

Address given by Mr T J Parish at the Annual General Meeting of

The Gospel Standard Trust 20th May 2017 on

“In the World but not of it – Living as a Christian in the 21st Century”

In considering our title of the address this afternoon it is right to set forth what I mean by the term “Christian”. We live in a world where the term “Christian” really envelops many, many people. But this afternoon I see the need to bring it to its proper sense and I hope and pray each one of us here this afternoon will be found true Christians. What do I mean by the term “Christian”? Those that seek to walk in the fear of the Lord, those that believe His Word, those who see the title of the talk *In the World but not of it* and that expresses their desire, to be in the world but not of it, and it is in that context this afternoon I would like to address you all. May each one of us be found with that desire to walk rightly before this evil generation in the day in which we live.

In the Gospel according to Matthew chapter 5 we have recorded our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ preaching the sermon on the mount. In that sermon He speaks these words “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” [verses 14-16]

Now you may say, well that is surely directed particularly at the gospel minister. Let his light shine forth, to stand and faithfully proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ and to do it boldly not fearing what man will do unto him. Well, that is right but also there is also an emphasis on each of the Lord’s children - those who fear God, who love His Word, who may not have that full assurance that they are numbered amongst His children but even so they fear the Lord, they love His Word and they would seek to walk rightly in His sight – to serve Him. So there is an emphasis to let our light shine in the world.

Beloved friends, we have all come into this chapel this afternoon. We have all made a profession to the world around us. We make a profession every Lord’s Day when we leave our houses and we attend a place of worship. The world cannot tell who walking into that chapel has made an open profession, they do not know. So they watch on and may we have that sense in our hearts of the weight of the matter in professing, however small our profession is, may we know the weight of it. The world is watching on, the world notices, the world sees how you go about your business. The world sees how you deal with things that come in your life. If you and I are out in the world at work, we have those that watch us. You may mention very little about your religion but you would be surprised at the difference that some see in you. In the fact that I hope you do not blaspheme and use bad language. In the way you deal with those around you, in the way that you conduct yourselves when disappointment comes, how you react. What a witness a humble walk can be.

I heard of a young man who making a mistake at work felt he ought to resign, thought it would be better if he resigned, thought he would actually be sacked but he was not. The Lord gave him grace in the mistake he made to walk through it, to endure it. A year later his boss called him to one side and said “I admire the way you have conducted yourself over the last twelve months” and awarded him a pay rise. So you see the world watches us, we are an epistle read of all men, the weight that it brings to live rightly. In the world but not of it.

In the world: in Philippians chapter 2 Paul writing to the Philippians, verses 14 and 15 writes “Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;” Do we, are we shining as lights in the world? There are those that are in their circumstances they do not have to venture far into the world and they are kept from a certain

amount of evil from the world –which is a great mercy. But whether you are in the world physically through your work or your school or whatever, or whether you are at home you will find that the world will come in. We live in a day where Satan has many, many weapons at his disposal; many things that he can use to attack us even when in our own home. You only have to look at the rise of technology in our day – living in the 21st century, in our country: there are so many ways where we are under attack and so many ways in which we need to be kept by the power of God and that we may let our lights shine. But beloved friends, there is an emphasis on letting that light shine, not hiding away, hiding our light under a bushel. So what do I mean? Well, opportunity. Do we leave our house in the morning and pray that the Lord will give us, grant us, a door of utterance, give us an opportunity to speak a word in season to those around us? If you and I have tasted and handled of the blessings of the gospel, if you have felt the love of Christ in your heart, would we not want that desire in our heart to share it with those around us? We are to love our enemy, we are to love our neighbours as ourselves. Would we, would you seek that opportunity to speak? I mean, seek it in prayer, the Lord will open the door, it must be the Lord's work. You would not want to speak otherwise. The Lord will give you that strength, and that help and encourage you so to do. Sadly we can be ashamed, of that hope in us, a missed opportunity.

