Sermon preached by Mr. G.J. Collier, at Jireh Chapel, Tenterden, on the evening of 18th May, 1983

If the Lord may help me this evening, I would draw your attention to a word which will be found in I Corinthians 15, the first verse, and part of the second.

Text: "MOREOVER, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved." I Cor. 15. 1 & 2.

There are five great points in this word before us. I will just mention them, so that we can retain them as a base of our subject this evening. First of all this word, 'declare'. "Moreover, brethren, I declare". Secondly, 'I preached', and thirdly, 'ye have received'; and then fourthly, 'ye stand', and finally and fifthly, 'ye are saved'. Tremendous points of truth these five points are, and I have noted, no doubt you have, how that 'five' figures a great deal in the Word of God right throughout, and so often this is one of the great demonstrations of the inspiration of God's holy Word. So often do these five points in the Scripture denote the grace of God. We have an example of that here in our text this evening, that these five points are demonstrations of God's grace toward the people of His choice.

I sometimes feel we do not read enough the Bible. We may have our casual and spasmodic turnings to it and readings here a chapter or a chapter or two, but I feel that one of the great things is to read the Word of God from beginning to end. I have just freshly started from Genises to Revelation, and a friend of mine told me the other day that he practiced reading the Bible throughout once every year. It is the all important factor for knowledge and understanding, the Word of God.

If I may tell you a little private, domestic experience of mine, over sixty years ago now. I used to receive letters from a young lady, and I used to read these letters. I did not just look at the beginning of them, and then turn over a few pages and see who it was that was writing, and then put it in my pocket. I think if that had been my practice we should not have been in close union for sixty years. You see I not only read the letter, but I read it many, many times. It was from a person that loved me, and it was written by a person I loved.

And here we have the Word of God from Him who loves with an eternal love all His people, and He sends out of that immeasurable love the Word of His grace, the Word of His truth. My dear friends, we ought to take it far, far more to our hearts than we do. There is nothing in my view so profitable as the reading of God's holy Word. There is always something to gain. We may well find ourselves examined right to the very heart of our being by the Word of God. We may also find the line in which we must walk and take that that we might find precious nearness to Jesus and the things of God in their real power and blessedness.

Well now, let us look at these five things then, one after another. I have noticed this, perhaps you have, when we have five things in the Word of God, the first and the last are often the most important. You just look at it here now, and see how that is bourne out. The first of these things is, 'I declare', says Paul. He declares the whole glorious fulness and fundamental reality of the gospel, and of course that was all of his life, it was the spring of his ministry. And then the last of these five things is this, 'wherein ye are saved', and you will find that there is a connecting link between these two, the first and the last. And then again I have noticed this, the third, in the middle of these five things is always of great significance and importance, and that is, 'ye have received'. Now you look at the Word that God declares, or that His servant declares, of the Word of God, that being received is the cause and evidence of those souls being saved. So you see there is a connection in this way most wonderfully with the first, and the last, and then the central truth of all. Now this is only my observation of these things, but no doubt, if you think of it very carefully and look into it, you will find how that is borne out again and

again in the precious, sacred Word of God.

Well now, let us take the first point. Paul said 'I declare'. He did not invent the gospel. It was not the creature of his own intelligence, and he was a mighty intellectual man was Paul. But he knew full well that the gospel had no origin in himself. He felt it was a mighty privilege to be raised up and called by God's grace, and ordained, and sent forth as a minister of the gospel, that he might declare the wonderful things of God. No, Paul was declaring what God had declared before time began, before the world was made, and every minister of the gospel declares what was from the beginning. It is unalterable, unchangeable, the glorious foundation of fundamental truth. Paul says, 'I declare unto you the gospel'.

