

NO. 150.

M A T T H E W X V I I . 1 - 7 .

An Address by Mr. P. W. Heward,
At 61, Upton Lane, Forest Gate,
4th April, 1920.

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I want, beloved friends, that everything in this narrative should lead up to the command of the narrative, which is given us to obey. The description of Christ before us first, and what He is to the Father, and THEN the appointment "Hear Him". If we realise what He is, we shall realise our appointed attitude toward Him. "THIS IS", and then "HEAR HIM". Thus we have the inference, as soon as we know that He is the Beloved Son in Whom the Father is well pleased. But the narrative is wrapped up in that which only shows its beautiful brightness the more. We behold the Lord Jesus with Moses and Elias, and Peter and James and John; - all of them wonderfully privileged saints; three of them writers of Scripture; all of them gifted with wonderful blessings; and Christ is the Central One, and the Father does not say a word about THEM, but simply about Him. Amid the glorious servants He is the infinitely more Glorious Son, and God the Father calls our attention to HIM, for if we know HIM aright we shall understand that all the trophies of His finished work are only to His praise, and any exalting of that which God does through them can rightly be done only through Him Who is the Altogether Praised One, and through Whom they stand as saved ones, and are able to serve.

Another Gospel record tells us that Moses and Elias were talking about the exodus of the Lord Jesus, that wonderful exodus which He was then about to accomplish at Jerusalem. So many people think of the Exodus in the Second Book of the Bible when you mention that word; but Moses and Elias thought of a more wonderful exodus. Israel this very night will be saying, "We were bondmen"; and WE know that we, too, were bondmen, but we have a

greater exodus than they remember. We have been delivered from the bondage of a dismal Egypt. The ruined world is Egypt, and we are no longer the world's bondmen. HIS exodus is the best subject. The other exodus was but a type, an earthly picture. Beautiful is the picture, but who would put aside the reality for the picture? Let the picture rather tell us more of that which is portrayed. And so Moses and Elias were talking with Him. And then sadly we hear, "But Peter answered". Oh what a danger is often brought about when the WRONG person answers. They were talking with Him, and HE was the One to answer, but Peter answered. There are many "Peters" who answer, instead of hearing Him. And so we read the striking words, "Peter answered and said unto Jesus". He did not mean to be rude. He said "Lord". He had a good suggestion to make, he thought. "It is GOOD for us to be here". It WAS enjoyable. Peter spoke out of the fulness of his heart. Oh, beloved friends, there are many of us who, perhaps, have thought that if we feel happy in the presence of the Lord, there is a very good reason for us to talk, and that we have every reason to be encouraged that we shall not make a mistake when we are happy in the Lord's presence, when we have a mountain-top experience. I could almost say - "That is the very time when we are likely to make a mistake", but every other time has its perils. We need to hear even on the mountain-top. There is a danger of our prominence even there. And, in the joy of the Lord, and delighting to be there, and saying "It is good to be there" Peter makes a mistake. There are some dear children of God who feel unwilling to be "checked" in one of their "good" things. They have a "good*thing" in front of them, a delightful project, and they think you are unkind if you get in the way of IT. IT has come to them through a mountain-top experience, and they feel sure IT is the Lord's will, but they have not heard His voice for IT. Here is the failure when FEELING comes in instead of the will of the Lord. "Let every man be swift to hear; slow to speak".

Beware of the dangers amid a mountain-top experience. It is good to be there so long as the Lord wants you to be there, but He also has some more rugged work for you down in the valley. I do not mean the valley of depression; yet it may be the valley of Baca; but even there the Lord will grant a plentiful rain, - water of another kind, to refresh His inheritance when it is weary. Going through the valley of Baca is only a steppingstone from strength to strength, till everyone appeareth before God, because in the hearts of those who pass through the valley of Baca, (or weeping), there are the ways, and they do not stop half-way when they have the ways of the Lord in their heart! But we must not be those who choose where we would be. "It is good to be here" - but only good to be here as long as the Lord wishes us to be here. We are not to select for ourselves even the good things. the LORD'S appointments are perfect. And Peter makes the mistake of answering, and he says "If Thou wilt, let us make". He wants to be right. "If Thou wilt", he puts this aspect in prominence. But he has his suggestion. Oh, beloved friends, there is even a danger as to our suggestions. We want to hear the Lord's voice BEFORE we spend our time on our suggestions. We are not to bring to the Lord alternatives, and say "Which of these two hast THOU chosen". We have to be careful even as to our proposals to make something. The mind must often be directed on to something which the Lord made. Moses and Elias talked of HIS exodus. Peter, alas, of man's making, his own making. Let us talk more of the Lord's exodus, the Lord's work, "Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through THY work".

