

## Gospel Words - Fourth Series.

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A Series of 4pp. Gospel Tracts by W.K. for distribution after preaching.

### 1 The Jewish leper

Matt. 8, Mark 1, Luke 5.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 141-142. Gospel No. 4: 1.)

In the first of the Gospels this is the earliest miracle given in detail: a suited testimony of Messiah to His people, a testimony that He was Jehovah in their midst acting in power and grace. Indeed even here the account is brief. The fact is in some respects all the more significant. The real state spiritually of the chosen people was no better in God's sight. The law had singled out leprosy as the standing sign of uncleanness and exclusion from His presence. Hence the more manifest was grace toward the Gentile in the action of the prophet of old, when Israel was sinking down more and more into apostacy.

But now a greater than Elisha was here. Immanuel was on earth, in the land; and this unhappy Jew prostrates himself before Him, and makes his appeal: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." The chosen people were morally what he was physically; but they knew it no more than they bowed to His glory. But it will dawn on the remnant by-and-by, when they shall say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah." "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Far different was it in the day of Messiah's visitation.

Even the leper, who did pay Him homage then, feebly apprehended the grace that was in Him "Lord, if Thou wilt." Why question? Why doubt? Wherefore was He come, and come Himself, the Holy One, to dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips? A man, yet the King, Jehovah of Hosts! If the eyes of the blind were to be opened, and the ears of the deaf to be unstopped, and the lame to leap as a hart (and prophecy had bound up this and more with the advent of Messiah) was the leper to be an exception? Was he without the pale of mercy? The leper, abject as he was, acknowledged His power

without hesitation.

But grace rises over all difficulty and applies the power to the need, however desperate; and here Luke lets us know, suitably to his own character, that the man was "full of leprosy." But if faith was small, grace comes forth in its own immensity. "And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him."

It was not always thus that the Lord wrought in cleansing lepers. When the ten met Him, as we hear in Luke 17, they stood afar off, and the Lord cleansed all, but touched none of them. Here we have the beautiful sign of His mercy toward Israel another day, when He will bless them with His gracious presence and heal all their diseases, as He will forgive all their iniquities.

Now, present in humiliation, His glory could not be hid. Had He been merely man under the law, there was no license to touch the leper. Jehovah Messiah was there; and however He might stoop in love, He could not deny Himself. He and He alone could touch the leper, not only undefiled, but banishing the leprosy. How manifestly it was God in Christ winning the overwhelmed heart, and blending power with grace in a way beyond all human thought! Mark tells us that He was "moved with compassion"; and indeed the act was exactly suited to express it.

But He added words, recorded in all three Gospels, of the utmost weight — "I will; be thou clean." None on earth but He was free so to speak. His Person gave Him the right. He, Who could truly say "I am," was entitled to say "I will." In every other born of woman it would have been not only presumption but sin. He could say these words Who does say in John 8, "Before Abraham was, I am." "Be thou clean" was immediately followed with power that could not be disputed. "Immediately" the man's leprosy was cleansed. The Lord Jesus spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

It was but a sample; and, as the Lord enjoins, "for a testimony unto them." Therefore Jesus said unto the leper, "See thou tell no man, but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded." A greater work was needed for man before God. A deeper want than any created by disease, however fatal, lay upon Israel; but this was "for a testimony unto them." To show himself to the priest ought to have raised the question there, if his lips kept knowledge, or if his heart sought it, Who has healed him? It would have drawn out the answer from faith; Jehovah is here; Jehovah has healed him. For no one knew better than the priest that man is powerless here; and the law has no provision for healing leprosy, only directions for cleansing ritually him who is already healed.

Alas! like people, like priest; all were unbelieving then, save the little remnant which heard the Good Shepherd's voice and followed Him. How is it with my reader? The Gentile professor, though christened, if this be all, is no less a leper in God's sight than the Jew; and the outward bearing of the Lord's name cannot bring to God without living faith. Nay, to possess externally was and is a great danger for the flesh, which goes asleep under privileges now as Israel did of old.

Oh, listen to His voice, that speaks still from heaven, and assuredly with no less power than to the Jewish leper. Why is the tale recorded so fully if it be not a multiplied witness, that you should believe on Him? Your case is no less desperate than the leper's. But the Saviour and His word are the same for ever if your faith may be as small, your appeal as hesitating, as his was of whom we read. The grace of the Lord Jesus meets faith however little and weak, and acts according to God's glory. May you then hear and live!

## **2 The Gentile centurion and his servant**

Matt. 8: 5-13; Luke 7: 2-10.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 156-157. Gospel No. 4: 2.)

In the first Gospel the leper is set immediately before the Centurion, to mark the grace at hand for the Gentile when the defiled people should reject the Messiah. So the Gospel shows from its beginning to its end. Hence it is that in its account of the Centurion (not in the corresponding narrative of Luke), the Lord declares that many should come from east and west and share the feast with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, whilst the sons of the kingdom, their seed, should be cast forth into, the outer darkness with its unspeakable anguish.

In the third Gospel, which has a moral object rather than dispensational, the Holy Spirit led to placing the forgiven paralytic after the healed leper (Luke 5: 13, 14, and 18-25): the two striking pictures of sin as needing divine grace to cleanse, and the known remission of sins for power to walk and serve aright. Here too, the case of the Centurion is given in its actual place, which equally fell in with the scope of the Gospel. The Lord had laid down for His disciples in a large way and wholly above human thought or feeling that blessedness which He know in its perfection which grace calls to and forms. Hence it is no question here of scribes and Pharisees, or of those of old time, He urges the principle of God's kingdom in words which leave the Jew out of sight and instruct the man of God where and when ever he may be.

The faith of the Gentile Centurion follows, with a detail of similar propriety. His bondman was dear, yea precious, to him, but sick and about to die. Yet the Centurion did not present himself to the Lord. He came to Him only, as those are said to do themselves what they do by others. He was no heathen; he honoured the Jew, low as they were, because God chose them and entrusted them with His oracles, the scriptures. Therefore did he (a rare thing in a Roman officer) love their nation, as he even built them their synagogue. And so he sent to the Lord elders of that people, who besought Him earnestly on the behalf of one so worthy in their eyes (as rare a thing in a Jewish elder).

But when the Lord was not far from the house, the Centurion sent friends to Him, saying, Lord, trouble not Thyself, for I am not worthy (adequate or qualified) that Thou shouldst come under my roof. The very grace of the Lord, which offered to come and heal the servant, awoke a deeper sense of the Lord and of himself in his heart. This was a morally right feeling in the Centurion toward One Whom he could not but regard as possessed of divine power and title; as the elders were right in their sense of the Gentile's worth and religious feeling. He was in truth a believer. This made him humble as well as reverent. He recognised in Jesus what made himself nothing, yet what encouraged him to lay at His feet his appeal for a dying slave; and this first through Jewish elders, then through friends; for what was he himself to be accounted of? Whereas He, the Lord, has but to say by a word, and his servant shall be healed. He too, a man set under authority, had soldiers under him, and says, to one Go, and he goes, to another Come, and he comes, and to his servant Do this, and he does it.

