

probably May 26 1980

Evening Lesson. Ephesians 2.

TEXT ACTS 2 V 37-39

There is an amazing significance in the opening language of the Text I wish to call the attention of the godly to. "Now when they heard this," It was 'hearing this' that had a living, gracious, life-imparting^{effect} on dead souls. The Lord conveyed spiritual, immortal life to their souls when they 'heard this'. I see three things in this that they heard. First, with much reverence, adoration, solemnity and love we mentioned in this afternoon's discourse, the crucifixion, the unparalleled sufferings, agony and Passion, the bitter smart of the dear Son of God incarnate. "Now when they heard this" - their responsibility for His crucifixion, and life flowing to their souls they suddenly became aware that they participated willingly, actively in the crucifixion of the Lamb of God. That is the first thing. "Now when they heard this" by the power of the Spirit, that this poor man as they viewed Him; despised, rejected, hated, fought against; when they heard this, that He was both Lord and Christ they felt alarm and tremendous concern, and they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" See the force of the passage; "What shall we do? Is there hope for such as we? Is there a door of hope for those who crucified the Son of God actively, willingly, deliberately? Is there hope for such as we?"

Two other blessed things I see in this. Peter had referred to the precious Jesus: "that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." And those two immortal, invincible, glorious titles of the Lord penetrated their spirits. God had made Him Lord, King; King of kings and Lord of lords. They had crucified the King, and this King would come to be their Judge. You understand the tremendous, unparalleled concern of their souls. They had crucified the King of Glory, and He would descend and on the white Throne would judge them. "Men and brethren, what shall we do before this Judge, the King immortal, invisible, glorious? We have crucified the King!" And the third thing, God had made that same Jesus whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ. He is the Messiah. The Jews were well acquainted with the Messiah: they knew the meaning of the title, - a Saviour. Now God had made that same Jesus, whom they looked upon as a poor man, and despised and rejected Him, He is the Messiah. Why did it give birth to tremendous anxiety in their

minds? is it not in the Hymn?

"When Thou, my righteous Judge, shalt come
To take Thy ransomed people home,
Shall I among them stand?"

They became aware powerfully that unless they were interested in the Messiah and His work they would be lost for ever. Now you may appreciate what gave birth to tremendous concern in their spirits: this poor Man they had crucified; they had said, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him," God had made Him Lord and Christ. O the unparalleled concern of their souls! (I saw that just now in the vestry.)

So now a further step. It is a beautiful, singular, exclusive term for those born again, quickened by the Spirit,- 'pricked in their heart!'. The term belongs to the Lord's elect people and the time and manner of their conversion, imparting divine life to their souls. They were pricked in their heart. I have endeavoured to expound this. The Spirit by His powerful, invincible, divine operation pierced their hearts. I suggest this line of thought to the friends. You may have an intractable case to deal with: you try to impress on another the importance of the things of God and their immortal souls, and you say, With all my endeavour it has no effect on them. It is this that has an effect: they were pricked in their heart. Whatever man can do and tries to do for the good of others there is the realisation that it has no effect. This is the operation that has the effect of awakening the dead to life: there is nothing else. I speak in love to the dear families with children, grandchildren, relatives you will know nothing else has the effect you desire. They were pricked in their heart, and once they are,- it is the sovereign work of the Holy Ghost,- it is done, once and for all. It is not a fleeting, superficial conviction, (this is possible, but it is not of the Spirit of God) it is the vital, powerful, efficacious operation of the Holy Ghost. They were pricked in their heart. I will draw your attention to the other point; namely, the concept in my mind is in Hymn 802; the prayer of Joseph Hart that you joined in, that the Lord pierce your heart with 'the blood-dipt dart'. What is the concept there? Is it something that is injected and removed? I tell you it is divine life that enters the soul. It is the Spirit imparting life to the dead, and it is life that pricks you,- the life and power of the Spirit of God. It is not something that is static,

it is living, vital. It is life going into the soul; the life and power of the Spirit in a divine operation and it enters the heart. The work of the Spirit always enters the heart.

