

No. 2

*Preached on Lord's Day evening, 5th January, 1964.*

Text: "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no."—Deut. viii. 2.

As there are a few friends here this evening who were not here this morning, I would just very briefly say this, that I feel persuaded in my own mind that this is the day which the Lord has appointed for the purpose of a personal, and yet I hope a united, thanksgiving. In short, these are the three points that we are attending to today, although I think the third will have to be postponed until a future occasion. The time has come for me to tell you, dear friends, first of my call by grace (part of which I covered this morning), secondly my call to the ministry, and thirdly (which I think we shall have to leave until later) my call here to West Street.

Well now, I do not want to forget the text. I am very concerned about this, especially as we confessed in prayer, that we have the Lord's Supper to attend to, that solemn, sacred, blessed ordinance, and I do want to remember the Lord Who said, "Do this in remembrance of me" (I Cor. xi. 24). And yet there is a time and a right time to speak. And *thou*—this poor sinner—"thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee".

I will not cover the same ground, but I would start here this evening, by telling you of one thing in particular I have been thankful for in my little experience, and that is this. The Lord generally, note that—generally—has not been slow in chastising me for my sin. That has been sharp sometimes, very sharp, and a solemn and hard work, and a pulling down work, and a humbling work, but I have been thankful for it. On the other hand, there have been occasions when I have been very tried. I have had cause to be, lest the Lord has been inclined not to chasten me. I seem to have escaped chastising under His corrections, and that has caused me an exercise and an urgent cry to the Throne of Grace, because if one taught

of the Spirit of God can sin cheaply and easily and think that he shall not be apprehended for his sin, he makes a great mistake. I am sure some of you know what it is to be so concerned because of the Lord's silence to you. Maybe it is like this with you, you are concerned because the Lord seems to be silent in reproof. Well, I recall how that in small things, if I may use that term rightly, the Lord was quick to reprove me. On one occasion, in my garden at Lewes, I found myself listening to some music coming from somewhere else, another garden or house, and I began to be taken up with it. I was thankful that the Lord brought me into a rightful place then. He did it with this word which arrested me: "My kingdom is not of this world" (John xviii. 36). That brought me down in shame and confession at His dear feet. I had to plead forgiveness. Wondrously the Lord spake that same word in very different circumstances when I was feeling over-whelmed with various things, both spiritual and providential, at another time. I had many trials in work at the office. One was a very severe one which lasted about 15 months before it was cleared up. Well now, when I was in such a trial as that the Lord spake that same word to me—"My kingdom is not of this world". Now that was comforting. In the first instance—a reproof and correction, but in the second case it was comforting; a comforting word. Let us take care to remember whether we have got such things as these, or do we always escape apprehension? Very solemn if we do. Be very thankful, dear friends, if you can remember and trace this out in your experience in this wilderness, whether God is pleased to favour you in that way that He quickly corrects you for your sin and folly. It is a great mark and token for good, I do really believe.

I must also tell you about this. In another long season of darkness and distress of soul, which brought sleepless nights to me, when I feared to call the Saviour mine, when all the depths of hell seemed to be let loose, as it were, I was afraid of death and terrified of eternity, there drew near to me that night One who I knew was none other, none less, than the Holy Ghost. I cannot explain this. As we said recently in a Prayer Meeting address, we

cannot explain what the glory of God is, the glory of Christ; these things must be tasted, that is, experienced and felt. So I feel to have a barrier of language here on this point in particular. But there was One, a Heavenly One, a Divine One, Who drew near in mercy to my poor distressed soul. He came like this, as representing Two Others, namely the Eternal Father and the Eternal Son. Now that I do believe was the first, and the only, as yet, revelation of the Trinity that God has ever blessed me with, and it was a blessing. Therefore, in my humble way I do feel I can testify this today, that there are Three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And in that moment my heart went out to Him in love and praise and worship, and I could say this then: "I know whom I have believed" (II Tim. i. 12). The following morning my dear wife looked at me (she knew what I was in) and she said this, "Has the Lord spoken to you?" She could see it. It makes me think of Moses who wist not that his face shone. Now she knew it. How did she know it? I did not say a word. The Lord had spoken and yet not a word did He speak. Do you know what I mean? That was the voice of the Lord to me and it was a revelation; the second revelation I believe that the Lord was pleased to make to my soul. Well now, that did wonders for me; that made a new man of me in that sense, spiritually. What I mean by that is this, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature. Old things are passed away and behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. v. 17).