Can we wonder that the gracious Lord wondered? It was faith simple and strong, the fruit of divine grace. The word of God, for this was read and heard in the synagogue, acquainted the Centurion with God's nature and ways, as none of the Jews learnt who listened with no such sense of need but claiming a monopoly of possession. Not even in Israel, the Lord said, had He found so great faith. Those who were sent returned and found the sick man in sound health.

How is it with you who read these words? If not born of God, you are in the evil and darkness of the fall, and all the more guilty because you have heard not the law only, but the gospel from your tenderest years. Yet you have lived as if you were not a lost sinner, as if God were not a Saviour, as if Christ who died for sinners was not ordained Jude of quick and dead, most of all to be dreaded by those who hear but neglect so great salvation. You are in a worse and more dangerous case than the

sick slave of the Centurion. Only the breath of your nostrils severs you from death, the forerunner of the second death, the lake of fire for ever. Oh! weigh the tale written to save — written by the Holy Spirit to save — a slave of sin. Christ speaks in it to you who read or bear. For Him to speak by a word is ample to save the soul that believes. And He has said many words to give you confidence notwithstanding your many sins. He gives healing, life, pardon, peace, and power. He gives all things worthy of God, all needed by man. But beware of doubting beware of deferring. The "convenient time never comes. Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. If you put off, beware lest you perish.

### 3 Peter's mother-in-law

Matt. 8, Mark 1, Luke 4.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 166-167. Gospel No. 4-3.)

We have only to compare the first Gospel with the two which follow, in order to learn not only how reliable in them all Scripture is, but the faithful persevering goodness of the Lord to Israel which was Matthew's task. It is Mark, who by his notes of time, "straightway" and others, gives us the surest clue to the historical order of events in His blessed service. With this we can compare the others, and may by grace gather why that order is left for other objects in the mind of the Holy Spirit. Thus we can see that with Luke, who describes the Lord morally, there was no motive for departure from it; and so here Mark and he coalesce. But the dispensational design, which He used Matthew to make known, required the change to a much later occasion, and therefore a wholly different connection. Hence all can notice that here are no links of time in his account. Both the others bind their narrative of the miracle with the precious and notable facts of that day in the synagogue of Capernaum. Matthew, because of transplanting the case, says nothing of the kind.

"And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she arose and ministered unto them" (Matt. 8: 14, 15).

If the Gentile centurion appealed in faith to that gracious power, which had only to speak the word and healing followed, the Lord in no way turned from Israel. His heart yearned over the favoured but guilty people. And Peter's wife's mother laid down in fever gives us to see it clearly. Here He does enter the house, and touch her hand. Luke tells us that she was seized with a great fever (for the sickness differs much); and adds that they besought Him for her; as Mark, that they told Him of her anon or immediately. This was all seasonable on their part; but He was there ready to cure. So Mark lets us know that He took her by the hand and lifted her up. Nor was it only that the fever left her immediately, but that she was serving them (Mark and Luke) as well as Him (R.V. of Matthew).

Such is the Lord to any sinner's need now. His ear is open to every cry direct or indirect to Himself. He was then healing the sick. He is now delivering men for time and eternity. Why should not you, my reader, appeal for your guilty soul? Is not the soul more than food, as the body is more than clothing? He only is the Saviour of both if you believe the gospel: of the soul now, of the body by-and-by. "Fear Him Who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." "Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven." These words are faithful and true. Beware of unbelief; for now is the hour "when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." Life is in Him, and He gives it to all that believe. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not

come into condemnation (judgment), but is passed from death into life" (John 5).

But you may plead that Peter's wife's mother had the apostle and more to speak for her to the Lord. This is true; but there is no appeal like the needy one's himself to the Saviour. Search and see if He ever refused one. He declares in John 6 that "him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Oh, I beseech you, be not faithless but believing. To find Him you need not to ascend the heights where He is, nor to descend where He descended. He is near to every one that calls on Him. Every secret of every heart is bare before His eyes. Doubt not then, but believe.

On the evening of the same day He cured Peter's mother-in-law, and so immediately that she was able to serve Him and His followers, He did yet more for others. "And when even was come, they brought unto, Him many possessed with demons, and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all that were sick; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses" (vers. 16, 17). (See Isa. 53: 4).

The very aim of that prophetic oracle was to announce that, before He suffered atoningly (which follows in ver. 5- 12), He entered into all that troubled His people even in their bodies, and as we see in the Gospels from Satan's more immediate power. And this He did not in power only but in the tenderest bearing of the burden on His spirit, while He took it away; as it is said elsewhere by the same prophet, "In all their affliction He was afflicted." Here then is more and most ample encouragement for you to bring your need to His feet. If you so come, He will never say you, Nay. Why is all this revealed, but that you may cast your soul on Him now? If you are a great sinner, be assured that He is a greater Saviour.

## 4 The Paralytic healed

Matt. 9, Mark 2, Luke 5.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 182-183. Gospel No. 4: 4.)

The new and precious feature which betrays itself at the point in this narrative of Matthew is the growing opposition and hatred of the religious leaders toward the Lord. It is not, as in Matt. 8, a certain scribe ignorant of himself and self-confident who proposes to follow Him whithersoever He may go. In Matt. 9 the scribes begin with saying within themselves, This man blasphemeth; and the Pharisees end with their own blasphemy — that it was in virtue of the prince of the demons He was casting out the demons. Through the darkening unbelief the Lord gives His blessed and blessing testimony.

The first incident recorded is the cure of the paralytic as He was speaking the word to a crowd at home in His own city — Capernaum. This malady aptly sets forth the effect of sin in destroying power; as leprosy in its unclean taint before God or man. The occasion was the house filled even beyond the door, as Mark tells us; which accounts for the difficulty the four bearers had of getting near. Eastern buildings, however, furnished easy access to the roof; and this they uncovered, and let down the sick man on his pallet through the tiles, as Luke tells us. The Lord saw their faith and says to the paralytic "son" (or "child" rather), "Thy sins be forgiven."

It was indeed a startling word; and so it was meant to be. The Lord laid bare the root of the evil, and dealt with it at once fundamentally. He alone could thus speak. Not even an apostle approaches its force. It was proper to Him Who was alike Jehovah and Son of Man. The men learned in the law were shocked. They unbelievably reasoned in their hearts to His dishonour; but He, the ordained Judge of quick and dead, read their hearts as He does, those of all, and answered their unuttered and evil reasoning by the question:- "Which is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Rise up and walk?"

