

**Sermons preached by**  
**Mr. C. A. Wood**  
**at**  
**Swavesey Chapel**  
**Centenary Services**  
**Saturday, 26th July, 1969.**



*Afternoon sermon:-*

Text: “And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I *am* the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I *am* with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham’s sake. And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac’s servants digged a well” (Gen. 26 v. 24, 25).

There is much spiritual instruction in Old Testament history. We should not pass by this part of the Scriptures, but in all our approaches to the holy Word of God may we read it prayerfully and reverently, desiring with one of old: “Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law”. The experience and the path of the patriarchs of old is rich in spiritual teaching, and is left on record for the comfort of God’s dear people down to the end of time. The Word of God records not only their triumphs, their victories, but also their failings, their falterings, their weaknesses, their fears, their backslidings, and that they were men of like passions as we are. The Apostle Paul in writing to the Hebrews, in that wonderful 11<sup>th</sup> chapter, as taught by the Spirit, speaks of those who lived and died in faith; and in the following chapter he says this: “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus” (Heb. 12 v. 1, 2). Two words stood out in my reading of that some few years back, and they were these: “*We also*”. Are you by grace following that same path, walking in those same steps, walking by faith and not by sight? Are you by grace found in that straight and narrow path that alone leads to glory? Have you, my friend, the evidence of God’s work of saving grace in your soul? Jesus said, “Ye must be born again”; and we may add, “*We also*”. As the Lord Jesus prayed before going to Calvary: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for *them also* which shall believe on Me through their word” (John 17 v. 20). Beloved, are you among those for whom the Saviour prayed, those for whom He died, for whom His blood was shed, and for whom one day He will come - “And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up

My jewels” (Mal. 3 v. 17)? Further, the Lord Jesus prayed: “Father, I will that *they also* whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory” (John 17 v. 24). O my dear friend, are you found among them? Will you be found at last in glory? The record alone is in heaven of how many souls that worshipped in this place through the years that are past will be found there, whose bodies now have been committed to the earth to await that glorious resurrection morn when “the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout . . . and the dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thess. 4 v. 16). We often say:

“When Thou, my righteous Judge, shalt come  
To take Thy ransomed people home,  
Shall I among them stand?  
Shall such a worthless worm as I,  
Who sometimes am afraid to die,  
Be found at Thy right hand?” (938)

An all-important question. It would be a great mercy if it weighed heavily upon us on this anniversary day, when we seek reverently to acknowledge the Lord’s goodness to the dear people here; and with them we desire by God’s help to attend to the services in the spirit of sobriety, that there may be that which shall be profitable. It is very easy for us to be carried away with external occasions. We need to be kept, and to pray that there might be on this day that which shall be for our spiritual profit, for the good of never-dying souls, and to the glory of God. This is the desire, I know, of our friends here.

You have heard read a brief history of this Cause<sup>1</sup>, the changing scene. You look back as far as your memory will carry you over your own path. What do you see? *Changing scenes*. You think of godly fathers, mothers, and those that have gone before, and you remember a little of their path, and what do you see? *Changing scenes*. Tracing out sunshine and shadow, light and darkness, mount and valley, storm and peace; sometimes a Marah, sometimes an Elim, sometimes the valley of the shadow of death, and sometimes sweet liberty; sometimes the pressing of the fetters, and sometimes the song in the night. You trace out your

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<sup>1</sup> A “History of the Cause” was read out by the deacon, Mr Ayers, before the second hymn.

providential path; the day of prosperity, the day of adversity. We need much grace to rest upon this well-known word: “We know that *all* things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8 v. 28). We are reminded that life’s path is as a needlework pattern, the strands of varied colour; some bright, some dark and sombre. Perhaps we spend too long looking at the sombre strand instead of trusting the Hand that works the pattern, that orders all things well for the dear people of God. We see so little here. We do not understand why it should be such a narrow path, why it should be such a rough way, why it is through much tribulation that the dear saints of God shall enter into heaven, why they should be bowed down under some heavy cross. Why should there be some secret sorrow, some thorn in the flesh, sometimes a furnace heated seven times hotter than it is wont to be heated? Why should there be a famine? Why should there be those times of temptations, testings, sinkings, and shrinkings? Why should it be? Yet my friends, it all forms a part of the way, the right way, in which God leads and deals with His dear people: “He led them forth by the right way that they might go to a city of habitation” (Psalm. 107 v. 7).