In 1951, the Lord, I would humbly remember now, laid upon me the matter of the ordinances of His house; He brought me to that point in my experience when, if I held my peace any longer, the stones would have immediately cried out. The Lord favoured me, I believe, in a little measure in passing through the ordinance. I felt to have the love of Christ in my heart and I believe that was confirmed, because afterwards He spake this word to me. "Continue ye in my love" (John xv. 9). But oh, when I look back on that! Have I continued? Sometimes there seems to be a discontinuance on my part as to experience, but you see the love of Christ, it continues; it

never ends. It cannot fail or come to an end or cease to be, any more than God Himself can. Oh, the strength, the security, the certainty of these Divine things which are bound up in this precious Christ Who, as I said this morning, first revealed Himself to me at the age of 19 when I was in France.

After my baptism something tried me very sorely, and it was this, the word of the Lord: "My sheep hear my voice" (John x. 27). And for a while I did not seem to hear His voice at all. It was a great concern to me, and yet it pleased the Lord over a long period of time to speak to me on two occasions on that very point that tried me. These were the words that He spake to me which, at least for the time being, quietened my mind on this matter. First, He spake this, "Hereafter I will not talk much with you" (John xiv. 30). Now I have proved that ever since. He has not spoken much to me since. Blessed be His dear Name, He has not been silent, but He has not said much to me or talked much with me. Also, the second word He spake in this matter was this—"The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power" (I Cor. iv. 20). Do you see the point? Our minds might be stocked full with words, but what is that without power and without life? I say this to you: It is far better to have this, even though you might not have received a definite word from the Lord, even this—"Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts xx. 21). If you have that you have reality, you have something with the hallmark of heavenly divinity on it, whether the Lord has spoken a word to you or not, and yet if you have got that He has spoken in that way to your soul. Be after that. Oh, do be after that more than a mere word spoken into your mind, dear friends, even these twin graces of the blessed eternal Spirit—repentance and faith.

I would seek to come now to where we left off this morning. You remember that I mentioned this, that the Lord wonderfully blessed my soul throughout December, 1959. I believed He was my God. I knew it. Whereas going back perhaps just a little further into the past, I recall the time when I walked the street literally as a poor, lost guilty sinner, envying the beasts that had no

soul to be lost, no soul to be concerned about. Well now, in December, 1959, the Lord made me feel just the opposite. I praised Him for giving me a soul that I might praise Him and honour Him in my soul. I could not do that without a soul. Oh, what a difference it makes when the Lord shines into a poor sinner's dark benighted mind; everything has a new aspect. Well now, when that blessing receded as to the sweet enjoyment of it, the Lord spoke a very solemn word to me with which we opened the year 1960, just four years ago now. It was this, "This year thou shalt die" (Jer. xxviii, 16). Oh, I did wonder what that meant! It brought distress, fear, questionings as to the past, as to the present, and as to the future. I knew not what it meant, but that word is linked up very closely with my call to the ministry and I must soon come to that, if the Lord will. In 1960, in one sense I did die in the middle of the year. The Lord brought me right down in health and in soul that I thought my end had really come, and so did the Doctor. He feared a fatal blood disease; I feared the same; and I was in distress about that, especially when I tell you this, that for about twenty years I had been exercised about the ministry, ever since the Lord gave me a dream in my teens, after I believe He took me in hand. I dreamed in this dream that I was in a certain church where in my unregenerate days I was a choir boy. I was only there I believe because I had a strong liking for music. In this dream I was preaching in this church, which was Church of England, and the text was Romans, chapter 8 and part of verse 9: "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his". That is a very solemn text. I remember to this day the peculiar sense of power and authority I felt as I spoke from those words. What I said I cannot remember. I do not recall that any words came out of that dream, but there was the sense of power and authority in it. Nearly all the people got up one by one and went out; three or four remained, that is all, but that did not seem to worry me. Then I awoke, and behold, it was a dream! I did not know what that meant for a long, long time, but I really believe from that time I date the exercise regarding my call to the