But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power (or, authority) on earth to forgive sins (He saith to the paralytic), Arise, and take up thy bed, and go to thy house." And so the man did immediately before them all. And the crowds at least were filled with fear and said, We have seen strange things today.

Let me plead with you who have sins and cannot avoid foreboding of judgment. Why should not you take hold of such words of divine grace? They are for every soul of man that believes. They were not limited to that age or race or land. They are written in the imperishable word of God, for guilty men wherever they be who bear, that they may believe and be saved. Therefore did He come not yet to judge, but to say still, Thy sins are forgiven. Miracles may cease; but the love never fails which forgives sins to every needy sinner that believes. And if Jews reject, it but gives the opportunity to open the door freely to the Gentile, far and wide. Is God of Jews only? Is He not of Gentiles also? Yea, writes the inspired Hebrew of Hebrews, of Gentiles also. Fear not then, but believe.

"The Son of man hath power *on earth* to forgive sins." This the scribes learned in the law did not believe; for they knew not Him, nor the God Who sent Him. They would not have disputed that God forgive sins. They rebelled against the Lord's exercise of any such authority. He claimed it as Son of man, exercised it on behalf of the paralytic, and gave Him immediate powers to rise take up his couch, and walk, before their eyes, as His disproof of their evil doubts, His witness outwardly of that precious boon. He had overcome Satan for this life and was dividing his spoils.

But more: Christ has accomplished redemption since. He took His seat on the right hand of the Majesty on high when He had made purification of sins. Risen from the dead, He has told us that all power (or authority) has been given to Him in heaven and on earth. He has vanquished finally; He has borne God's judgment of sin on the cross; He has borne our sins in His own body on the tree. Is there not all the more urgent ground for you to believe, and all the deeper encouragement for you to confide? He has sent out His servants expressly into all the world, and told them to preach the gospel or glad tidings to the whole creation. But He solemnly warns that he that disbelieves shall be condemned (or damned).

Oh, deceive not your soul, nor slight the Saviour Who is the Lord of glory. If He humbled Himself to become not only man but a sacrifice to God for sin, is there not the best of all grounds for you to bow, and bless and worship Him, even as the Father Who gave Him? And how many, once unbelievers, have become the most devoted of His servants like Saul of Tarsus, afterwards the great apostle? Be not like the proud scribes or bitter Pharisees, who trusted themselves, rejected Him, and perished everlastingly.

Power to walk aright and glorify God is inseparable from knowing your sins forgiven. Till you believe the gospel, you are as powerless as the paralytic was on his couch. When you have redemption in Him through His blood, the forgiveness of your offences, you can enjoy God's love in Christ, His counsels and His ways; and the Holy Spirit will strengthen you to walk worthily of Him, and of the calling wherewith you were called. Ability to walk as a Christian follows faith in Christ and His grace in forgiveness. They reverse God's way and Christ's word whose effort is so to walk as to be forgiven. It is all vain, because it is self and unbelief: a flame of their own kindling. And this shall they have of God's hand: they shall lie down in sorrow.

See then that ye look to Him, Who, if He is exalted now, is still the Saviour. For God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. If you believe not, you will assuredly be judged by Him and lost for ever. So His word declares plainly.

## 5 The Tempest, and unbelief rebuked

Matt. 8, Mark 4, Luke 8.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 197-198. Gospel No. 4: 5.)

Here is another manifestation of divine power and goodness in the Lord Jesus here below. Matthew wished to take it out of its historic place, after the parables of Matt. 13 were uttered, for that express purpose; or rather the Spirit Who employed him, if one may so say reverently.

"And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves; but he was asleep. And the disciples came to him and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish" (Matt. 8: 23-25).

Thus did the gracious Lord test the faith of His followers, that they might confide in His supremacy over all need, His concern for them in all dangers and difficulties. Was not He with them Whom God had sent to save? Was not the Reconciler not only of all believers but of all the universe, in the ship? He, Who was come to lay the basis of the new creation and everlasting glory? If He could not perish Who was here to rescue from everlasting destruction all that look to Him in faith, how weak and unworthy to wrong His love as if He would leave them to perish? Yet appearances were allowed to prove their hearts. The sudden violent squall, the sea raging, the little ship or boat on which they had gone aboard, the waves beating in so that the ship was already filled, the Lord asleep (not on a pillow but the boat-cushion)!

It was assuredly perilous increasingly, with but one ground of confidence: Jesus was there. But this to faith should have been everything; and it would have been, had they looked away from the wind, sea, and all else, to Him. When they woke Him, it was but with the appeal, "Lord, save us: we perish." Even on the resurrection day they were yet more sad and despairing, if not blinded by alarm, because He had bowed to death and suffered on the cross; and He had then to reproach them as senseless and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets spoke. He, despised and rejected of men, had only to speak the word, and the elements least controllable by man obeyed His voice, Who stooped so low in love, yet was their Creator. "And He arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still; and the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." But He said also, "Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith"? Sinner, or saint, what a word of truth to both! No doubt there is a difference immense, between him that believes and the unbeliever, for the one is in the hand of the Father and the Son; the other lies like the whole world in the wicked one. Yet the unbelief which in the latter resists the Holy Spirit fatally, so far as it works, dishonours the Lord and injures the believer; and scripture abounds with proofs of both, that each may respectively be warned. It was certainly fear that prompted the importunate repetition which Luke records (Luke 8: 24), "Master, Master, we perish." The disciples soon learnt the vanity of their alarm when he arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water; though they to the end of the earthly pilgrimage need to look earnestly to Him, as His love values it, and it is due to His glory. And if a rebuke to unbelief, how strengthening to the heart when we learn afresh His faithful and effectual intervention, whatever the manner of it!

But is this nothing to you, who are perishing in sins and unbelief? The Creator of all things did not become a man save to glorify God and to bless man, as blessing could only be thus; and by nothing short of death, the death of the cross. His incarnation was not only to manifest Him in life, solely doing God's will, as it never had been on earth before, but to suffer for sins in the body God prepared for Him, that sins might be taken away by the all-sufficient sacrifice, and that believers might be sanctified, yea, perfected for ever. For this Heb. 10 declares to be the fruit of the Saviour's work.

And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us. Whatever may be the good things in store for Israel when they repent and look in faith unto their pierced Messiah, the good tidings are now sent by God to any sinner, Jew or Gentile. Oh, take the place of truth, and own to God your sins and ruin, that you may not come into judgment. For His judgment (and the Lord Jesus is the Judge) is holy and righteous, and therefore must be utterly destructive of the guilty. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16: 31). He is the object of faith set before any, and all by God, that whosoever believeth may not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3).