A few further steps by the grace of God and His merciful aid: there is such a wealth of divinity in this. Does not this cause great searching of heart as to whether we have been pricked? There is much in religion of a social nature: how we need the vital power and operations of the Holy Ghost! not externals. You need the vital power of the Spirit, and nothing less will satisfy a child of God. Though you delight to meet your dear friends you will want the power of the Spirit in your soul. This occasions great searchings of heart. Have I been pricked in my heart? We would be daily convinced of sin, and we need it continually. Have I one in the Sanctuary who is kicking against the pricks? The Lord is working in your heart; your conscience is pricked; are you kicking against it, trying to hold your idols? "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." There is no peace in your life: you know you are wrong. Blessed it would be if to day you were enabled to submit and resign yourself to the Lord. The third thing is, what a word of hope this is concerning those who are dead yet the Lord has given you a spirit ^{of prayer} for them! Don't you agonise for your offspring? That is not too strong a term. What a word of hope this is. Is any thing too hard for the Lord? The Lord is able by the power of His Spirit to do it for them so they are pricked in their heart. When the deed is done there is life, spiritual life, a living concern. Does not the Hymn say,

"For who of mercy needs despair,
Since I have mercy found?"

There is a ray of light, a sweet hope there. It is dilated on,- "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." 'They were pricked in their heart'.

Let us take the further steps by His Spirit and grace. Immediately there was a cry of life. "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble." a cry of spiritual life; a deep, inwrought, powerful concern expressed, so they said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They were in a dreadful state, in self-despair. They had crucified the Lord of Glory and He would come to be their Judge. He died to atone for the sins of His people: what if their sins were not

atoned for? The friends will know under condemnation of the law you do not know what to do. What can you do? If you spent your life shedding floods of tears what would it avail? I will tell^{you} one thing you will do by the help of God. The Lord will teach you to do it; to justify Him in condemnation. You will say to the Lord, "Though by my sins deserving hell," and later, "who can tell?" There is a chink of light. And why is the preacher able to express himself thus? It is my own spiritual experience. I justified the Lord if He consigned me to the pit. It is as though under deep, powerful conviction there is no hope, no experience of it. You are in self-despair and for the time being ignorant of a way of escape, a way of mercy, a way of salvation, a way of deliverance. "What shall we do?" My dear friends, would it not be a wonderful delight to have the Chapel half filled with these people? I said half full because I trust we have many who know salvation and know Christ. It would be remarkable if multitudes were in the same condition, crying out, "What shall we do?"

"What shall I do, or whither flee,
To escape the vengeance due to me?"

Then for a while under condemnation they do not know what to do; they are groping in the dark. The apostle Peter had the delight of telling them the way of divine mercy, deliverance, salvation. I put it to you, when you were under condemnation, in bondage you did not know where to fly to. Immediately Christ was revealed you knew where to fly to.

"Fly, then, awakened sinners, fly;
Your case admits no stay."

As with the cities of refuge, they knew where to run to and escape to. The roads were straight and well signposted. When the Lord Jesus is revealed you know where to flee to. It is the Spirit enables you to flee to the clefts of the Rock and the secret places of the stairs. "What shall we do?" It will be right for me to name to you, in many things there are times when you may say, "What shall we do?" Jehoshaphat said, "Neither know we what to do." Many of the dear friends in the Sanctuary have been in a position where they said exactly that. "What shall we do?" In the case of Jehoshaphat he answered his own question; "but our eyes are upon thee." What was he doing? Fixing his eyes on the Lord. A blessed thing this is. You know from the divine record the triumphant issue. They went out, and this is an incredible thing; in front of the army was a

band of singers praising the Lord. "The battle is not yours, but God's." You may be sure of the result where there are singers to praise the beauty of holiness. So, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