ministry. I found this, as regards my exercise in a ministerial way, that when the Lord has blessed me and favoured my soul that matter has come up. When I was resurrected from the depths, brought up out of darkness, that came up with me. When I went down in my soul, that went down too. When I felt lost, that was lost. When the Lord blessed me, recovered me, favoured me, then that matter came to the front, and so it was for many years. Well, now this thing began to annoy my flesh. I did not know how to bear it. I had at times to pray hard against this exercise. It seemed to follow me from place to place and whenever I heard it touched upon in the ministry I did not know what to do; I did not know where to put my face. On one occasion I remember I was at the week-night Prayer Meeting at The Dicker and the Lord's servant looked straight at me in his address and said: "Son, go work today in my vineyard." (Matt. xxi. 28). I had never breathed a word to him about it. I wished the floor could have opened and swallowed me out of sight. Oh, I did not know what to do! I hung my head down, did not speak to anybody, and got home quickly. But later on, I thought I had succeeded in my requests to the Lord that it might be removed from me, because it went. Whenever the Lord's servants in various places spoke on it—the sending forth of God's servants—it did not seem to affect me. I literally rejoiced and I thanked God that He had heard my requests and taken the whole matter from me. My prayer was, "Lord, take it away in such a way that it will never even enter my thoughts again." When I thought I had succeeded, first one and then another of the Lord's people asked me outright: "Are you exercised about the ministry?" Always I gave them a most guarded answer. There had to be that hiding up until that certain day in 1960. But in 1959 when the matter was much upon me, news reached me that one of our dear friends and members at The Dicker was coming before us as a church to relate his experience relative to the ministry. Oh, how that tried me! I remember just what I was doing at the time. I had to leave it and go away on my knees before the Lord and I said this: "Lord, now

I shall find this, that all that I have heard in the ministry, all my exercises have been wrong, it has all been meant for another, for my dear friend and brother". I prayed earnestly from my heart that the Lord would give me a right spirit toward him. I felt that if I was left there would be such rebellion and many harsh thoughts going out from me to him. Oh, I did pray that the Lord would bless me with a right spirit to him in future days. When I got up from my knees the Lord spoke this word to me: "I the Lord will hasten it in his time", (Is. lx. 22) and I laughed. Then I thought of Sarah when she laughed and I felt this subsequently, "Lord, if these very words that Thou hast spoken to me should be spoken from the pulpit soon, I must reconsider the matter"—I felt that. I waited and waited and watched and prayed and on the first Lord's Day in 1960 the Lord's servant in prayer in the afternoon spoke these very words: "Lord, perhaps there is one here this afternoon to whom Thou hast said this—'I the Lord will hasten it in his time', and perhaps, like Sarah, they have laughed". It went right through me like a dagger. It had a great effect on me, took hold of me completely. Just see what I had at the same time—"I the Lord will hasten it in his time" and "This year thou shalt die"—both words at the same time exactly. Oh, the Lord's ways are past finding out, they are unsearchable! Then I came down into a deep valley. I had three of these outstanding valleys to pass through over a few years, seven or eight years. The Lord brought me down into the third of these in June, 1960. My tears were many, my fears great, and in the midst of all (I think it was when the Doctor had taken that vital blood test and gone to the hospital with it, saying he would come back with the result), I believe it was then when the Lord spoke this to me: "I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold I will add unto thy days fifteen years" (Is. xxxviii. 5). I responded straight away like this: "Lord, if Thou wilt spare me for five days they shall be Thine," and I meant it from my heart. Yet the anguish I felt waiting for the Doctor to return! He did return and he said to me: "Well, we have no fears, it is anæmia". Oh, how I

did praise the Lord and He did spare my life. Well, you see, He had a purpose toward me.