I had an opportunity to speak, shortly after I was called by grace, working in somebody's home. I was changing some windows on the outside of the building of their home and the weather, all night and up to the point I got there in the morning, was absolutely horrendous. But as I turned in their drive to do this work, the weather completely changed. I had been begging the Lord that He would enable me to get this work done, I needed to get this work done. I walked in their house and the lady of the house was there with her in-laws. They were sitting there at the breakfast table. They were discussing this remarkable change in the weather, they had thought I would not turn up. They were saying, "How has this come about?" They turned to me and said "We can't believe the change in the weather, how has this come about? How? How has the weather changed so dramatically and so quickly?" You know friends, I did not say anything. To my shame this afternoon I have to confess, I did not say anything. I did not say that I had prayed every mile of that journey to their home, I did not say that my heavenly Father had appeared so wonderfully and brought about this change in the weather to enable me to go about my business. I did not say anything, silence. I went out to the van afterwards; and I sat at the back of the van and I thought, why didn't I say anything? The bitterness I felt, ashamed of Him. I did not deny Him but I did in words, but I did not speak, an opportunity gone. I went back in the house afterward and thought I would say something but they had moved onto another conversation. No opportunity arose to say anything. Now my heart was bursting with guilt but no opportunity.

Well, friends I will leave it there. But pray that the Lord will give you grace, give you strength to speak, not to be ashamed of the glorious gospel, not to be ashamed of our Almighty God in heaven, but to speak when an opportunity is given. You see the effect it has. You will be surprised, you will think surely these people in our evil day will reject it, they will turn and rend me, they will not hear me. But you will be surprised if the Lord has opened that door. Ah what a thing can happen under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit. The Lord opens a door, to be able to just say a little and what is done, O heaven, heaven will tell. So there is that emphasis in the world. In the world but not of it.

In the second of Corinthians we read that we are to be separate. You say, well how is this? We are to be in the world but 2 Corinthians chapter 6 says "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto

you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” [verses 14 - 18] You say, well hold on, we are to be in the world as lights shining in the world, not ashamed of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, not ashamed of Him but now we are to be out of it? Separate, “be ye separate.”

Well, beloved friends, it is this point this afternoon I want to dwell on particularly: to be in the world, as lights shining in the dark world, as a witness in this evil day in which we live but not of the world. You and I are sinners and though we may be called by grace we are still in a body of sin, we still have an evil heart, a heart made soft, a new spirit put within – but still an evil heart, and now there’s that conflict within and temptations. How can we then, as sinners, with the grace of God in our hearts, live amongst sinners and walk rightly before them and before God, without separating ourselves, without hiding ourselves away in our closets, without living as monks and nuns in a monastery? How can we fulfill these things, this separating from the world? The child of God, those that fear God, those who seek to walk according to His ways, who fear the Lord, who love His Word: those will be given a desire to not be of the world. There will be a separation in their heart, their affections, their desires. The sins, the pleasures of sin that they once sought will not have the power over them as it once did. Their affections are set on things above. The Lord has brought about a change within them whereby in their affections they are separated, in their desires they are separated and yes, that may bring the loss of close friendships they once had with blasphemers and the world, the infidel as Paul says. Yes, there may be business unions that need to be broken. But by grace working in the heart these things will be done because the child of God is a new man or new woman or a new boy or a new girl, the believing, the believer in the Word of God and in God. There is a change within that brings this separation. They are not to shut themselves away but as they go into the world in their daily business for necessity, in their right mind they are not seeking those things they once sought. They are not following the pleasures of sin as they once did. They are not overtaken with the snares of this world, the riches of this world, following the fashions of the world. There is a new spirit within them and it is the Spirit of God. So it is to come out from among them in your affections, and in relationships and in business relationships where needed. You are to judge your own life. You are to live it before God, you are to give an account to Him at that Great day of Judgement. I am not here this afternoon to lay down lots of do’s and don’ts. In your coming out of the world in your affections, it is your living then unto the Lord. Letting your light shine and being separate.

But you say, how? How can I, as a poor sinner, a poor trembling sinner, a fearful one, a timid one suffering the onslaught of temptation? How can I, knowing what my heart is, walk worthy? How can I meet this high standard? How will I not make shipwreck? How will I not be turned aside? “Finally, my brethren,” writes Paul in the Ephesians chapter 6 [verses 10, 11] ‘Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.’ This is the secret: being in the world and not of it – putting on the whole armour of God. It is how a believer can walk in the evil hour, the evil day. Put on the whole armour for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, it is not an outward battle. We have liberty to worship in our country. We are not under the same outward persecutions as those in former days but we fight against, we wrestle “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God,” God has provided it for His people. The armour “that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.” [Eph 6:12, 13]