"Then Peter said unto them," - there are two promises,- "Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ," and two blessings; the remission of sins and the receiving of the Holy Ghost. You may wonder how I shall present this to you. "Repent." This is how I shall deliver it to you. Repentance and forgiveness are the two blessings we read of which the exalted Saviour gave to His people. "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Repentance is a saving grace which expresses contrition, godly sorrow, compunction. How is repentance received in the soul as a blessed, saving grace? You do not know the wonder of repentance under the moral law. You feel trouble, distress, misery, but you do not know the sweet, saving grace of repentance. Repentance is a fruit of love; the love, mercy, grace, clemency, favour of God. Immediately a little love flows into your soul you are filled with repentance, expressed by a broken and contrite spirit. You know immediately your heart is broken, and it is repentance. "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The dear Lord gave them a taste of mercy and of His love, and the result was they were blessed with the saving grace of repentance, and the apostles confirmed it and showed them it was the way of life. Their hearts were broken. Do you feel confused concerning the grace of repentance? Once the Lord grants you a drop of His mercy, compassion, love, favour, your heart is broken and this is repentance. It contains godly sorrow, contrition, compunction, holy mourning: your soul is warm and feeling. Repentance is derived from the compassion and love of Christ to a poor needy sinner, and it exhibits a principle divine which is the principle of holiness. You are broken-hearted over sin; not because of the dread of hell, but you have sinned against God. In ~~repentance~~ ^{repentance} there is a capacity to love holiness; to loathe and hate sin. Take the erstwhile infamous woman the Lord had mercy on. She came behind Him weeping, blessed with repentance. Her eyes were as a sluice; her heart broken. This is repentance. She washed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with ointment. She had the sentence of the gospel,- "Thy sins are forgiven."

O this blessed repentance! You will never be happy, only when your heart is broken and soft. Every blessing flows from the exalted Redeemer to your soul.

"Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." This needs wisdom in expounding. Remission is the same as forgiveness. The whole concept is the Lord has separated sin from the persons of His people and sent it away. It rests on,- not the remitting of the penalty; not for your Surety. He came and stood in your place and the penalty was executed on Him so it will never be executed on you. Remission of sins includes cleansing, pardon, purification of the soul, forgiveness. Your sins are cast behind God's back, drowned in the depths of the sea, gone for ever. "be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." You may be baptised in gratitude to the Lord for the remission of sins. A dear soul who sees and knows the wonder of it will see in the holy ordinance all this beautifully set forth. They see the pool and the fountain whereby the Lord cleansed His Church. They see the vicarious sufferings of the Lord Jesus: they see His descent to the lowest parts of the earth; see His sacrificial death, see His glorious resurrection. They see their Covenant union with Him, so as they go in the pool they have put off the old man with his deeds. They are buried, and they rise proclaiming they are walking by the grace of God in a manner of life to His everlasting praise. They see the sacred command of their blessed Lord, how honouring to Him this is, to show forth His praise. "Be baptised every one of you" with a broken heart, who know the cleansing of the blood of Christ. "in the name of the Lord Jesus," by the authority of Jesus Christ; relying on Jesus Christ to obey, and to fulfil acts of obedience after baptism, seeking to glorify the Lord Jesus, it is in the Name of Jesus Christ.

"and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." The principle is revealed in St Matthew concerning the baptism of the Lord Jesus. "And Jesus, when he was baptised, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." "and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." It is the effusion, the baptism,

the anointing of the Spirit; partaking of the Spirit of holiness and of the fear of God. And it is the Holy Spirit coming to you as the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. And it is the Spirit descending on you so you have the unction of the Holy One and know all things. It is the Spirit of wisdom and of the fear of God; the Spirit of grace and supplications to seal you heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." I will refer to the word of prophecy through Isaiah; "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." Happy and favoured are godly parents who have received from God a "Thus saith the Lord," a promise concerning their dear children that covers them all. Have we not had in this Sanctuary those who have received from God this promise, and it has been fulfilled,- "not an hoof shall be left behind."? Every member of the family the Lord has taken to Heaven. Some may know the satisfaction your dear parents enjoyed when they could say, I believe the Lord will save all my children. "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Those that are afar off,- poor Gentiles. When Peter saw the great sheet with all manner of four-footed beasts and wild beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air and was commanded to kill and eat, he said, "Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean." And the Lord said to him, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." Blessed be God.