Now, just after this, on the 26th June, 1960, I awoke that Lord's Day as I have never done before or since. I had such a feeling come over me like this—this is the Lord's Day, the day He hath made—and I praised the Lord in spirit and in truth that day, long before I entered His sanctuary. There was an expectancy in my breast. I felt the Lord was coming even that very day. Oh, the happiness, the peace, the joy that was in my heart, and the thanksgiving! And I knew, I felt, there was something yet greater to come, and there was. Being at the House of God early, I went round the cemetery at the back, reading various inscriptions on the tombstones, and one of those inscriptions arrested me: it was this, from Isaiah xliii: "Fear not, for I am with thee" (v. 5). Now you know I quoted that this morning when the Lord spoke it to me in France through His word—the same word exactly. The first time it was more for providence—protection in those days of danger, but this time it was spiritual, for the ministry. "Fear not, for I am with thee". I would just say this: my prayer on waking that Lord's Day morning was, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth" (I Sam. iii. 9). I was waiting for Him to speak. O, do speak, Lord! I am listening. Thy servant heareth. So I had that word, and then, as mentioned just now, the word "Fear not, for I am with thee". When that word came into my heart in the cemetery, I said this: "Lord, it is enough, it is enough" (Gen. xlv. 28). I felt the Lord Himself was enough for me, my Sufficiency, my All; whether I would live or die I should be the Lord's—very blessed, very real. When the sermon commenced, the Lord's servant stood up and gave out his text: "Fear not, for I am with thee". And he commenced his sermon like this—these are almost the exact words so far as I can remember: "If you can enter into the exercises of a God-sent minister, your prayer will be this, and you will know what this means—Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth". And then he said, "You will say, it is enough". That did it. I drank in the truth that day and in the service I believe

I felt the Spirit of God descend upon me, anointing me for the sacred office. I immediately became two bands in my soul—first, the Lord's prisoner, secondly, the Lord's free man. I have proved the truth of both of those words since, personally and in the ministry—the Lord's prisoner and the Lord's free man. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

The next day I did something I said I never would. I had to go back on my words, as we often do. I went to my dear Pastor and told him everything. Well, I believe, then, the Lord sent me to preach, sent me to declare His truth.

I had forgotten this. When I was in this deep, dark valley I had this word too from Psalm cxviii, "I shall not die but live and declare the works of the Lord" (v. 17). In fact, that very same Lord's Day, when I hope the Lord anointed me, I was called on to read and speak in prayer at the Prayer Meeting, and I read Psalm cxviii. I was, as we say, let loose. "Loose him and let him go" (John, xi. 44). God's free man and yet, you see, I am His prisoner. I do His bidding, I trust. Well, I have passed over a lot, particularly in providence, for the time is fast going—it seems too fast for me today; I hope it seems the same to some of you, at least. I will not dwell much longer on this point. But just this word on providence. The Lord helped me in providence. He made a way for me. I have never been prosperous and am never likely to be. I want the prosperity the Lord gives. "O Lord, I beseech Thee, send now prosperity" (Ps. cxviii. 25). That is, for my soul and for the people of God here, for the Church of God. I want that prosperity. But the Lord made a way for me in providence and He brought me to the top point in my Department—only a small office of about twenty employees, but I was working in that office for 28½ years, the one firm all the time, and the Lord just brought me to the top, as it were, as far as I could get. The Lord gave me favour in the sight of my employers, and then He said, "You are my servant". I had to leave it. I have been thankful for it. Oh, I have been! I knew something had to be taken away. I could not serve two Masters. It had to be one or the other.

I was trying to preach, travelling here and there many miles; something had to go. The Lord did speak two words to me in this matter: "What doest thou here, Elijah?" (I Kings xix. 9). I had to come out, had to leave it, lay it aside. Secondly, He spoke this to me, "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them" (I Tim. iv. 15). That came about when you wrote to me, dear friends, but we must not touch on that now. We must leave that point.

