21,567e
LaT971

Substance of Sermon preached by our Pastor

On Easter Day Evening, April 3. 1983.

Lesson. John 16.

And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee.
Luke 24. vv.5,6.

The activity of divine, holy faith and the logic of faith would absorb the fundamental foundation, the holy doctrine divine the Saviour enunciated in Galilee to His disciples. One thing is incredible how dull, slow to learn we are, even God's dear people. I am sure after many years of preaching the gospel and hearing the ministry of the Spirit, you will mourn over your comparative lack of knowledge of divine truth and heavenly doctrine. How little do we know of God, of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Ghost, of the heavenly Councils, will and decrees of God and the fundamental truths of our most holy faith. Would you claim to the glory of God that you have a more profound knowledge of the glorious Person of Christ and of God, and consequently of self than a decade ago? This should deeply search us. "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Also the analogy used that is common to mankind: men are not born men, but babes, and from the initial phases of infancy, the incipient stage in a normal child there is growth and a developing of the senses until the status of manhood is realised, and the Lord uses this. So it is to be anticipated if we are the Lord's people there will be constant growth, a development of spiritual graces and sense, until we are favoured to acknowledge growth, maturity in the things of God.

I ask this congregation what you will do in the Church of God without the backbone of mature Christians? Your answer would be lamentable if we were deprived of the essential things to hold the framework together. Some of you say you have worshipped at Zoar Chapel, you have been in the Sanctuary forty or fifty years. How much have you grown? You might say, Have we qualifications to judge whether we have grown in

grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? It is obvious from the Scriptures that some our apostle expected to be as men he had to deal with as babes; they needed milk: strong meat they had no capacity for. I ask you in all solemnity to consider the matter of growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. One thing is paradoxical. We have two things that are congruous: growth in grace to maturity in the knowledge of His Son, and to be as little children in humility and the sweet graces of the Spirit. These are deep things I wish to enunciate before you. Examine yourselves if you are willing to concede that you have sat under a good, spiritual ministry; have you grown in grace? What about it, is there growth in grace in a decade? is there maturity? You may say is this important? My friends, don't you think the Lord will produce full ripeness in your soul before He glorifies you? The seasons teach us. Our younger friends if they are engaged in fruit growing, know that it is to be fully ripe so it falls into the net spontaneously, as peaches. Do you think you will go to Heaven if there is no maturity wrought in you? Let it not fall on deaf ears. Pray to God that you may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. A measure of growth and maturity is known to the person concerned. How? You will know if you are weaned. Don't tell me God has measurably weaned you from the world, the flesh and the vain things of the world and you do not know it.

That is only one facet, the negative. The positive is you know more communion with Christ, a closer walk with God, You have more spirituality of mind, more light, liberty from Heaven. You commune with Him and He with you. There is something that is obvious to a child of God and I declare it to you positively. There are many things that inhibit, occlude, cause deterioration in us. Carnality, pride, worldly-mindedness, secret sins tend to bring deterioration to a child of God. "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. You were warm to Me, now you are cold." There is deterioration.

The great, glorious Prophet told His disciples in Galilee so clearly, there was nothing confused, there could not be: He told them in a lucid manner, "I am going to Jerusalem to be killed, and I will rise again on the third day." They did not understand. It is incredible. He enunciated

the foundation truths of our most holy faith and that which it stems from. The Lord never speaks of trouble to His people in the Scriptures in the abstract, never. You cannot find one Scripture where it is referred to in the abstract to the people of God. There is a classical example in the Lesson. "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." and you know the definition of the Scripture is profoundly simple. Trouble is surrounded with peace and victory. It is a glorious foundation truth, the operative principle that stems from the subject. He was going to Jerusalem to be crucified, to die and be buried, and He would rise again on the third day. They did not understand it. As we have already referred to, they had a whole body of proof and evidence in the Old Testament before them. I name to you the case of Adam and his deep sleep. When he awoke from his sleep there was the woman. It all pointed to Christ, His resurrection and His bride. And there was Abraham and Sarah and the promised seed, and the raising out of the sepulchre of their dead bodies of a child. The rainbow is enough to tell there is a resurrection, so light, beautiful. We see the whole spectrum of light, and all the perfections of Jehovah harmonious in our salvation. It does not suggest death; it is resurrection. Seed time and harvest. "While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest," The logic of faith would see it is resurrection. Did Jonah perish in the whale's belly? No. All supposed and taught the resurrection of Christ. Very beautiful. "Watchman, what of the night? The morning cometh, and also the night." That in itself is enough to teach the resurrection.

So the disciples were blind and dull. I wish I was not. Hart speaks of two inveterate evils that afflict us.