I confess that I had really no thought of speaking from this word today. Another word I had has been taken away, but this word has been with me for a few days, and I have sought to preach from it. I tried to turn from it, but it seemed to revive as I came here. I do hope and pray that the purposes of God for the good of His people and the glory of His name may be seen in it. Poor preachers do not desire to choose a text, but “What saith my Lord unto His servant?” Bearing in mind then what we have already mentioned - the varied scene, the ingredients of the cup, the cup of mixture, it is a great mercy if you and I are brought to this:

“Thrice comfortable hope  
That calms my stormy breast;  
My Father’s hand prepares the cup,  
And *what He wills is best*”. (70)

Easy to say it, easy to sing it, with the sun shining above our head and the path comparatively smooth; much grace needed when the chastening hand of God is upon us, when the way is rough, the path is

dark, Satan active, faith seems so weak, your soul trembles, and you fear as you enter the cloud. Ah my friends, I have prayed the Lord to lead me into the sacred Gethsemane scene, and there to view, as one might be enabled to bear it, that sacred Form, to behold the sweat of blood, the sweat as it were of “great drops of blood falling down to the ground”; to hear the agonized cry, “Not My will, but Thine, be done”. My friends, I believe this, that God’s children will not come lightly or easily to the uttering of those sacred words. I know not how it is with you. Perhaps you long to be led to say it, and yet you tremble to say it, you shrink from it; there is often a shrinking and yet a longing, a mixed experience, if I may so put it. Yet I believe if we are brought in any little measure into that path we shall know just a little of – may I tremblingly say it – “a sweat”. One of the Lord’s dear servants, now in heaven, used to say this: “For the saints it is sweating work getting to heaven”. It is, my friends. No easy path, yet the mercy is this: “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days so shall thy strength be” (Deut. 33 v. 25).

Now to pass on. We next observe the context. Go through the chapter and note, first the famine; then the voice of God speaking to His servant. Isaac is not to go down into Egypt, he is to tarry in his house. We note his obedience, and he tarried at Gerar; obedient to the voice of God in the matter, to trust God. If you come into a famine experience wait upon God, do not take a move suddenly. Sometimes it pleases God to direct His people elsewhere, but I think of the warning of Naomi and her husband. As there was a famine one day at Bethlehem, they went to the land of Moab. I *know* it was overruled, I know that Ruth was brought out of that land; but do not lose sight of this – the desolation and the hand of death that followed. It is better to tarry in the land of famine with the smile of God upon you, and to seek grace to trust in God, and to trust that He will feed your body and bless your soul too. Some of God’s dear people walk in a very lonely path, and in the path of famine; maybe not near a cause of truth, we cannot judge; but my friends, the Lord ministers to His dear people, He keeps alive their soul. My mind went to Elijah and the widow, how in the time of famine the Lord provided for the widow, the son, and for the dear servant of God; a “Thus saith the Lord”, that the barrel of meal should not waste, and the cruse of oil should not fail, all the time that the famine lasted. It was

then a step of faith. It was in trusting God that Isaac tarried in the land, and yet how soon he falls, how soon that faith falters. He is afraid because of the beauty of his wife, and in fear he starts to speak lies and tell those around that she is his sister. Abraham twice did it. The Word of God faithfully records the faintings, failings, and weaknesses of the dear saints.