Listen not to the wiles of the devil, who whispers that you are taking away from God's honour by looking to His Son, the Lord Jesus. Not so; for "he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also," and "whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (1 John 2). And this is the reason why "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son;" that all men might honour Him as the Father (John 5). Those who believe honour Him now, and have eternal life in Him, and by grace walk accordingly; but all who now dishonour the Son, by refusing His word and disbelieving Him Who sent Him, must be raised to a resurrection of judgment which will compel them to honour Him in the solemn endless day of their everlasting ruin. So He declares Who is the way, and the truth, and the life. Sin no more against God and your own souls; but believe on Him Who by the grace of God tasted death for every one. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus a man, who gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due times"; and so He is to you now, that you may no longer neglect so great salvation, but believe on Him to the saving of your soul.

## 6 The Demoniac delivered

Matt. 8, Mark 5: 1-20, Luke 8.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 212-213. Gospel No. 4: 6.)

There are two very different forms in which the enemy of God and man works: one which may be called extraordinary; the other far more common. It is thus for evil with the spirit that operates in the sons of disobedience, as the Holy Spirit does for good in children of obedience. The history in which the demoniac plays so conspicuous a part illustrates both. The second Gospel enters into affecting details of the man's hopeless misery, and of the Saviour's gracious power; as the first is more general in the display of a present Jehovah-Messiah, taking notice of a second victim as is usual throughout (Matt. 8: 28, Matt. 9: 27, Matt. 20: 30), the least adequate testimony to Israel. Mark and Luke graphically bring before us the more notable of the demoniacs. When the Saviour was here, it would seem that Satan put forth his malignant power beyond all example. But a stronger than he was here to overcome him, take from him his whole armour wherein he trusted, and divide his spoils.

Immediately, on the Lord's quitting the ship from Capernaum to the other side of the lake, there met Him a man with an unclean spirit who had his dwelling in the tombs. None could bind him, not even with chains. Often as he had been bound with fetters and chains, the chains were rent asunder by him and the fetters shattered; and none had strength to subdue him. Continually by night and day in the tombs and in the mountains was he crying and cutting himself with stones. What a depth of unspeakably wretched and appalling degradation! Matthew adds the fierceness and danger to others; Luke, that for a long time he had worn no clothes.

The sight of the Lord Jesus even from afar arrested him, so that he ran and paid Him homage, and with a loud voice cried, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure Thee by God, torment me not. For the Lord said, Come forth, unclean spirit, out of the man. Nor was this all:

He asked him, What is thy name? and got the answer, My name is Legion, for we are many. There is a fact outside human ken, on the evil side of the spiritual world, beyond measure horrible: a man with such a host of evil spirits in him as could justify the well-known name of a Roman battalion, and a man with a personal consciousness, yet also merging his personality in theirs! — Legion, for we are many!

But mighty as a spirit is, and especially when in such multitudinous and tyrannical force of evil, demons have no sceptical hardihood. They believe and shudder (James 2: 19). Therefore did they beseech that He would not command them to depart into the abyss; for their sure doom was before their eyes; and they knew that when He reigns, they will be cast there, which they dreaded even now. Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time? is the cry in the first Gospel. So, when they begged to enter a great herd of swine feeding on the mountain side, the Lord gave them leave; and the swine, about two thousand, no sooner received the unclean spirits, than they rushed down the steep and were choked in the sea. It was the witness, to all that believe scripture, of the Lord's delivering power on the one hand and of Satan's destructive energy on the other. It is idle here, as everywhere, to confound possession by demons with either lunacy or disease. Either or both might be also, or neither be, and yet that possession of evil spirits. The reality was thus transparent. The effect on the swine made the objective fact undeniably plain, and the suggestion of a physical or mental derangement inexcusably false.

Nor does the Lord, to Whom all belongs below as on high, need the apology of man to justify His permission, any more than for the sickness and death, the plague and the famine, the tempest and the earthquake, which He employs providentially in this fallen world. To what purposes of grace does He not turn every one of these inflictions for such as hear His word So doubtless it was then whether Jews or Gentiles owned the swine.

And here we face the more ordinary working of Satan's power. For when the swine-herds reported all, the whole city came to meet the Saviour and besought Him to depart out of their borders! They saw the possessed that had the legion sitting, clothed, and sensible; and they were afraid, not of Satan but of the Saviour! The witnesses related what explained all as to the demoniac and the swine; but all the people round about began to beseech Him to depart!

Such is man under Satan's power ever at work, if not so terrific in appearance far more dangerous than the maddening possession in its intensest form; and none is recorded beyond Legion's. Yet his presence never so acted on their fears, as the proof of the Saviour's beneficent power.

O my readers, are you under the same fatal spell? Do you dread to approach the Lord of all, the Saviour for eternity of all who believe? is it Jesus you dread in your soul? Is it from His grace that you shrink back, lest you should be saved now? Consider your most perilous condition. You are slaves of Satan, children of wrath, enemies of God. What must follow as you are? Death, and judgment. So it is laid up for men as they are. Without faith on your part, baptism and the Lord's Supper, blessed as they are to faith, only aggravate your guilt. There is no Saviour but the Lord Jesus, Who, once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to those that wait for Him unto salvation (in contrast with judgment, as He died a sacrifice for their sins).

Not such was the state of the delivered demoniac, who besought Him that he might be with Him. But becoming as the desire might be, the Lord had work for him to do, before that first love is gratified as it surely will be in due season: "Go to thy house unto thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee and showed thee mercy." And he went his way and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus did for him. And he did right, though all were wondering.

Alas! wonder is not faith. Let it not be your lot to fall short of the demoniac. Delivered from the

oppressive power of Satan, he was to bear witness of the gracious power of the Lord, even Jesus, shown to himself. But was it not by the hearing to produce faith in souls exposed to Satan in other ways? May you be delivered from the snare that would bid the Lord Jesus to depart. The day is fast approaching when He as King shall sit on the throne of His glory, and say to the faithless nations gathered before Him, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels.

## **7 The Woman healed and sent away in peace**

Matt. 9, Mark 5, Luke 8.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 230-231. Gospel No. 4: 7.)

Here we have a living picture of a soul smitten incurably for man, every effort fruitless, all medicine and physicians in vain, her resources spent, herself nothing bettered but rather grown worse.

But faith cometh by hearing; and, having heard of Jesus, she came in the crowd behind, and touched His garment, or, as Matthew and Luke say, its hem. Faith is always sure of the Saviour; it may have as feeble knowledge of itself as of Him, but it does not doubt in Whom the virtue lies. Much remains to be learnt and corrected, but it goes straight to its object. For she said, If I but touch His clothes, I shall be made whole. And faith does not fail to receive its answer through grace. Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she knew in her body that she was healed of the scourge.

But the Lord knew the whole case better still, and meant for her no half blessing. She did not question His power; she seems to have connected it in her mind with His person and surroundings physically. She must learn that His soul acted with it, that His mind and heart were engaged in the blessing. It was not a charm, as heathenism made it in thought; nor was it even dependent on His bodily presence, as Jews were apt to conclude. He Who had deigned to become the Servant of divine love, in a world where sin reigned and had wrought fell ruin, would show her the kindness of God.