He has given the whole armour and what is it? Let us briefly go through it. “Stand therefore, having your loins girt.” [Eph 6:14] You as a soldier, because this is Paul’s reference. It is a reference to a Roman soldier and he is to have his loins girt. Do you pray every morning when you leave your house, do you attend your morning worship? You think of your children going off to school or whatever your day is to be, do you pray, Lord grant to me this armour? Do we take it upon us in prayer? Do we seek for it? Pray earnestly for it - that He may girt us about. You cannot move through this life unhindered with things entangling your ankles. It is to be girt about with truth. You

are running a race and you are to lay aside those things that hinder. You are to leave those things that would hinder you. What am I to do this day? Is it profitable for me? Is it right for me?

Maybe there's parents here - you've got things at school, there's a trip to look round a theatre, there's a theme park to visit – whatever it is - and you're in two minds. You know what's right but there's pressures to conform. There's pressures of the world around. There's pressures on your children isn't there. And you think of some things and maybe they're not quite so clear in your mind. They're not definitely wrong. Maybe you hear that others, other Christians do them. What shall I do? Can you ask the Lord's blessing on it? That's a good starting point. Can you take that activity that day and pray, Lord help the children in it, Lord be with them where they go, be by their side, be with me, Lord, in this that I'm doing this day? Can you ask the Lord's blessing on it? If it fails that first test then you know your answer. You can't go can you? Can you take your armour and then go into a place where you feel the Lord wouldn't be found with you?

And so it's a good test - to stand therefore, having your loins girt and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. If you're going to stand - O to stand in the gospel. That word "preparation" in the Greek it means strong footing, strong foundation and you're going into the world. Are you going in your own strength? Are you going in your own standing? Or are your feet shod with the gospel of peace? Is that where you set off from in the morning? Well the gospel of peace is in your heart. You're going into war but your feet are shod with peace. What a foundation! The Lord Jesus Christ Himself the true foundation. O to know it! And to believe it!

And above all, above all the emphasis Paul puts on it – take the shield of faith. You know Satan will fire his darts at you. You're venturing out into the world. You don't want to be found of the world. The first thing he attacks is your faith. O to have the shield of faith wherewith you'll be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. Lord give me faith this day, Lord increase my faith. Take the helmet of salvation, Satan attacking your mind questioning you whether you really are a real Christian. Lord keep me, keep my mind stayed on thee - on Thy promises, on Thy Word, who Thou art, what Thou hast done for Thy people. The helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

Beloved friends, we have such an armour, we have such an armour. There is nothing to be fearful of if decked with all of these, the breastplate of the Lord Jesus Christ's righteousness. Our friend Mr Playfoot spoke of the righteousness and how when reading of The Lord our Righteousness it touched his heart. You know the old ministers used to speak of imparted righteousness and imputed righteousness. The imputed righteousness of Christ for the child of God in heaven to cover the shame of having once been a sinner. But the imparting is of it daily into the hearts of his people. Daily granting him, them His righteousness. Ah this breastplate. That final line of defence for the soldier's vital organs. The Lord Jesus Christ, Jehovah Tsidkenu, The Lord our Righteousness.

The sword of the Spirit. Sometimes when we go into the world Satan comes into close combat. You know he's not always firing the darts from afar. Sometimes it's from close range. Sometimes the tempter comes within. Sometimes it is close ones we acquainted to, at work or school acquaintances or whatever and Satan moves in and its close combat but God has given you a sword, His Word.

Do you know how to wield it? David went into battle against Goliath; he put on Saul's armour, took Saul's sword and he said I can't go. He said I haven't proved them. He took it all off, he took his sling and his stones and he ventured –he had proved those. But you know we never read of him venturing again into battle with his sling and his stones. David ventured each time with the same Almighty presence, seeking the same Deliverer, seeking the same strength from his God but when he ventured, he ventured equipped differently. As he went on to further battles, he took upon him the armour of a soldier and he got to prove it - to fight with the sword. And you and I - you know if we're to take the whole armour - the emphasis is the whole armour - if we're to take the whole armour, it's taking the Word of God with us out into the world, you've got to prove it. You can't wield a

sword that you've not proved - you'll fail. And so it's this reading of God's Word, giving our time to study His Word, to become familiar with it. It's infallible. The world cannot stand against it. It answers every single problem you and I will face in this world. Our lives are written out in it. The Word of God is still relevant and will ever be relevant despite what some may say. Even in our day with all the advances of man, the Word of God stands sure. O to give that diligence then to read it, to study it for there is our safety.

