

I feel to name to you the burden that rests on my spirit, and it has reference to the foundation truths that are before us here in this sacred Scripture. The fundamental doctrine before us in the Text is the doctrine of justification. The burden on my spirit is this. We are living in days when the truth of God is very powerfully assailed, and all the holy doctrines of the Scriptures are denied, and even the sacred Person of the Saviour is ridiculed. The very truths the Holy Spirit has taught us are flatly denied by many religious groups in this erstwhile highly favoured land. One burden is, I feel as St Luke said in his preface, writing to Theophilus, that there should be a declaration of the things 'which are most surely believed among us'. In a measure we are lacking in this. We may dwell largely, and rightly so, on experience, but we often forget to seek to clearly enunciate those things which are most surely believed among us. You will appreciate what I mean.

The other observation is, there are those who, perhaps not wilfully, tend to say if holy doctrine is clearly enunciated, that it is dry doctrine. I am sure that is an incorrect view. There never can be dryness in holy doctrine: the dryness is in sinners hearts, not in the pure, holy truth of God. I appreciate the meaning of some concerning the language used in the Hymn which I quoted on Thursday,- just to have doctrine resting in the brain and no gracious experience of it in the soul. That is a different meaning. It is solemn, and it is treacherous ground where one can lose one's soul eternally; to have the mind filled with sound doctrine, and yet to lack a vital, fundamental, saving, unctuous experience of it. I suggest to you, not to name or to eulogise an individual, did you ever listen to J.K.Popham, or J.H.Gosden? If so, you will have known this, and it is something I would seek to pray about continually.

There are three main things in the ministry of the Spirit. The first is the laying of the foundation, and the whole framework of the building is a gracious declaration of the things which are most surely believed

among us. If you have no holy doctrine you have nothing to build on. So there is in the ministry of the Spirit a beautiful balance between holy doctrine, living experience, and holy precept,- fruit. Let me suggest to the Church and congregation that you neglect not to seek to delineate the sacred doctrines of grace; the things that are most surely believed among us. The young people will need a basic groundwork in this. I expect in many of the schools, colleges and universities you meet with those who ridicule the Bible, the Being of God, the virgin birth, the new birth, the fall of man, guilt and sin, so it is essential that you should have a sound groundwork of the truth of God. It needs the power of the Spirit to quicken a soul, but we do lack in this.

So if it is the Lord's will, and it will be brief, I will try to call over with you what you have already subscribed to with heart and hand, body and spirit: the things which are most surely believed among us, the holy doctrine of justification. Let me put it to you; what would you say as professed believers in the Lord Jesus Christ was a definition of justification by faith? If we are not interested in it we shall go to hell. If you are not justified by faith you will sink into the pit. I am certain some would say they are lacking in ability. You are not lacking in ability if you are a child of God to express the things your soul has embraced by faith. If you said; "No: I cannot attempt to say a word on it." if that is your permanent response I suggest you do not know it in experience, or the Spirit of God would give you the ability to express it.

I will spend a few minutes in trying to define those things which are most surely believed among us, - the righteous, who they are, and what it means. It is simple enough to say it is in the Bible, but what is it to be made a righteous person? You do not know whether it belongs to you unless you know you are justified. You are not righteous in yourself. I will name two holy doctrines, and dwell on justification by faith. The first is the utter ruin of man in the Adam fall,- the complete fall. Man fell from the image of God to the image of Satan, and he retained no righteousness. He is in a state of awful ruin and death that is complete, so he has nothing but sin, original and actual: no goodness, no righteousness. He is unable to produce anything that is righteous,- right. So man is completely lost, absolutely ruined, He has no ability to serve God, or to do right: he is

destitute, impotent. Do you subscribe to this? the doctrine of sin is seldom mentioned to day. Do you feel your polluted, wretched, ruined state in the fall and in ~~transgress~~ transgression, so you could say; "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing."? It comes out at the Prayer Meetings, and I am glad to hear it: it is an evidence of the Spirit's work and teaching.

"Though all are sinners in God's sight,
There are but few so in their own." (89)

We have got a few in this Sanctuary who are so in their own sight. They need a Saviour, and they have got a good appetite for the gospel. It is good for young friends when the Lord deepens His teaching and they know more of their sinfulness. I have heard it said, (I must leave it as to whether it is a fair comment,) people have gone to a Prayer Meeting, and no one has wanted anything, and you would not think that any were sinners. Are you a sinner? You know it, and in a deepening sense you see the world in you: in every cell that is opened you see vileness there. You believe in the total ruin of man.

How shall I lead on to the next point? In this way. As sinners we have completely violated the law of God, the Decalogue, in every part of it, either in thought, word, or deed. We are rendered incapable of performing what is acceptable to God. And there is another consideration: heaven; hell. How can a sinner get to heaven? Justice says; "The soul that sinneth it shall die." How can we get to heaven, unless we have a nature to appreciate it?

This leads me to the next point. What a fallacy it is for people to teach poor, guilty, fallen sinners that they can get to heaven by their own efforts, or put something in the scale to help Christ! These are damnable heresies from the pit. These souls are deluded and lost. We have no hope of heaven apart from the plan devised by eternal wisdom. The plan was this: that God's only begotten eternal Son should most mysteriously assume our nature, and assume our nature so He could be a Substitute for us. The term is, Surety; to stand in the place of others. How did He accomplish this? These are things that are most surely believed among us. The power of the Highest overshadowed the virgin Mary, and the Holy Ghost came upon her, and she was with child by the Holy Ghost, - the immaculate

conception of the Lord; not of Mary, and His holy humanity consisted of a true body and a reasonable soul. His humanity He assumed into indissoluble union with His divine Person, and was of a virgin born. He was made of a woman, made under the law in a federal sense. When He was born He was as your Substitute, as if you had been there. He stood as Substitute for the whole Church of God, and the assumption of a holy humanity you have subscribed to. It was not sinful, peccable, or mortal, but pure and holy, conceived of the Holy Ghost. It was not peccable, -not capable of sin: not mortal, - not liable to death: only by a voluntary act could He die. The precious Person, who was of a virgin born, stood as your Substitute and Surety. In a body He could be your Surety. Deity could not obey the law. Deity could not suffer and die. He could never have stood in your place if He had not assumed a holy humanity. His precious Person is Substitute and Surety. What did He do? He completely, by the holy purity of His life and soul obeyed the law, suffered the curse, gave His life vicariously, sacrificially, triumphantly. He had precious blood to shed. "and without shedding of blood there is no remission." So He obeyed the law by His holy spotless life and obedience and sacrificial death, and shedding of His vital blood. He answered the demands of Justice, restored honour to the law. He condescended to give His life voluntarily, and to be buried, and He rose to declare the virtue and validity of His sacrifice and to declare the efficacy of it. All He did is imputed to His people and they are righteous. It is ascribed to them; put upon them, so it is really theirs. It is yours. Your Saviour's obedience is yours: the shedding of His precious blood for you to be cleansed in. ~~All~~ He did is yours. All He is, and has, and has done is yours, and it is made over to you by the Father, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, and you are righteous. Amen.