When Paul was at Ephesus, you remember how he told the Church after two years' ministry, that he was called to go to Jerusalem, and as he parted company with those dear saints at Ephesus, they all went down to the shore to see the last of their faithful servant and minister, and they were weeping. But just before they parted company, Paul said this, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God". (Acts 20.27). And he says I am free from the blood of any man; no one at Ephesus, or anywhere else for that matter, could lay a finger of condemnation at Paul and say you only taught us part of the truth, you only declared some of the gospel. Paul says I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. And this is a faithful place and position indeed, which God requires from all His servants. We cannot avoid, sometimes it may seem, the truths in this glorious gospel and the Word of God are not all so pallatable as others. Some people who go forth and claim to be ministers of the gospel only present the easy, softer and more acceptable aspects of the gospel. But you see it is all balanced in a wonderful way and manner. There is medicine in it; there is food in it; there is correction to be found and learnt by it; there is encouragement for the least, and the worst, and the weakest. These is a buildeing up, and sometimes there is a pulling down. All these are parts of the great and glorious declaration of the gospel, and Paul says, 'I have declared unto you the gospel'.

And you notice where this takes place after these fourteen chapters (of course there were not chapters when Paul wrote this letter), but after this long period of exhortation, admonition and declaration, Paul comes to this point as he closes this great and wonderful epistle, he says, 'Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel! Well, my dear friends, what a sonderful thing it is! The heavens declare the glory of God, as the Creator, the gospel declares the glory of a Triune Jehovah in its wonder, blessedness and greatness. The Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost receive all honour and glory by the declaration of the gospel.

Well now, we must pass to the second point, and that is, 'I have preached unto you'. You may say, what is the difference between the declaration of the gospel, and the preaching of it? Well, there is a difference, and it is important that we should lay hold of it. You see the difference is this, as I view it, the declaration is a declaration of God's truth, unalterable, unchanging and glorious, God-honouring. The preaching is God's instrumental way of application of declared truth. The preaching, therefore, is the preaching by instruments that God has chosen and ordained of the words of truth. God has ordained that by the foolishness of preaching, as we were reading just now (I Cor 1.18), He should save them that believe. Now it does not mean to say that the preacher or the preaching avoids some of the great fundamentals of the gospel, but he does mean that they will be enabled to take the words of truth and preach them. And there is nothing to my mind more wonderful in this world, and in the whole economy of God's grace, than the ordination and the use that God makes of feeble men to preach the everlasting gospel. There was the Lord our God with angels at His beck and call who have never sinned and never disobeyed, never broken anything that was sacred, and yet He turns from the angels and He appoints poor, fallen man, who by His grace has been raised up from death and darkness, and He appoints this creature, this man, this poor, weak, sinful, dependent man to go forth and preach the

everlasting gospel, the words of truth and grace, to sinners' hearts. I say what a profound wonder is this!

When Cornelius received a great vision from God the angel came to him, and he said, "Send men to Joppa and find one whose name is Peter" (Acts 10.5). The angel could not preach the gospel to him, he had to send all the way to Joppa to hear from the words of poor Peter the words of grace and truth and life that was to bring the Gentile people first of all into the Kingdom of God. And, O my dear friends, I daresay that you have some very special experience in regard to preachers. You love them, not because of what they are, but because of what they preach, and what they set forth, and if you have had any experience of the preciousness of Jesus Christ through the words of a minister of the gospel, you cannot but feel attached to that person. You love the memory of him, you cherish every thought that comes to your mind of how the Lord used him to bring you into a true state of knowledge of Chrost and His gospel.

Now you dear young people, I remember the time when I used to hear some very eminent ministers of the gospel, and they were especially used in my case to bring me to a place of understanding, and a place of seeking, a place where I revered the sacred things of God and eschewed those precious words of truth and righteousness. And O, how I was saying this morning, how I loved to attend, and cherished the time which would come so slowly, I thought in those days, when I could enter the House of the Lord and hear from the lips of one of His own chosen vessels the words of truth and grace. And I daresay you find sometimes that there is a thought in your heart, and the minister in the pulpit must have known all about you, somebody had told him.

Only the other day I had one of my congregation come to me and said you told Mr. So-and-so, who was preaching in my place, you told him all about me. I said, I have done nothing of the sort, I only had a quarter of an hour with him before he went into the pulpit, and we had no time, and I had no intention to give any details about your case. Well, she said, it is a most wonderful thing, because everything he said seemed to directly apply to my case, my feelings, my experience, as if he knew and was unravelling really the very thoughts of my heart. It must be the Lord that knew. It must be the Lord that gave him the word and brought that message to my soul, and it was a great means of encouragement.