The leader of the Liberal Democrats, Tim Farron, was interviewed recently by the BBC and they asked him a question regarding the act of homosexuality and whether he thought it was a sin. And after having not answered that question for a good number of months or even years he was pressed and answered the question to the BBC interviewer and said, "No, I don't think it is". You say, what if I'm asked a question at work or at school and it's a question like that and they're trying to cause me to slip up, to catch me, how am I to reply? What's the starting point for us? Well, it's God's Word. The question -What do you think? Is it a sin? The reply - it doesn't matter what I think, it's what God thinks. I'm a Christian, I believe God's Word and in believing God's Word, God's Word says..... Why am I saying this? Because the BBC interviewer, she then took Mr Farrons' sword, God's Word, and she said this to him. When he said "No, I don't think it is", she turned round, (he probably thought he would get a pat on the back for being so liberal, so loving and so welcoming) she said this "Oh right, so you dismiss all the writings of Paul the Apostle, do you, in the New Testament? You're saying that what he's written isn't true? You're saying that God's Word is not true then? You're a Christian, surely you believe God's Word?" You see, she'd taken his sword, which should have been his defence, and she pierced him in his heart. You know it's solemn isn't it? May you and I see a lesson in these things.

When David went into further battles, he went as best equipped as he could having proved his sword and his armour. May you and I give diligence to read God's Word. Because friends it's our foundation. God speaks in His Word. It's still sworn on in courts of law. Don't bring your opinion into it if you're put to the test. Use God's Word. I'm a Christian, I believe God's Word and God's Word says..... And in every court of law there's still a copy of God's Word. God's Word says, this.... But you know, you've got to know God's Word to wield that sword. O then may we study it, prayerfully, carefully. O what a treasure! What a weapon it is for defense for the Christian!

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself, He says 'I am the door'. I've said already to pray going out of your house in the morning. The Lord Jesus says, I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, he shall go in and out, and find pasture. He's a door of the sheep fold. We pray as we go out in the morning, Lord be with me in my day, where I go, with my loved ones. As a good shepherd He counts His sheep out. Seek permission for where you're going, seek His blessing. Seek the whole armour that ye may be able to take it with you and have it and have His presence. They out, and He counts His sheep back in the evening. Where have they been? Do you pray in the evening, Lord I've been in the world, Lord I feel I've picked up things of the world, Lord I feel contaminated, Lord I feel stained, I feel at times my eye has been drawn away, cleanse me, cleanse me from all sin, cleanse me from this guilt, cleanse me daily, wash my feet as Thou didst wash the feet of the disciples? He says I am the door and ye shall go in and out and find pasture. You know that loving Shepherd, He see His children coming in and are we, as Christians in our churches, I wonder if we are bringing things in with us? I wonder if we are not seeking to be cleansed from all these sins. The world coming in, being brought in.

We seem to be struggling with this being in the world but not of it. Are we seeking that daily cleansing? The Lord to be with us daily, the Lord to wash us from these things, because when we bring evil in, when the world creeps into our churches, when the world creeps into our families and into our own hearts it brings spiritual sickness. And is there not a little of that in us and in our churches? Lethargy, and slothfulness, and indifference, and carelessness. You know those beginnings of spiritual sickness. Well the blessing of the children of God is to be found with a heavenly Shepherd who counts them out and He counts them back in and He can cleanse them from

their daily sins. 'I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil [John 17:15]'

Beloved friends, we have many things we could say this afternoon, the time has failed, but in closing it's this: Know your enemy. He's defeated. Satan knows you, he knows you better than you know yourself but know this, he's defeated. '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. [John 16:33] The Lord has overcome. The Lord has gotten the victory. The Lord is our Captain leading us through this pilgrimage. O to be found not seeking our rest but seeking that walk through this world, not loitering. Yes, letting our lights shine. Yes not shutting ourselves away but seeking grace daily, faith, trust, the love of Christ in our hearts and to know His Word. 'Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.' [Jude: 24, 25]