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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham
on Wednesday evening 5.1.72

Hymns: 1023, 1071, 144

Reading: John 10

Text: John 14.6

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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the
life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me".

I realise that these are familiar words and can perhaps be
familiar words to some who have no saving experience of them;
but if we have a saving experience of these words, then we have
a religion that will take us to glory. They may seem simple;
but they are a very clear definition of the doctrine of the
Gospel, as that doctrine centres in all that Christ is to His
people.

Christ is here said to be three things: the Way, the Truth,
and the Life. That is all we need for our everlasting salvation.
If the Lord Jesus Christ is one of these things, then He will be
all these things, for they are so intimately connected. He
cannot be the Way and not the Truth; He cannot be the Truth and
not be the Life. What is so confirming is that He is accessible
to a poor needy sinner. In a Gospel sense He is the Way, Truth
and Life, and there is no other way, - "No man cometh unto the
Father but by me". This is a solemn fact, for in the Scriptures
we read that there is a way to hell, as clearly as there is a way
to heaven. We read that there is a broad way just as clearly
as we read that there is a narrow way. The Lord affirmed the fact
that many go the broad way, and few, comparatively speaking, the
narrow Way, which the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is. It does not
say here "I know the Way" (although He does) but "I am the Way" -
I myself. This is very, very clear, but even so many people may
be going the wrong way, and yet still think that they are going
the right way. There is a Scripture that says, "There is a way
that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the
ways of death". The all-important point is, where does the way
end, that you and I may hope we are travelling in? What seems right

to a man naturally, can be quite the wrong way, and yet a poor trembling thing who may fear he is in the wrong way, that he is out of the secret, may be in the right way, and probably is. Far better to be struggling hard to heaven than sailing easily to hell!

Plenty of people have a religion; they can be very full of it and yet perhaps have never had a solemn, sober sense of the majesty of God in their hearts to show them what they are in themselves. If we have this revelation of what we are in ourselves, then I believe one day we shall have that revelation of what we are in Christ. I have been thinking a little of what an amazing wonder it is that there should ever be a way to heaven which Christ is. This way has been opened at a tremendous cost, more than our poor minds can conceive. Yet even so this sense of our ignorance will not condemn us; it is a haughty, hard-headed confidence that condemns a person, although he may be satisfied. It is far better to be emptied from vessel to vessel than to be filled with self-confidence; and being so emptied to take root downward and bear fruit upward.

In what I have been reading the Lord refers to Himself under another figure. He says in John 10 "I am the door of the sheep" - "I am the door; by me if any man enter in he shall be saved". The Lord Jesus Christ is that door. In the Revelation He is spoken of as an open door. What a mercy this is! The Lord says of His sheep that they shall go in and out and find pasture. I knew a good minister of bygone days who used to say that he believed this was going in to be fed, and out to be tried, but the Scripture does not say so. It says that he shall go "in and out and find pasture". Pasture is, as you know, what is eaten by grazing. It is not hay stored up in a barn; it is what animals gather out in the open field, in the meadows. It has to be torn off from its roots while it is fresh and green. That is what the Lord's sheep find when they are out so to speak for the day. According to the ancient custom in the east it seems that the shepherd would lead the sheep forth in the morning and bring them back into the fold at night. But whether they are in the fold at night, or out in the meadows by day, it does not affect their standing.

They are sheep just the same. But it does affect their condition and possibly their feelings. The Lord leads His dear people out as the Shepherd of the sheep. He does not drive them, but leads them forth as the Shepherd of the sheep. He does not drive them, but leads them forth as Eastern shepherds do. There is nothing in what I have read about driving the sheep, it is about the Shepherd going before them. "They follow him, for they know his voice". How far can you and I go in this? You may hear the shepherd's voice when you are out in the meadows, on the pastures. In Psalm 23 it is said, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul". That is very sweet, is it not? But it may indicate that the sheep was a wandering sheep and had been back-sliding. Yet He does not disown it because of the wandering. "He restoreth my soul." Some of you may know what this is. Sometimes He brings them back by a chastening; He can bring them back by speaking to them for we read they hear His voice.