"While he yet spake", the Lord answered through wondrous circumstances; - "Behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them". This bright cloud brought a shadow that they could not see. They were to be taught that their experience then was only a shadow, - a shadow of good things to come; and Peter wanted some of the good things before the right time. There was a shadow,

and behold a voice. Ah, this voice was more than a mere sound. "BEHOLD a voice". Can you LOCK at a voice? Ah, beloved friends, this voice was to be realised as something more than mere words. "BEHOLD A VOICE". "Behold a voice out of the cloud which said, This". The voice said, "This". You remember how in the chapter before Peter had answered and said, when he answered rightly, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God". He understood the word "Son" on that occasion, but now he had answered wrongly, and the Father Who had before revealed His Beloved Son reminded the disciple of his right answer, and the words sounded forth, "THIS is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased". In each Gospel of Matthew, Mark and Luke, we have this stress, - a stress which links us with Matt. 3, where we behold the Lord Jesus brought up out from the water of baptism, figuring wrath; and there as the One Who had completed righteousness and passed through wrath in type, He is similarly marked out, "Thou art My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased". We little realise the fulness of the Father's DELIGHT in the Beloved Son, the One Who was not only the Beloved in the bosom of the Father, but in Whom the Father was well pleased for His righteousness' sake, even because of His finished work, Who had carried through that work. If in Matt. 3 we have the picture of His death and resurrection, here we have the picture of His glory. His glory is on the basis of a finished work, for in Matthew it is "After six days", and "six" is the number of a finished work. "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work" was the typical testimony. In Luke we read "About an eight days after", and "eight" is the number of resurrection; and so, because of a finished work, the Lord Jesus is MARKED OUT on resurrection ground, as the Beloved Son, in Whom the Father is well pleased. Then comes the command "Hear (YE) Him". It is not for you to speak, it is for you to hear. He is to be the Speaker. Peter had answered and said, but Peter is to listen. "Hear (ye) Him", listen to His voice. He is given as a Leader and

Commanded to the people, "Hear (ye) Him" - to know what He says, and to delight in that which He appoints. "Hear (ye) Him". Oh, beloved friends, surely this is the character of the present (dispensation.) The Lord Jesus Christ is exalted, that His people may hear His voice, a stranger they are not to follow, they know not the voice of strangers. Of old He said, "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you", and again He said, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments". "Hear (ye) Him"; and if we have been brought out of death into life, if we have heard the voice of the Son of God, (and they that hear shall live), then our life henceforth is to be marked by this holy attitude of hearing Him. It is NOT for us to arrange. Herein is the birth of our ANXIETY. We are NOT to scheme our way through the problems of this weary world. Rather "Hear Him". He has the work in hand. We are simply representatives. We have no responsibilities beyond that of heart-felt faithfulness. In the power of the Holy Spirit Who takes of the things of Christ to show them to us, we are simply to "hear HIM". We are not in charge of the work, or in charge of our lives. We are to hear HIM, and whatsoever He says unto us we are to do it. It may be costly, it may involve a strain, there may be difficulties; but we are to hear Him. The believer is emancipated from his cleverness. The believer is delivered from his perplexities. "Hear (ye) HIM". But the Lord does not only speak in words of ~~promise~~ ^{command}, Not only does He speak in words of promise, sometimes He blends the two, yea, oftentimes He gives a command which wraps up within it a fulness of encouragement. Peter had been speaking before, but Peter has not a word to say now. When the disciples heard, they fell on their faces, and were sore afraid. Not when they heard HIM. "They heard". Their first hearing is the hearing of reproof, and rebuke. When the disciples heard, they fell on their face. Yes, this was a steppingstone. And then the Lord Jesus graciously took the position which was marked out for Him, and He began to speak, and He came and touched

them. Oh how wonderfully He deals with His troubled people. "I fell at His feet as dead" says John, "He laid His right hand upon me" - that right hand which had the seven stars, yet He did not drop one of them when He laid it upon John. "His right hand doeth gloriously", and that right hand can meet every need of His people. The Lord has no secondary love to His people. His very RIGHT hand is devoted to them. "He laid His right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the First and the Last". He buries all their fear in what He is, yea, all the difficulties are removed in what He is. So is it in this passage. "This is My beloved Son, .. Hear Him". He touched them and said, "Arise, be NOT afraid." Peter said, "I am willing to die" on another occasion, and boasted "I will not deny," I will not falter; but when the Lord Jesus reproved him. He added quickly the words, Let not your heart be troubled. The Lord would not OVERSTRAIN Peter, and so on this occasion He did not arouse Peter and say to him, Why did you speak at the wrong time, but He said "Arise and be not afraid". "His mouth is most sweet". "This is My Beloved Son, hear Him". Oh how wonderful are the FIRST words that the Lord utters after He is marked out as the One to be heard. He says to His people, "Arise". How often that is His first word. Of necessity it contained a measure of rebuke, but, oh, so tender. How many of us would have spoken very differently to Peter in such a context. We should have drawn the inference that it was a good thing he was afraid after he had made such a grave mistake, that it would teach him the lesson more fully. But the Lord spoke so tenderly. There was a reproof in the word "Arise", for Peter said, "Lord it is good to be here", and he had to learn that instead of making tabernacles which he thought he could arrange, Another One would make the tabernacles, the abiding places, and prepare a place for Peter. The only making that the servant could do on that occasion was to be made to fall on his face, and he could not do much other work then. He had to arise and