Yes preaching. 'I have preached', says Paul, and what a wonderful statement. What a vast ground he had to support that statement. No man since the day of Pentecost has preached like the Apostle Paul. We only know a little of his sermons, but we can see the effects and what we have here by the Holy Spirit, and elsewhere. We know that he was a man sent of God, raised up and chosen by Him, as the Lord Jesus said to him on the way to Damascus, "Thou shalt witness for me among kings and Gentiles and many people" (Acts 9.15) 'I have preached the gospel'.

Now there are just one or two things that I must say about preachers, and one is this: They must be sent. "How can they preach except they be sent?" (Rom.10.15). I am quite sure that every real minister of the gospel is oftimes found perplexed and deeply concerned about whether really he has been sent. The devil will try to persuade them that they have not; anything that can possibly deter a real servant of Christ will be used by the great adversary. There will be such a lack of fruit; there will be so little evidence of effects; there will be few that will seemingly be moved; people will come and go seemingly without any impact, and the question will go on in the heart and conscience: 'Have I really been sent?' But I find this when one is down in these depths at times, the Lord wonderfully sends a singular evidence that one has been sent.

I went once to Peterborough in the war, when there was a bombing raid on, and we had to bring the service to an abrupt end, and I went away and I thought whatever have I accomplished, whatever has been done?

It seems a blank completely, utterly and unavoidably. But then in 1969 (this of course was somewhere in 1941, I think) I attended a service and a lady came up to me at the end of it and said, do you remember preaching at Peterborough when we had an air raid, and it was very dangerous and difficult. I said, madam, I do remember it. She said, that was the time when the Lord broke into my soul and delivered me from Satan's power and darkness. You see, the Lord will keep His people and His servants when they get discouraged, cast down, and prove they are sent by Him. It is not the bold, confident, proud, who are so sure of their credentials and so certain of being able to deliver satisfactorily to their hearers that bear any evidence of being sent. It is the tried, tempted, struggling soul that has difficulty to find a text, and difficulty to deliver upon it, and very little encouragement in doing so, they are the people God has sent. And be sure of this, whom God has sent God will use to His own glory and to the gathering in of His elect from the four corners of the earth. Yes, the preacher, we read in the book of Ecclesiastes, "The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth". (Ecc, 12.10). So then 'the preaching'.

Now we come thirdly to the great central truth of our text, and that is, 'received'. "I preached unto you, which also ye have received". Now my dear friends, if we have come under the preaching of God's Word indeed, and with any degree of power, then there has been a receiving of God's truth in our heart. Now that does not mean to say that the creature, the person, the individual, has done anything meritorious in this matter. You see it is all the work of God. You see, when the Lord Jesus was here He gave an illustration, and that illustration was this: "The sower went forth to sow", and he took, of course, with him good seed (Mark 4). It was good seed that fell on the wayside; it was good seed that fell among thorns, but neither of these two places yielded any fruit. It was not the seed, it was the ground. Then He says, there was seed sown in good ground. It was good because it was prepared ground and the seed received it and brought forth fruit in abundance.

Now when God intends His people to receive He will prepare them for it. Sometimes this preparation is lengthy, very severe, deep. It is needful it should be. We do not want anything like the wayside experience in hearing the Word of God. I hope none of you will, when you leave the House of Prayer, have lost everything that I have tried to say. I hope none of you will prove to be wayside hearers, but I do hope there might be a real receiving of the truth as it is in Jesus. You see, 'ye have received'. "And as many - says the Word of God - as received Him", that is, the Lord Jesus. John speaks of that in that wonderful first chapter of the gospel, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." (John 1.12) "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (v 13). You see, it was by the power of God that there was a receiving. O, that is something that is very vital and important, and receiving of God's truth should be a concern with all who seek after the things of God.