These sheep then are out in the meadows where they find pasture, and the Shepherd makes them to lie down in these green pastures after their feeding, as cattle do. But when they go in at night so to speak it is not the green pasture they are provided with it is the fodder that has been stored up for them, and prepared beforehand for them. When the meadows are cut and the grass is stored up it has to be dried; it is a prepared food, yet it is all in a sense the same kind of food. In this way the Lord supplies the needs of His people. Sometimes it may be that green pasture which they may have to hunt for and as it were tear away from its roots by "grazing". At other times it may be in the fold, experimentally feeding upon the blessings of the precious Gospel that have been treasured up for them in the covenant of grace. These pastures then are the blessings of the Gospel, food for living souls. If the Lord makes any portion of His Word sweet to your soul it will be a green pasture, and if you get a little reviving at any particular time it will still be sweet. These are the green pastures.

Jesus said to Thomas, "I am the Way". What had Thomas been saying

in so many words? He had been saying, "We do not understand, we do not know what you mean when you speak about coming and going." Thomas said, "We know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" Yet he was a disciple and had been with the Lord. He must have seen many miracles and must often have heard the Lord speak of His decease and of the death that He should die, and that He would rise again. He must have heard all these things. But the time came when all was made plain to poor Thomas, although that was after the resurrection when the Lord appeared the second time and Thomas was with the eleven. Particular attention was then paid to poor Thomas who confessed that he did not understand what the Lord had been talking about. The Lord so demonstrated His identity to Thomas that removed every doubt and gave him every reason to be satisfied. "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless but believing", and Thomas did not say "I do not know what you are talking about". He said, "My Lord and my God". All the mist had cleared then, and Thomas had that sweet view of a living Saviour which by faith some of you have had.

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way" - a very explicit, expressive answer to Thomas. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." The Lord Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father, then; this is perfectly true, is it not, because the text says "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." We have the same blessed truth in the Epistles. The Apostle Paul writing to the Ephesians speaks of coming to the Father through and by Christ, so that those who were far off are made nigh by the merit of His blood. There is a way to heaven, to the Father, through Christ, this doctrine is often demonstrated in the New Testament. This means that a poor, coming, trembling one, in venturing before the throne of grace, pleads for all that he needs in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." What a blessed truth this is!

There is another encouraging point about coming to the Lord Jesus Christ. "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh I will in no wise cast out." He does not say "I am going to separate a few of the best sheep, and cast out all the rest

and destroy them". What hope would you and I have if He only accepted the best sheep? The hymnwriter says:

"The vilest sinner out of hell
That lives to feel his need
Is welcome to the throne of grace
The Saviour's blood to plead."

What a Gospel there is in that! So it is not a matter of setting up some qualification or standard for ourselves; it is whether we really need Christ. He is the only way. Whatever other courses people may take will only lead to confusion and death. There is no other way, no other door but Christ. He is the way to heaven. He has opened that way gloriously by responding to every claim of the Law on His people's behalf; He has removed every stumbling stone. The Law is against us, it closes the mouth, and brings the sentence of death to an awakened conscience. But Christ has fulfilled the Law, and a view of Him opens a poor sinner's mouth - not to say what a good state he is in, or what a good person he is, but to say, "Give me Christ or else I die".

Christ is a hidden way. "There is a path", it is said in Job, "which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen". Many keen-eyed professors of religion may never have seen this way in an experimental sense, so as to feel the reality of it in their own souls. He is the hidden way, and His dear people by the Spirit's glorious teaching are brought to know this, and to renounce all for His name's sake putting their trust alone in Him. This way is hidden from the eyes of the world, although they may hear about Him, but there is a great difference between hearing about Him and possessing saving knowledge of Him. Where do we stand in this? Can we feel to have any confidence in our own hearts that we are pressing on in this way? It will end well with us if we can feel it. We shall meet with much opposition from carnal reason and a tempting devil, who can be as an angel of light or as a roaring lion. Those who are really in this way bear the Christian's armour, fight the good fight of faith; fight their way through hosts of devils. Oh what a mercy it is that there is a way to heaven for sinners. It is only those sinners who feel their state by the Holy Spirit's blessed teaching that are really in this way in a spiritual sense.