Touching the hem of His garment stealthily, she would, if the case had been left there, have ever felt that it was underhand and surreptitious. She did not as yet know God, though availing herself of Messiah's healing energy. The Lord could not in His grace consent to so partial a mercy. He is entitled, and He loves, to bless fully all whom He blesses at all; and "him that cometh to Me," said He elsewhere, "I will in no wise cast out." So fully did He come as a servant, that He was here only to do the Father's will, not His own. Whosoever came, He received. And the full blessing He gave from first to last; He would lose nothing, but raise up at the last day.

So even at this day He not only forgives transgression, and covers sin, and imputes no iniquity, but takes guile from the spirit. This the healed woman needed; this the Lord gave. So immediately perceiving in Himself the power from Himself gone forth, He turned round in the crowd and said, Who touched my clothes? The disciples, as so commonly, misunderstood; and Peter, with the rest, talked of the crowds hemming Him with their pressure. But the Lord alone knew in the highest way, that a certain one did touch Him; and He looked about to see who had done this. It was not that He could not have named her, but to give her opportunity to confess the truth. How little she knew the grace that filled Him! For frightened and trembling, conscious of what had been done upon her, she came, and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth. How little she knew that such was the condition of her better blessing! And He said to her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole: go away in peace, and be well of thy scourge. How transporting to her as yet confused and anxious spirit! What solid abiding comfort for her to be thus in His presence, and to have all out before Him, and to know Him more than

confirming all she had got, with a message of peace unailing for all that is to come!

Such is the Lord to every need that is brought to Him; such is He most of all to that deepest need, which demanded not power only but propitiation in His suffering to the uttermost, the death of the cross. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. As He does not change, among human shiftings and men's various and strange doctrines, so neither does His power, nor His love. But to be blessed fully we must meet Him face to face, and know from His own lips grace given to us. It was an immense mercy to have the mischief stayed, the living death arrested; but how much more to hear His voice banishing all fear and sending her forth in peace, as we pass through a world of strife, and spite of a fallen nature which ever tends to pleasures that war in our members!

There may be crowds around the Lord. He is not occupied with them, but passing through. The touch of faith, however uninformed or feeble, arrests Him at once. But a blessing, though immediate and rich, is not enough to satisfy Him. The Blesser will be known, that faith may have a blessing, good measure, pressed down, shaken up, and running over: so does God give, not man. If it is for His glory that all be clear and confessed, it is also the condition of peace by faith. When silence is kept, the bones wax old through roaring all the day long, and the Lord's hand is heavy night as well as day, so that moisture is changed into summer's drought. But peace is known, when one's sin is acknowledged to Him; this cannot be while one's iniquity is hid. "I said, I will confess my transgressions to the LORD; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." So it was, so it is, so it must be, as long as grace brings sinners to God. Nature is all wrong in fearing that the Lord begrudges blessing, and the fullest, and for ever. It is no question of our merits who have but sins and death and wrath as we are naturally. It is His grace that saves; and His grace would have us to know that He makes salvation assured with all His heart.

## **8 The Daughter of Jairus raised**

Matt. 9, Mark 5, Luke 8.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 245-246. Gospel No. 4: 8.)

A great request was now laid at the feet of Jesus. The petitioner was Jairus ruler of the synagogue. His daughter, a maiden of twelve years, was dying. "But come" said her father, "lay Thy hand upon her: and she shall live." Nor did our meek Master turn a deaf ear, but arose and followed him.

The dying maiden was a striking type of the daughter of Zion, for whose sake Messiah was here. And the Jewish ruler expressed his faith in engaging His gracious presence and power to restore his daughter at the last gasp.

On the way the woman with a bloody flux for twelve years touched His garment and was healed. And the Lord not only yielded to her deed, but drew her out from her hiding, and sealed her faith and confession with His open approval to her better blessing. It is not otherwise with the Lord now, as we have proved who have gone to Him in out depth of need in this interval, since He came as Messiah to be sought by Israel, and before He reaches the daughter of His people, not sick only but dead. Grace has met us to the uttermost, not merely immediate healing for such as have touched Him on His way, but clearance away of all fear and doubt that we might taste how gracious He is and rest in peace through His word.

Yet this created a delay which must have tried most severely the importunate Jairus. And while the Lord was yet speaking to the healed woman, one comes from the ruler's house saying, Thy daughter is dead: trouble not the teacher. But an answer was given to nourish his drooping faith, Fear not; only

believe, and she shall be made well.

So it will be in the day that hastens. Unbelief will do its deadly work among the mass of the Jews. But the desperate condition of the chosen people will draw down the action of grace; and faith will, according to God's word, look to Him that loves to heal, and to Him that smote to bind up; and He will in due time raise them up and cause them to live before Him. Whether it be the long and desperately tried woman or the maid of Israel, faith alone enjoys the blessing. And justly so; for faith renounces all dependence on self and honours God and His Son, giving credit for love as great as the power, and Christ's word as unfailing as either. Faith therefore purifies the heart, us well as relieves and assures it.

Here the Lord, when come to the house, suffered none to enter save chosen witnesses, Peter, James, and John, with the father and mother of the maiden, As for all the rest who were weeping and bewailing, He put them out when They derided His saying, "Weep not: she is not dead but sleepeth." They believed their senses, not His word; and the scornful shall not see the blessing. But He took hold of her hand and called, saying, Maiden, arise. Then her spirit returned (for it was gone), and she rose up immediately; and He directed food to be given her. So in due time will the same Lord raise up the people from the valley of dry bones, as the prophets assure us, no matter how many say, Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost: we are clean cut off. As Jehovah hath spoken, He will perform; and in that day shall it be known through all the earth.

Quickening was no strain on the Lord of glory. It belonged to the Son as to the Father; and now that the Son was here a man to do His will, the Father gave Him to have life in Himself, showing Him all things that Himself doeth. Of these none was more characteristic than awakening the dead and quickening them. His dignified calm is remarkable here as on all such occasions. He took the dead child by the hand, and called; and she arose immediately. He graciously thought of her bodily need, which at such a moment even parents might not unnaturally overlook. Truly "He hath done all things well," and as none other; though many another did like works or even greater in His name, which exalts Him as much or more than if He had done them all Himself.

And has this tale of the Holy Spirit no bearing on you who read these lines, — dead to God while you live? Nay, it was written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in His name (John 20: 31). How many have heard His voice, since He was here, in the written word! For the hour now is (John 5: 25), as the Lord so solemnly avers, that souls hearing Him may not come into judgment but pass out of death into life.

Leave not such an issue uncertain. You might well despair if it turned on you, as men fancy in the pride and impenitence of their hearts. But the life you need is wholly and solely in the Son of God; and God is calling you to believe that Jesus is He, and that He gives eternal life to every believer on Him through His word.