If the Lord will, to take up the text again. "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee." Now the Lord by His hand by His dispensations, by His chastenings in particular, has humbled my soul. Oh the pride that has got to be brought down! It is still there, don't think it is not. So much there is yet remaining in us like the Canaanites who are still in the land that must be humbled and brought down. Has God led you, or is He still leading you with this end in view—to humble you, to make you low? And that is just what we don't like; it is what I don't like, speaking after the manner of the natural man. I don't like to be kept low. We want to be high and lifted up, thought well of and looked up to. We want to get on. The way to grow in grace is this: "You will not get on, sinner. I am going to keep you down. I am not going to forsake the work of My Spirit in your heart. I will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ". "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. i. 6). The work of God in humbling a sinner, I believe, takes up most of the time—that is, in our experience. I say, child of God, it will be humbling, humbling, humbling, and that is how God forms His people for Himself. Did we not say this, last Lord's Day, that Heaven is a most humble place? I know it is high, very immense, unfathomable, holy, but it is humble; there is no pride there. You give thanks then to God if He is humbling you by this dispensation, by that affliction, by this cross or loss, by this overturning, by

this hard and set-fast affliction which is in you maybe; I know not, but God knows, all to make you humble. When you are most humble you are most like Jesus Christ, and when you are most humble you are as near to Him as you can get this side of Heaven. Do you believe that? What kind of a mind is it, for example, that God inhabits? a humble mind, a chastened mind, a corrected mind, a well-exercised mind. We read about this—those who have their minds well exercised by reason of use; use, which means that you are used to things. Are you used to this, that God is chastening you, humbling you, proving you, testing you? Oh, if He is He is forming you for glory! You may not believe that; you cannot feel it, you cannot see it, some of you, but you will see it. You are being fashioned and shapened for glory if He is humbling you. You who are taught of God, you whom He has been leading for a few years, have you not proved that this is true?—that your sweetest moments are spent when you are most humbled; your most blessed times are when you are humbled at His dear feet, and you do not want to remove from that sacred place, do you? Oh, that we could ever live there as Mary did for a while! She does now everlastingly in Heaven. Oh, to sit at the feet of Jesus! What is the language of these really humbled ones? It is this, I believe, "I need to be taught, I cannot see anything, cannot receive anything, cannot understand anything unless Thou, Lord, by Thy good Spirit, dost condescend to interpret Thy truth to me. I shall never receive it without". That is what they say. They also say, "Lord, I am not a man. I have not come to full stature in things Divine. I am only a babe". An old divine of some 200 years ago said this, I believe toward his end, in a letter to another, how that the Lord was humbling him, teaching him, keeping him down, and he said, "I believe I am getting on a little in the school of Christ and hope soon to be in the lowest class". *There is humility!* "To humble thee and to prove thee"—test thee, try thee by means of various dispensations and cross—providences "Whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no". Now I had to keep God's

commandments. Many times, as I have told you, I said, "No, Lord, I am not the man; this never could be". Many, many times I have called myself a thousand fools for having such thoughts in mind, but "I the Lord will hasten it in his time". I believe I told you on Wednesday evening (then we must close) that once when I was in Grove Road Chapel, Eastbourne, and the minister ascended the pulpit, I said, "Lord, if Thou wantest me for the ministry, Thou must come and take hold of me by the neck!" A very wrong thing for me to say, but I said it, and I meant it. Never could I go like that. There was no obedience there, but rebellion, obstinacy, pride, all of which had to be broken down, and the Lord broke it down. He made me humble. "Son, go work today in my vineyard".

Well now, here is my little, humble testimony to you today. Do you remember in the Gospel account there were once ten lepers? They were all cleansed. This has just come to my mind. They went their way. One who saw, felt and knew in himself that he was healed and cleansed went back and gave thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ, the wise Physician Who had healed him. Christ said this, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." (Luke xvii. 17-18). Now I hope I am not a stranger amongst you, but I hope I have been enabled today to give thanks, and here is my little testimony. But where are the nine? Where are they? The Lord knows and He will bring you out from your hiding places, soon I trust, some of you, when you will not be able to hold back any longer lest these stones should immediately cry out. God will hasten it in His time in your heart, then you will come forth, you will keep His commandments, which are not grievous.

May He add His blessing and forgive all amiss. Amen.