatter people as if they were all right. Many are afraid to speak of hell and hell fire, and afraid to speak of the awful iniquity of men. They are held back by their own failure to deal with sin within; for we always close our mouths when we close our hearts against God's reproofs. We always increase our weakness when we fail to deal with our sins. But if we deal first with our own sins, and then plainly deal with the world's sins by our actions as well as by our lips, the world will not come to us. The child of God sometimes has a

difficulty to know HOW to act in circumstances that are awkward. The important point is that he should WALK with the Lord, and then "circumstances" will be a great deal changed. A child of God may say "Before I was saved I had friends who were ^{lost} unsaved ones, and I do not know what to do now. When I see them, or they see me, I cannot be off-hand with them, yet I am told not to treat them as friends, but I do not like them to think I am rude when I go to them, or they come to me. I do not know WHAT to do". Let the child of God walk with God, and his ^{lost} unsaved friends will not want him. This will clear up the whole point. The child of God will have plenty of time for the companionship of the Lord's people, plenty of time for communion with the Lord, if he walks with the Lord; because it will clear him of so many other things. It will settle the point for him, because if he is in accord with the Word, and in accord with the Truth, ^{lost} unsaved ones who like the world, will not like his friendship. Those who are careless will keep away. Those who want the world will be frightened of the child of God. There will be a certain awe of the child of God. If the Lord's people are walking with Him, there will not be the great increase of fellowship with the world. Sometimes there seems encouragement mingled with the manufacture of hypocrisy. The true fellowship is of those willing to obey Christ. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light". See how this would unite all the Lord's people together. DOING truth is that which unites. If all the Lord's people sought to obey Him, this would separate them from the world, and unite them among themselves. Thus instead of the existence of large divisions of professing Christianity, there would be real Christianity of those united, - everyone in Christ seeking to carry out the will of the Lord. Such would rejoice to come to the light. They would rejoice to come to Christ, and Christ would be the Centre. "That their deeds might be made manifest, because in God have they been wrought". Works wrought in God, nothing of the flesh approved! Nothing in self can be exalted in His presence. Boasting is shut out. These are the last words

of the Lord Jesus recorded here. Nicodemus who had come with words of courtesy and who had changed to words of criticism and almost opposition, apparently went away, so far as we know, in SILENCE. It would seem at first sight that Nicodemus was such a disappointing character and that something spoilt all his interview. Nay, it was not so. God works in a mysterious way. Nicodemus needed to be brought lower. To have flattered Nicodemus would have been to have gained him, in one sense, but really to have hindered him. The Lord spoke plainly, and left results, and Nicodemus seemingly went off - no word of courtesy is recorded, no word of answer. This silence is striking. The Pharisaic scholar was told that Gentiles were to be saved as well as Jews, and that all - both Jews and Gentiles - must be born of God, or be lost, - that he himself was linked with those who did NOT come. Perhaps he felt himself insulted; to be told he was among those who did not come to the light was the more humiliating perhaps, because he HAD come to the Lord Jesus to talk with him. But remember he had come at night, and that very fact MIGHT have made him feel the words all the more. The Lord on another occasion said to some that they had not come when they were physically present. There are two comings to Christ. Even Nicodemus did not realise coming to Christ in the sense of fully feeling oneself a helpless sinner. Had he come to the Lord in the true way? But he was apparently convicted. There was the beginning of Divine working. Let us not be disappointed when there seem discouragements. A man may say "How?" and may go off without any apparent interest, even annoyed - and yet be the subject of a Divine work, and may be brought back again three years later.

Verse 22. "After these things" - after the Passover, "came Jesus and His disciples" (NOT - "and His brethren"). Spiritual relationships cut Him off from natural relationships. It is most important that this should be emphasized. Psalm 69 shows us that spiritual relationships are the closest. "Into the land of Judea". They had been at Jerusalem, a city of

Judea, now they came into the land of Judea where John was baptizing in person. That thought is important. We read in 4. 1 "As therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples)" - He was baptizing as in charge of them, but they were doing the actual work. Wonderful wisdom the Lord Jesus showed in this. Two reasons are apparent to us. Others we may learn as we wait upon Him. -

(1) The Lord would not appear to set Himself up against John. John was the forerunner, and though John was to decrease and the Lord was to increase, the Lord would not make disciples in opposition to John. Hence He did not personally baptize.

(a) John had rightly said Christ was the One Who would baptize in the Holy Spirit. Therefore though He approved of water baptism and EMPHASIZED water baptism, He Himself never baptized in water, that this might put the more stress on the fact that He was the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit. That was His peculiar baptism.

The Lord Jesus was tarrying with them and baptizing was going on. LARGE NUMBERS professed the Name of the Lord; yet only 500 brethren saw the Lord in resurrection. He found 5,000 listen to Him at a time when He fed them, but only 500 were gathered together after His resurrection. Where we hope most we ought sometimes to be rightly discouraged; and where we hope least we have sometimes cause for the greatest encouragement. Under all circumstances, and in every case, we stand in need of heavenly encouragement which is ever from God Himself.

Verse 23. "And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there; and they came and were baptized", - more emphatically "They were coming alongside and were being baptized" - keeping on being baptized, i.e. - there were always fresh disciples. So we have Jesus and His disciples baptizing; and "John also baptizing". There is no mention of John's disciples here, ^{albeit} although John is baptizing.