It is "the dead" who are now called to hear: and they that hear, the Saviour assures us, shall live. Clearly they are not dead physically, but in trespasses and sins; and they are called to hear Him and live. For life is not in the first man whether profane or religious; it is in the Second; and faith by grace receives it. For such a boon, morality is as vain as ordinances. Those that live do live to God, and honour His institutions; but believers guided by God's word and Spirit testify to Christ as their life, and reject every other dependence as a destructive error and a cheat. He is the way, the truth, and the life, as He Himself declared; and so it is in John 5 with His "verily, verily." Woe is his who despises Him or sets up a rival in His stead. "Whosoever denieth the Son hath not the Father; he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also." And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life! It is far better than to be raised to natural life as Jairus' daughter was, though He Who raised her is the same

Who quickens those who believe now, and Israel from the dust of death by-and by. Fear not; only believe.

## 9 The Healing of the blind in the house

Matt. 9: 27-31.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 260-261. Gospel No. 4: 9.)

Healing of the blind was a marked work of the divine Messiah. So Isaiah predicted in his earlier announcement (Isa. 35: 5): "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened"; nor was it otherwise in his yet more personal anticipation later (Isa. 42: 7, Isa. 61: 1). So in the synagogue of Nazareth the Messiah applied the last scripture to His own service. "Today is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Without doubt we are justified in giving the largest scope to the language employed; but the figurative in no way supersedes the literal.

Nor was there any act more characteristic of Messiah than giving the blind to see; as the testimony to His Sonship was rendered by, His raising dead men (Rom. 1: 4), most of all in raising Himself from the grave, after the Jews crucified and slew Him by hand of lawless men. Many a wonder had been wrought in days of old by Moses and Joshua, by Elijah and Elisha, and others; but never do we read of eyes given to a single blind man before His advent; so that the Jews justly regarded it as a special sign of the Anointed of Jehovah.

The present miracle is also peculiar to the first Gospel. There are two blind men specified: a fact which made it very suitable to him who was inspired to testify of Jehovah- Messiah to the circumcision. For it was a well established maxim of the law for them to look for at least two witnesses. Hence the mention of the two demoniacs in Matthew's account of the last fact in Matt. 8; whereas for Mark and Luke it sufficed to dwell on the more striking of the two (Mark 5, Luke 8). A similar principle applies also to the two blind whom Matthew shows healed at Jericho (Matt. 20: 29-34: compare Mark 10 and Luke 18).

As the Lord then was quitting the scene of raising up the Jewish ruler's daughter, two blind men followed him, crying aloud and saying, Have mercy on us Son of David. Even Mark and Luke record the like appeal in their account of a similar miracle at the close. In all cases it strikingly attests that He was owned as the Messiah, pre-eminently that Son of David Who alone could avail those so afflicted. Thus they could with assurance appeal to Him on the ground of plain and positive warrant of scripture:- "Have mercy on us, Son of David."

Even the Jewish leper of Matt. 8 made no such appeal; still less the centurion, as recorded next. Nor do we find it in the general account of the healed, any more than the particular case of Peter's mother-in-law in the same chapter. The call of those imperilled in the boat during the tempest on the lake was, "Lord, save us: we perish." When the demoniacs cried out, it was "What have we to do with thee, Son of God?" It was not the paralytic that cried to the Lord (Matt. 9), but Jesus (seeing their faith) said to him, Child, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven. Even Jairus did not so address Him on Whom he counted for his dying daughter; nor of course did the woman who only approached behind and touched the fringe of His garment.

On the other hand in Matt. 15: 22-28 we have the converse, so full of instruction in the ways of God. The Canaanitish woman, real as her faith was, failed to receive the answer she sought or indeed any at all because at first she called amiss. The grace of the Son of David to the distressed of His beloved people is a clear and blessed encouragement for a Jew; but what had a Canaanite to expect

from Him? When He brings in the power of His kingdom by- and-by, it will not be as it was in the day of His humiliation, and as it had been ever since the entrance of Abram. "The Canaanite was then in the land" (Gen. 12: 6); "the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land" (Gen. 13: 7). Even Judah in the days of Joshua failed to purge his portion of that accursed race: those of the hill country were driven out, but not those of the valley. And so it was for others yet less. But the sad issue to their ruin was that "the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites," etc. (Judges 3: 5)

When the kingdom by-and-by is in Messiah's hand. "there shall be no more a Canaanite in the house of Jehovah of hosts" (Zech. 14: 21). Was it then hopeless for the woman of Canaan? By no means; but He answered her not a word, when she cried substantially as the blind men, On that ground judgment for the Canaanite is predicted rather than mercy; and the disciples had nothing better to say than "Send her away, for she crieth out after us." This the gracious Lord did answer with a word that cheered her tried spirit. "I was not sent (said He) but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Therefore there was an answer to the blind who so cried out, and none for her as yet; for she was not only a Gentile but of a race specially cursed (Gen. 9: 25). She drops accordingly a claim of relationship valid for the most wretched of Israel, but wholly void for her, and paid homage, saying, Lord, help me. Then He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. The truth fully burst on her, and she submitted to it. Her faith, already real, threw off its hindrance and became great. She abandons claim, for she had none; she confesses sovereign grace, and receives the blessing at once. She said, Yea, Lord; for even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table. Then the Lord answered her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.

This helps to give the emphasis of the miracle in our chapter. And when the Lord came into the house, the blind came to Him, and He said, Believe ye that I am able to do this? and they say in reply, Yea, Lord. So it was in that day, and so it will be for the people by-and-by. Jehovah will bring the blind with a deeper blindness by a way that they know not. In paths that they know not will He lead them, when He will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight In the day that is coming the blind will look to Jehovah-Jesus that they may see; as we see a little earnest of it in the two who followed into the house, and confessed their faith. How graciously Messiah touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it to you! And their eyes were opened.

Has this no echo of comfort and blessing for you, my reader? Granted that you have eyes to see naturally; but your lack is of the deepest. You see not Jesus for your soul, nor believe in Him. If you too are Gentiles, the gospel is expressly sent to you to open your eyes, and turn you from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. This is much more and better even than the boon the Messiah gave the blind Israelites. It is the fruit of yet richer grace and of His own unfathomable sufferings. It is what the love of God sends to the poorest of sinners through the redemption that is in Christ. How blessed to see the Son and to believe in Him, and have eternal redemption! May it be your portion now through faith! For this cause is it of faith that it may be according to grace. It is not your righteousness, for then it were of works; it is God's righteousness founded on the redemption of Christ, unto all, and upon all that believe.

## **10 The early Haul of fishes**

Luke 5: 1-11.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 278-279. Gospel No. 4: 10.)