He is said to be a narrow way. These are days for broadening things out in religion; but the Scriptures do not change. When the Lord was upon earth He said, "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life", and the Scriptures have not altered, however much some people may compromise. The Scriptures are just the same. This is a narrow way, but it is a way of faith, a way of looking to Him alone, as it was with the witnesses of old, that "cloud of witnesses" who "laid aside every weight" and pressed on towards "the prize of their high calling in Christ Jesus". Dear friends, it is a great mercy to feel a hope that we are in the right way. And who is to give us that hope? Not the devil. If you are in the right way he will tell you it is the wrong way. It is the sweet voice of heaven saying, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love" - wretch that you feel to be in yourself, yet the Lord says that He does love these coming ones. It is a mercy to be in the right way. This is a way of hope. We have no hope beside Him. This hope that the believer has is like an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast. It is a hope that finds its anchor "within the veil, whither the fore-runner is for us entered, even Jesus". "I am the Way". This is just as true in 1972 as when the dear Redeemer was here upon this earth. The same truth stands, precisely the same. Some may say "I do not know much about it"; but if you have had some emptying out as we speak, have been brought to feel your own wretchedness, and then perhaps one day got a little token (though nothing is little really), this raised up a hope in your soul. And what did it do? It brought you to Christ who is the sinner's hope. Then you are enabled to put your hope, your trust, and your confidence in Him.

"I am the Way and the Truth". The Lord Jesus Christ is truth in its fulness. Truth here can refer to the Scriptures that reveal Him, for He is the truth of the Scriptures. It refers also to the Gospel, for the Lord Jesus Christ is the truth of the Gospel, and the Gospel is the Gospel of His grace which is communicable to His people. The Apostle says in the first chapter of this beautiful Gospel of John, "Of His fulness have all we received and grace for grace." This is the same grace, friends, whether you are in the fold for the night

or out in the meadows for the day, whether you are feeding on the green pasture or on the fodder prepared for the night or for the winter months; it is the same precious Gospel, and is living bread. This is the living bread that came down from heaven. "He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever." There is a fulness of truth in Him. The truth here then is the Gospel, the sweet revelation of the Gospel of which Christ is the fulness. There has been a fulness here all through the centuries. The spring has never dried up.

"A fulness resides in Jesus our Head,
And ever abides to answer our need".

He is no poorer for what He gives. One might perhaps say that their temporal resources are running out; but that can never be with the grace of God. "Of His fulness have all we received" - that is those who are in this Way, where He is the Truth; not a truth, but the Truth, the fulness of truth. He is the fulness of the Gospel. By truth then we may understand the blessings of the Gospel of Christ that are prepared for His people by His substitutionary work. There are blessings in the covenant of grace in the divine purposes of God; and those blessings are communicable to poor sinners through the merit and blood of a precious Christ. He is the truth, and He becomes this in the hearts ^{of} poor sinners when they prove Him in experience to be the fulness in their own souls. All Gospel blessings are in Him.

"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life", He is truth in its power, truth in its testimony, truth in and through the Spirit, and He is the life. There is no doubt about this. The Lord refers to this point in these blessed chapters. In one place He says: "Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more, but ye see me; because I live ye shall live also." What a blessed life this is! He is the life of living souls, He is their hope, peace, joy, confidence, Saviour, Redeemer, Friend, their Life.

If your soul is really lively in the things of God, this grace will be lively in you. May the Lord mercifully grant us some experience of this. Each point is very beautifully blended together - Way, Truth and Life. We are brought into this way from the ways of sin and death. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate". This is the Spirit's work

in a coming one who has been brought to feel something of his sin and is stripped of everything but Christ. Even if one shall sink so low as to feel stripped of all his religion yet he will never be stripped of Christ. No! He will hold you up and bring you through. Oh to have the wings of faith to rise to view Him, to see in Him all we need to bear us up and bring us through. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me". Those who come to the Father by Him will never be turned away. "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Amen.