Though we have John mentioned, we do not have his disciples in connection with baptism. We find some thus described in connection with other things. Where we have Christ mentioned, His disciples perform the baptizing. "Much water there". Why this stress? First, because of its literal need. Baptism was by immersion. Secondly, because of the figurative teaching. Baptism was burial; and it needed the much water of judgment to typify it, and much water of wrath. Baptism figured drowning, it figured judgment. It figured being under the wrath, showing that Christ would take the place of His beloved people.

Verse 24. "For John was not yet cast into prison". We know how Herod afterwards cast him into prison and murdered him. Right up to the last he appears to have been baptizing. John was a man willing for strain. He went through much for his Lord, and while quite a young man he was put into prison; yea, while quite a young man he was killed for his Lord. We do not always realise that John died so early, but how long was his life!

Verse 25. "Then there became a questioning between some of John's disciples" (out from the disciples of John), "with a Jew" (literally. We should render by the singular, not with Jews, but with a Jew), "about purification". "And they came to John" - that is, John's disciples came, and said unto him, Rabbi, He That was with thee beyond Jordan, to Whom thou bearest witness, behold the Same baptizeth, and all men come to Him. This is all one narrative. "Therefore there arose a question" refers to the questioning between the disciples of John and this Jew. Now we have already seen that baptism suggests wrath, implied by the many waters figuring much wrath. But baptism has a further thought of purification. Hence there ^{was} ~~is~~ the further controversy concerning purification. The two-fold teaching of Baptism is very impressive. The type suggests not merely the same thought as passing through the waters of the Red Sea but the laver of Israel's priests in the tabernacle.

God thus brings before us not only the idea of deserved judgment (i.e. the criminal nature of sin) but of uncleanness, (i.e. the contamination of sin). Baptism deals with both FIGURATIVELY, as Christ's blood deals with both legally and experimentally. We speak of our consciences, saying that they are sprinkled with the blood of Christ, also that we are cleansed within by the blood of Christ. The sprinkling with the blood of Christ deals with the fact that wrath is settled for us, that blood has taken away our judgment. But the blood also CLEANSSES. So water baptism figures both aspects of the work of the Lord Jesus. It deals with the outside, but it emphasizes the teaching relative to the inside. They said to John "Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to Whom thou bearest witness, behold the Same baptizeth, and all men come to Him". What made them say this? This Jew had evidently referred to the baptism of the Lord Jesus. In what way he referred to it we do not know. Had he been baptized by one of the disciples of the Lord Jesus? and had the disciples of John when they had gone up to him, finding him baptized with the disciples of the Lord Jesus, felt rather that their master was losing the authority and the glory? If so, were they jealous for John? It may be something of this character had happened. They may have felt "But OUR teacher is the chosen one. John is not so popular as he was". They said to him, "Behold the Same baptizeth, and all men come to Him". Now here was a difficulty for John, a real difficulty, because his disciples asked him, and it was right they should look up to him. But though he was called to emphasize personal responsibility over them, beyond all he MUST emphasize Christ. Hence he added "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven". "A Man". Here he refers to the humanity of the Lord Jesus, yet to something more than this. He speaks of himself also, as if to say "What I receive I do not construct myself, nor is it that I gather men around me. This was given me from heaven, and therefore if Anyone comes from above He has perfect

right to direct the disciples around Himself". John thus takes the opportunity of speaking about Christ. Whoever asked him about himself was sure to receive an answer about Christ. Chapter 1 illustrates this. Having mentioned his own nothingness the faithful servant ever says, "Ye yourselves know that I emphasize HIM. I have been sent to tell of THAT ONE; the emphatic THAT ONE, the glorified THAT ONE, the separated THAT ONE" - the expression "That One" is emphatic. They had said "This One baptizeth" (26). John said, as it were, "It is more than 'This One', 'tis 'THAT ONE' - the ^{Contrasted} Glorious/One. "This One" was often used as a contentious and almost insulting term among Jews of that day, but John would allow nothing against the glorious Lord. That One, the One distinct from all. So the Baptist adds in verse 30 "THAT ONE must increase". "HE is the glorious One, the exalted One". Notice the names John gives to Christ. He refers to Him as Christ, That One, the Bridegroom, The One that cometh from above, He That is out from heaven. O that we, by grace, may have a similar desire to exalt Christ, that there should be the honouring of the Lord. The mark of the true believer is that he follows the Lord, rejoicing in the voice of the Lord, desiring to live for the Lord, and longing that honour should be brought to the Lord. One mark of wandering is little care for the Lord. One mark of sin is thinking more of self than of the Lord. O that by grace we may confess our sins, and realising the glory of the Lord, exalt the Lord in our experience individually and collectively. O that the Lord may increase though we become less, that our conscious nothingness may be His exaltation, and our feeling of absolute frailty may only be honouring Himself more, for WHAT are we and WHERE were we by nature? We were lost. By grace we are simply saved ones dependent upon Him. The Holy Spirit ever emphasizes this. Without Him we can do nothing. Let us therefore, as John did, exalt our beloved Lord, and thus shall we settle all disputings as John settled them - Christ as the Centre, Christ glorified.

11.

It is by this true realisation of our true position that we enter into the BLESSEDNESS of the Christian life, and thus are enabled to live in the light of THAT DAY.

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