The Holy Spirit transposes the call of Peter and his companions to a later place than the historical

order adhered to by Matthew and Mark, which fell in with His design in their Gospels. But it suited His work by Luke to give previously the Lord's preaching in the synagogues of Galilee, His striking procedure in Nazareth on the sabbath day, His deliverance of the demoniac in the synagogue of Capernaum, His healing of Peter's mother-in-law with many more, and His preaching in Galilee. He Who arranged the task for each evangelist knew all the truth, which judges every man, and can be judged by none save at his peril.

In beautiful connection with the great work of proclaiming the gospel, we see the Lord standing by the lake of Gennesaret, as the crowd pressed on Him to hear the word of God. Into one of two little vessels there, from which the fishermen had gone and were washing their nets, He entered, and asked Simon (for it was his) to put out a little from the land, and thence He, sitting down, taught the crowds. After that He said to Simon, Put (thou) out into the deep, and let (ye) down your nets for a haul.

What can one conceive to act more powerfully on the mind of Simon and the rest! Sailors, especially fishermen, are apt to trust their own judgment in their craft and to think cheaply of landmen's advice. The circumstances too made any hope naturally forlorn. Master, said Simon (who had already, been led to Jesus and received from Him a name of honour), through a whole night we laboured and took nothing; but at Thy word I will let down the nets. And having done this, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes. And their nets were breaking. And they beckoned to their partners in the other ship to come and help them; and they came and filled both the ships, so that they were sinking.

But great as the wonder was and pointing to the Son of man with all things put under His feet down to the fish of the sea, it was small compared to the spiritual power which let the light of God in Christ into Simon's soul. For when he saw it, he fell down at the knees of Jesus, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. He knew himself as he never did before. God in His grace brought thus near filled him with self-judgment, and he pours out the confession of it at the Lord's feet. He believed already, and before the miracle promptly gave up his own thoughts and his discouraging experience at Christ's word. Then the immediate and amazing answer to his confidence not only awed his soul but searched his conscience thoroughly. It seems like a moral dilemma to say at Jesu's knees, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. It is really what an exercised soul feels on which the light falls with overwhelming power. Nothing farther from one than to depart from the Lord, yet His divine goodness and glory so realised that one feels utterly unworthy to be near Him while clinging to Him. When the work of redemption was done, much more could be enjoyed by the purified conscience and the heart resting on His love known in peace; but for this all had yet to wait. Even now the grace Simon saw in Christ made manifest his sinfulness but filled his heart.

The vast take of fish, the bursting nets, the sinking ships, each of which would have commanded Simon's interest at any previous time, were all unheeded. Jesus was all to his soul. Self-importance dwindled, no less than anxiety, and every earthly desire. He fell before One, a Man on earth, Who presented God with a power which delivered from Satan and the effects of sin for soul and body. As He Himself had read at Nazareth the opening of Isa. 61 and said, Today is this scripture fulfilled in your ears, so His course demonstrated in an outreaching grace which irritated even then all who would limit divine privilege to themselves. Even then it was clear that preaching the kingdom of God was more momentous in His eyes than the mightiest deeds of power: "therefore am I sent." He received not glory from men; He would by the word bring them into living relationship with God; He would not only lead such as Simon into deeper blessing, but call them from every object and tie on earth to Himself and the activities of His grace.

Depart from Simon! from a sinful man! Why, the Son of man came to seek and to save that which

was lost. As His grace made God better known, so it discovered Simon to himself, who would soon learn and own that He the Lord Jesus knew him perfectly, yea all things. Yes, the Lord Jesus knew all when He entered Simon's ship, and heard him own His word; and He so revealed Himself to his soul that Simon could not but follow such a Master and Lord.

And now He Who spoke the word of power for the miracle says to Simon, Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt be catching men. There is a season to everything, a time to fear, and a time not to fear. Nor is this peculiar to Simon. It is for every believer in Christ. Till we know Him by faith we do well to fear. Not to fear before that is impenitence with indifference or presumption. But when grace makes Him known to us, "Fear not" is as truly for us as for him. And so it was for James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners. The word addressed to Simon they took for themselves believingly; and they were right. It was written for us, that we might believe and have the blessing with like assurance. Perfect love casts out fear.

All, no doubt, are not called to "be catching men," as Simon was; and eminently was made good in due time this word of the Lord also. But while the Lord still calls and sends to preach the gospel, neither man nor woman that believes ought to hide the word of His grace, but publish His name far and wide, as they have opportunity, and in all earnestness, though decently and in order. Time was, whilst all the apostles lived too, when the scattered faithful went through the world evangelizing the word; and the Lord's hand was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord (Acts 8, Acts 11). Let us fear neither for ourselves, if we believe on Him, nor to speak a word in season, His word, to the weary, if they too by grace may hear and live.

## 11 The Water made wine

John 2: 1-11.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 294-295. Gospel No. 4: 11.)

This was the beginning of the miracles, or "signs" as they are called in the fourth Gospel, wrought in Cana of Galilee. In it the "Lord Jesus manifested his glory," a glory truly divine. The occasion was a marriage feast, to which He was invited, and His disciples, His mother also being there. How instructive the grace which thus lighted up with love and holiness from above an institution of God that began in the paradise of man, but apt to sink with the fall of man into levity and licence! The law failed to retrieve it; the Lord alone vindicated it according to the mind of God that had been expressed before the law (Gen. 2; Matt. 19),

The Lord's bearing is a hard thing to those who idolise Mary. It is written for everlasting profit that, when the wine failed, His mother said to Him, They have no wine; and that He replied, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come (vers. 3, 4). Assuredly if any infer disrespect from these words, they are in error; but so are those who do not learn that the Son of God solemnly objects to dictation where divine glory was in question. He was sent to do the will of God His Father, not to please His mother, as here in her amiable solicitude for a family with whom she was evidently intimate, and at a time which engaged her feelings in their strait. Christ had already as a youth of twelve years testified to Joseph and Mary, after their anxiety, His consciousness of Sonship in the highest sense; now when emerging into public ministry He remonstrates with Mary, who as evidently now alone remained. Not even His mother must interfere with the glorifying of His Father, by a wish of hers however kindly meant.

And Mary understood it, saying to the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it. She was still

the meek bond-servant of the Lord, if others blasphemously make her the Queen of heaven and claim falsely the honour due to the Eternal Son. He, not she, is the One pre-eminently to be heard; as the Father's voice proclaimed on the holy mount, This is My beloved Son: hear ye Him. No more unworthy thought of fallen nature than to doubt His grace in Whom all the fulness dwells, or to imagine that He the one Mediator needs her intercession to stimulate or strengthen His love. He is Himself full of grace and truth; and He is able also to save to the uttermost (completely) those that draw near to God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. On the contrary she is unable, either to save or so to intercede for others, and needed to pray herself, as she was a sinner like others to be saved by faith. So we find in the last record scripture gives of her in Acts 1: 14: "These all [the apostles] with one accord continued stedfastly in prayer with [several] women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." What a contrast with ecclesiastical development in no long time! How soon men turned from him that called them in Christ's grace to a different gospel, which is not another, but perversion!