leave the place where he said, It is good to be here. It would be good to be there in the Lord's appointed time, but it was good for him to go wherever the Lord appointed first. "Arise and be not afraid". "Be not afraid". Here is a suggestion, not only of the tenderness of the Lord, but of the way in which His commands penetrate. The most repeated command of Scripture, or one of the most repeated, is, "Be not afraid", and one of the most difficult to obey. If it said, "Do not SHOW you are afraid", we might make a human effort at obedience; but the word cuts far deeper, it cuts at the root of feelings, and you cannot put on not being afraid. You can put on an appearance of this, but you cannot PUT ON an obedience to it. It pierces through and through. But He Who gave the command gives the power. "Fear not" is His word of encouragement to His people. "Be not afraid". Oh what a stress there is on the fact they were afraid, and that is commonly the case. There is a grave danger in a mountain-top experience if we make the mistake of putting ourselves into prominence, and thus become somewhat excited because of the experience. When Peter was enthusiastic for the Lord to defend the Lord, and he used that sword without a command, WITHOUT hearing Him, and instead of having an ear for the Lord, he cut off the ear of the servant of the High priest, and the Lord showed that HIS work ^{then} was to deal with the ear, - a hint to Peter to listen and not to act, to wait and not to arrange. At that time the next thing Peter did was to run away. You may be sure of this, that when a man is very determined in his own strength, the next thing will be a faltering and when one, in a mountain-top experience of joy thinks to arrange for himself, and feels happy with an excitement which is not altogether disciplined in, and under the Lord's authority, the next thing will often be that he will become very frightened and depressed. And the Lord steps in to deal with that circumstance, but not to excuse the failure which led to it. Oh, beloved friends, there are few passages which deal more penetratingly

with the "feelings" than this passage. You see a man who is carried away by feelings. The majority of us, I suppose, if the Holy Spirit had not given us a record, would have thought that the attitude of Peter was right, to want to do something for the Lord, and to enjoy being there. But there are times when we are not to be occupied with what we do for the Lord, but with what THE LORD has done for, and now says to us. We are to do after He appoints. It is easy to have an enthusiasm, to do this or that and to be this or that. Beware, impulse and emotion will only lead a child of God from excitement of joy to excitement of another kind. We want to be subject to the mind of the Lord, and to hear His voice, and have His authority. THEN it will be good to be in His way, in His appointment, and thus truly and not only in appearance, guided by the Holy Spirit.

"And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only". They saw HIM, and HE SAID to them, Tell the ^{SIGHT} (vision) to no man until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead. "Hear HIM" is another command. Again the disciples are not to be governed by their feelings. Would they not like to have told the (vision)? They might have said, This will be a help in our testimony, it will be useful. Nay, feelings must be swept into the background, except they are feelings of loving devotedness to include whatever He says. These are the right feelings. These are the true emotion. "AND HIS DISCIPLES ASKED HIM" - here is one step forward. Instead of Peter answering, they began asking. "And they asked Him saying, Why then say the Scribes that Elias must first come? AND JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID", and so they were led onward, and guided, in increasing measure. But, oh, beloved friends, there is a large measure of failure still recorded. We find afterwards when Peter is sought out by some in Capernaum, and a question is put to him, PETER ANSWERED instead of hearing the Beloved Son. And the Lord Jesus, when Peter comes to Him, reminds Peter of what has taken place, "Of whom do the kings of the earth take tribute or custom, of their

own children, or of strangers?" The word "children" is, literally "sons". Yes, Peter is reminded, "This is My Beloved Son, hear Him". Peter had felt quite sure that his Master paid tribute, for this was the temple tax. He did not like the suggestion which some made that his Master did not pay the temple tax. His FEELINGS of love were so strong to his Master, he did not want any insinuations against his Master. "Feelings" again. He ought to have heard the word of the Lord first. You recollect, moreover, how he had "feelings" in the 16th chapter, when the Lord said He was about to die. The learner, alas, began to rebuke the Lord, "Pity Thyself, this shall not be to Thee". FEELINGS. And so, throughout, we see that feelings of affection, and feelings of enjoyment, are ALL dangerous unless every feeling is wrapped up in these words, "This is My beloved Son, HEAR ^(YE) HIM". The Lord give us grace to have the true eyesight. Peter spoke rightly when it was said *to him* "Flesh and blood hath not REVEALED it unto thee, but My Father Which is in heaven". The true eyesight was then given, - Christ was revealed. The true hearing is joined therewith, - "This is My Beloved Son, Hear ye Him". Oh that this may be our joy henceforth.