You will never be satisfied with merely hearing the Word; you will never be satisfied really because you come to hear it in the place where it is declared; you will only be satisfied when you can really feel this honestly in your hearts, 'I have received the precious Word of the Lord in my soul'. O, and it will make a great effect upon you; it will change everything; it will turn darkness into light; it will turn the love of sin out of your poor heart, and it will place within you a real reverence and love for the things of God and for Christ Himself when you receive. There were many in the Word of God who did not receive, not among their fellow men, and we are told in the Word of God why they received them not; it was because they knew not Him who had sent Him. 'That which ye have received'.

Our time is going and I must come to the fourth point, and that is 'wherein ye stand'. Now if you want a real proof of your having

received the Word of God savingly and blessedly in your soul, here it is, you will stand. You will stand when everything else seems to be breaking away and decaying around you. You will stand fast, as I think Paul says in the sixteenth chapter of this same epistle, and the 13th verse, he says, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." This is how Paul concluded this wonderful epistle to the Corinthians - 'Watch', 'Stand fast'. A waverer just simply demonstrates that they have never really received. A person who cannot stand adversity, opposition or tribulation really declares that they have never really received. God sends these very things to prove to His people the grace that will enable them to stand. And they will stand in spite of all that the devil can do, and all their own poor, fickle, unworthy hearts can lift up against. They will stand! 'Wherein ye stand', says Paul, "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness". (Eph. 6.14). And Paul in the Ephesians gives us that wonderful catalogue of spiritual armoury which God supplies to all His saints, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, the helmet of salvation, and so having done all, ye may stand. (v 15/17)

O, you may see people going away from the truth; you may see people depart and never return; you may feel saddened by these things in these days. But the real secret behind it all is that they do not stand simply because they have not received. Now that is a very great principle. I firmly believe it, and therefore I declare it.

And now we come to our last point, the fifth in our text, 'By which ye are saved'. O, my dear friends, what a wonderful thing this is to be saved? The word is often used, bandied about sometimes, talked about by men who, it might appear, know very little about its real nature. But to be saved by the Lord, and by His grace, what a marvellous, infinitely glorious thing it is, 'wherein ye are saved'. I said at the beginning that this last point is connected with the first, and so it is. It was what God declared before the foundation of the earth would be verified and fulfilled in every vessel of mercy in time, in God's own way, and in His own time. He did indeed appoint a way whereby His people might be justified. Now He declares that justification, and those who are saved are made to rejoice in the justifying power of God. They say, "The just shall live by faith". (Rom. 1.17).

If He declares then that such a soul should be called out of the world, from the very depths of disgrace, and ruin, and wretchedness, by one single word being dropped into the heart, that will be fulfilled in time, and that sinner will be brought out by God and called by His grace, and saved with an everlasting salvation. These are the saints of God, saved by Jesus Christ. We were singing precious words this evening about the blood, the blood of the dear Redeemer, the sufferings of that glorious Son of God. This is the cause of the salvation. This is the very heart of it, and this is the experience of God's saved people, loved and received. They want more and more to know the power of that precious blood of atonement in their hearts. When they can really feel they are saved, when they can see their sins blotted out and their souls cleansed by the blood of Christ; saved with an everlasting salvation, without money. There is no human merit, no creature work can ever come into this great subject or matter. It is from first to last the work of God, and this is a great comfort to us all because, if it was us, if it were you and me, had to play a part in it, we should never be saved. It is essential that we should praise Him who ever liveth, He who can never change. He can in all things do right and fulfil His own glorious will in the great salvation of His people. He is the One that saves, and saves for evermore. We only have a part here - I was going to say a small part - but it is a wonderful part nevertheless, in this salvation when we are here in this world. The greater part, and some of us will not be long before we reach it, will be heaven, when the unmitigating glory will be revealed, the preciousness of Christ will be seen in all its fulness, and as I was speaking this morning,

the beauty of the Lord will shine in a glowing which we could never stand here. But the redeemed soul must enter into heaven to behold it. That is what salvation means. It means that your life is taken up by God, and your soul is possessed by His glory. It means that your whole being, your will, your heart, your affections are gathered unto the Lord Himself, and under His command, and in His cont rol, to the everlasting glory of His name.

So these, my dear friends, are the five great points that Paul brings before us. May God bring them into our hearts, and may we not only receive the truth, but may we be saved by the truth.

Amen.