According to scripture, to hear His word and believe Him that sent Him, is to have eternal life and not to come into judgment, having passed from death into life. And that life is a life of obedience and love, as 1 John 5 carefully shows. "He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." He that is not subject to the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. Practical obedience flows from submission to His person, and proves the reality of the heart-subjection of faith.

Christ's hour was not yet come for going down below all depths to glorify God; still less to be set on high with all things put under Him. He was here to give such witness as might please His Father in all dependence. And a worthy witness followed. For as six stone water-pots stood there according to the purification of the Jews, each holding two or three measures (probably the Jewish Bath), He said, Fill the pots with water. And this was done to the brim; whereupon He bade them, Draw out now and bear to the feast-master. Thus the servants and the feast-master became the irrefutable vouchers of the work Christ wrought; as did the bridegroom, who for the moment reaped the credit of reversing man's way, and, instead of supplying what is worse when men have freely drunk the good wine, of keeping it till the last.

But no! It was Christ Who thus made grace to shine; not the first man, but the Second, and this, manifesting His glory, yet never leaving the servant character He had taken, always refusing to allow the honey of humanity in the offering no less than the leaven. If He proved the omniscient to Nathanael, He is here the omnipotent. It was the true transubstantiation of God's word. The water was made wine, and the good wine, as all could see and taste, and bow to the manifestation of His glory. To reject Him is to men's own shame and ruin, who obstinately will not have God or His Son on any terms, even when divine glory veils its splendour with flesh and in lowly grace adapts itself to our every need with power incontestable. Such is the Lord Jesus. He is speaking still to every soul in the gospel. Oh! refuse not Him that speaketh from heaven.

"The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that is, the word that we preach," says the apostle; "because, if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." To be saved from perdition through faith is not a miracle, sensible outwardly; but it is a greater wonder than the water made wine. It is the wonder of grace, yet of divine righteousness through redemption. And it is a wonder God is showing day by day in all who believe, to the honour of His Son. Oh! refuse not Him that speaketh, and is near you on the earth, the Son of man now in glory Who came to seek and to save that which was lost, Jesus the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. Blessed are all those that put their trust in Him.

## 12. Nobleman's son healed

John 4: 46-54.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 310-311. Gospel No. 4: 12.)

The story of our Lord, in His dealings with the Samaritan woman and the town's people that followed, is all the more admirable, because there was no miracle. It was His power in bringing the conscience face to face with its sins before God and in revealing the Father in the Son, the Saviour of the world by His Holy Spirit.

Here we are in presence of our Lord not only giving a blessed sign of gracious power when all else was hopeless, but correcting unbelief in a Jewish courtier, who came to Him in Cana and appealed for his child sick in Capernaum. "When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him and besought him that he would come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death." It was not surprising that those who only looked on Jesus as the Messiah should connect His power with His actual presence. But one of the great designs of our Gospel is to make known in Him God, the Son eternal, superior to all times and circumstances. When the nobleman then entreated him to go down and heal his son, the Lord laid bare the error that demanded a visible wonder; his condition was as yet little different from the Galileans of whom we read in ver. 45, of whom it is written that they received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast. "Unless ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." This only increased the father's importunity, who says, "Sir, (or Lord,) come down ere my child die." Then comes the word of power, "Go thy way: thy son liveth." The man believed the word that Jesus said to him and went his way. If the Lord did not go with him and lay His hand on the sick child, it was but for better and in a better way. His word was given and believed.

Thus was the blessing wrought, a two-fold one; to the father's soul, and to the son's body. The father believed the word of the Lord Jesus, the son had his fever cured, and the Lord was honoured in both ways. And we readily see how different the case is from the Gentile centurion and his bondman about to die of the palsy. For there the Lord went with the Jewish elders, and was only stopped when not far from the house by friends whom the centurion sent to say, "Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof. Wherefore neither did I count myself worthy to come to thee. But say with a word, and my servant shall be healed." Yes, his was faith of the simplest and strongest character, formed by the sense given him of the Lord's glory. The word of Jesus was ample: He had but to speak, and it was done. Yet some famous men in early days have confounded these two distinct cases.

But to a similar point of simple faith was the nobleman now brought as the centurion took himself. "Go: thy son liveth" was received in his heart from the lips of the Lord Jesus. And as he was going down, his bondmen met him, saying, Thy child liveth. He enquired therefore from them the hour when he got better; and their answer was, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. It was clear as light, the immediate unmistakable action of divine power, not beginning but complete. At that very hour, as the father knew, Jesus said to him, Thy son liveth; and himself believed, and his whole house. Here at least it was no form, but a reality without danger of accrediting what might be untrue, and a fact which helps us to understand other statements of like kind.

But how is it with you, my reader? For this is written, like the rest of the Gospel, "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye way have life in His name." It was blessed when sickness drove men to Jesus for healing; it is more blessed still when sinners feel their sins before God and look to the Saviour for that deepest need. He is the Life as well as the

Resurrection; and He gives life eternal now to every one that believes, as He will raise their bodies at the last day. Undoubtedly the Saviour is now in heaven; but this assuredly detracts nothing from His power or His love. The same Jesus is now exalted on high and shall so borne in like manner, as He was seen to go up into heaven: The more urgent is it that you should neither slight God's call to believe, nor forget the consequence of neglecting so great salvation, for either is to brave the judgment.

If you are looking for a sign or wonder in order to believe, profit by the Lord's gracious correction of one far more to be excused than you who have all the word of God, and the N.T. in particular which leaves no room for such an error. Is it not plain to you that all depends on the Lord Jesus, and that His grace is as great as His glory? When He does not answer a word, it is to draw out self-judgment in faith. When He does not comply with a request, it is to lead by His word into faith of the unseen.

Sometimes souls are discouraged by a harsh rebuke of their feebleness at first. Never does the Lord so deal with any. He corrects in order the more to bless and prove and strengthen. Here we perceive faith growing exceedingly, when the mixture of sight, so natural to a Jew and indeed to flesh and blood, was removed by His word. And next we are told that the whole house was brought under the blessing of living faith: a result by no means unexampled in the ways of the God of all grace, but rare enough at any time, yet, where or when ever it is, full of interest and encouragement to those who would learn of Him, and seek the honour that comes from the only God. With Him you must have to do. If you hear Christ's word and believe Him that sent Him, you receive life eternal and do not come into judgment, but have passed from death into life. If you refuse now, you cannot escape the voice of the Lord, when He summons men to stand before the great white throne, and be judged for works of which you may boast now — but oh! the shame and horror when the truth is out. May the goodness of God lead you without delay to repentance at the feet of Jesus.