"Before we've journeyed far,
Two dangerous gulfs are fixed,
Dead sloth and pharisaic pride."

Slothfulness is an awful sin, so torpid. They were very dull. I am. Do you feel it? Let us face the solemn truth of Scripture concerning growth and maturity. Some of you are intelligent hearers, and I believe at various stages in spiritual experience, in letters to friends you have noticed various truths and revelations, and further light the Lord has given you over a period of time. I should be glad to read any such papers of

yours.

Let us draw your attention to the basic fact. What would happen to the ministry if there were no further growth, no further revelation and teaching of the Great Prophet? It would become vapid. It is a solemn thing: how long would it last? In these degenerate days it may be for a long time, especially if the professed minister knew that no one in the next place had heard him the Sunday before. How could there be any ministry of continuity unless there is growth and maturity and further revelations and communion with the Lord, and deeper knowledge and understanding? I remember with Mr Raven, he said he heard a good minister, experimental, but he said without any cynical motive, there was no teaching in it: he told you all you knew. It is very solemn really. So you can see how we have dilated from the one point of dullness, and how sad it is where one would expect maturity and growth in grace. *

* Remember what we have said: growth in grace is compatible with a diminution in one's own view, so we become as little children.

They had forgotten His words: now they remembered that He would rise on the third day. Because of forgetfulness they were seeking the living among the dead. I am sure you who are listening closely will have seen the connecting link between the Lesson and the subject in hand. It could not have been clearer than, "A little while," They did not understand what He told them. "A little while, and ye shall not see me" because His soul would be in Glory and His body in the sepulchre. "A little while, and ye shall not see me." Did He stop there? No. "and again, a little while, and ye shall see me. Why seek ye the living among the dead? I told you, a little while, and ye shall see me." And did He not open it to them abundantly? "And ye now therefore have sorrow" because He was about to depart and they would lose His physical presence, because of His departure via Gethsemane and Calvary and the grave. They concentrated on the fact that they would see Him dead on the cross and buried. He said, "The world shall rejoice" - in His sufferings, death and burial. Could there have been anything more lucid than "I will see you again"? "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen. I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." You can see how amazing and incredible it was that they had no sense of the

resurrection. "I will see you again." I want to make an immediate application of this to those who fear God in the Sanctuary, from the youngest to the oldest. It may be true that "ye now therefore have sorrow." Don't seek the living among the dead: don't keep looking into the tomb. Disappointments and frustrations you keep on looking at. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" My friends, remember that He said, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." Seek the living among the living, not the dead. That is often our trouble. Listen to the words of Christ. "Ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." Remember when the Lord gives you joy, and He <u>will</u>, you will never be robbed of it by man, so why seek ye the living among the dead? If the young people are disappointed, frustrated, and in sadness, if you fear God don't seek the living among the dead. Christ will see you again. My Saviour tells me He will see me again and my heart shall rejoice.

I feel while I am in this line of things, to make one or two observations that will apply this way. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" Saul of Tarsus was. In the days in which we live many young people are being seduced, led away from the truth. There is a vast charismatic movement, religious excitement and so on. I say firmly to you, "Why seek ye the living among the dead" if the Lord has quickened you into <u>life</u>. Don't be drawn aside in that way. The Lord keep you to His truth. There is anpther aspect of it. When the Lord quickened Saul of Tarsus he was not seeking the living among the dead, but among the living. He was one of the living seeking a living Head. Very blessed. He says in the list of those of those who saw Him after His resurrection, "Last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." How did he see Him? When he was caught up to Paradise, to the third heavens. So you see the importance of the word. There is another thing. "Why seek ye the living among the dead" in the world. If one has life in his soul he may linger in the world. There may be a few things he does not want to give up. You will never find Christ there. "Why seek ye the living among the dead." Do you think you will find Christ in the world, in the cinema? among all the inventions of the devil? You never will find Him among the dead. When we think of those dead in trespasses and sins and

eternally dead, why seek ye the living among the dead? Another word is we are so prone to be introspective and look in our wicked hearts and sinful nature, and to look on religious self. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" Hart says,

"Pore not on thyself too long,
Lest it sink thee lower;
Look to Jesus, kind as strong -
Mercy joined with power."

You must look out of self to the Lord Jesus. "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here." You go to the Prayer Meeting, and you find if you have got to speak you will be looking inside. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" There is so much of this, to look to our own resources. It is looking to Jesus, out of self, up to Him. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" I am to say to you, those who receive divine instruction, who love the dear Redeemer, are seeking Him, not among the dead; in His own appointed way, for He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He will reveal Himself to you, make Himself known to you. "Jesus..stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side." Blessed be God.