I pass on to notice next the increase with which Isaac was blessed, the hundred-fold harvest. Then there was fear among those that watched him, and they drove him away, bade him depart; they were afraid of him. It would seem that Isaac was a peace loving man. If we truly fear God we shall “*seek peace, and pursue it*”; but not peace at any price. A spirit of humility to contend earnestly for the truth, to hold fast to that precious truth, and yet to seek peace; but peace that is in accordance with the truth of God; humbly lovingly to contend earnestly, not contentiously, “for the truth which was once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). “Seek peace, and pursue it.” If you see peace about to go out of the doors of your home, or out of the church, praying God-fearing souls, bend the knee and pray as the Lord may help you. O, “blessed are the peace-makers”! Isaac then was a peace-loving man and did not provoke those around him, he lived graciously contented with his lot under the planning of God; and yet that did not shield him from such things as contention, hatred, and envy. Some of the most peace-loving of the people of God may find that their steps and paths are ordered in such a way as this, and they cannot understand it. If I might just enlarge on this point for a moment, and it is in this way – they dug a well to find suitable water, then the herdmen of Gerar attacked Isaac and his herdmen and claimed that it was theirs. Isaac did not fight back, did not retaliate. My friends, our strength in such times as this is to commit our way unto God and to seek that He will fight our battle. If your cause is right God will honour it: “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn” (Isa. 54 v. 17). The Lord will fight the battle for you, the Lord will uphold you. But do *make sure your cause is right*. How often a battle is fought, how often contention arises, and people are so sure that they are right. We need to pray, “Lord, show me where I am wrong, and where I am wrong put me right; and where I am wrong forgive me, and help me to seek forgiveness of others too”. “Confess

your faults one to another and pray one for another, that ye may be healed” (James v. 16). Further, if your cause is right you will need much grace to be *kept right*. We have a nature that is easily roused, a tongue that can be as the fire of hell, and in a moment, though right to begin with, we may have plunged ourselves into wrong by the manifestation of a wrong spirit. We need therefore by God’s grace to stand for what is right in the spirit of love and the grace of humility; with humble boldness and firmness to “seek peace, to pursue it”.

It happens again. In the first case the well was called *Esek*, signifying contention; and my friends, alas, there is contention sometimes among families, contention in churches, contention among God’s servants. O the evil one! O the root of bitterness that is seen at times! O what need the church of God has to watch and pray against these things! In the case of Paul and Barnabas contention was so strong between them that they had to part. I know the matter was put right later: “Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry” (2 Tim. 4 v. 11), but great was the contention at the time. Further, there was another well, and this was called *Sitnah* or hatred. How soon the seed of evil is manifest in our heart; yes, even among the people of God! We have not done with the flesh, you know. Flesh *is* flesh, and O we are dismayed at what we find within us, the seed of all evil, and we have to pray constantly that we may be kept! What grace we need to hold fast, to walk in the fear of God, to walk humbly before Him!

But there is another well named *Rehoboth*, where there was peace, no strife. The well is dug, and there for a season they dwell. Is this sanctuary a Rehoboth to the dear people that worship here? Do you feel the Lord has made room for you here?

“No more a stranger or a guest,  
But like a child at home”. (139)

Or wherever you may stately worship the Lord, is that your spiritual home? Do you speak of it as your Rehoboth, “The Lord hath made room for us”? Are you ever humbled as you come into the chapel sometimes, amazed that you are found in the house of prayer, amazed



that ever you should be found among the people of God, amazed at that and yet sorely tried?

“How can I bear the piercing thought:  
What if my name should be left out,  
When Thou for them shalt call?” (938)

Yes, you love to meet among the dear people of God, and often you are brought to ask this: “Am I one of them?”

“ ’Tis a point I long to know,  
(Oft it causes anxious thought),  
Do I love the Lord, or no?  
Am I His, or am I not?” (283)

Yet have you some sweet hope (as I hope to touch in a moment) that the Lord has appeared to you personally? Have you been blessed? Has the Lord dealt with you in His love, mercy, and grace? Has there been a word from heaven? You dear friends that have come in and out of this sanctuary for years, what has the Lord done for you? You may come drifting in and drifting out, I do not know; but it is not enough to be found coming in and out of the house of prayer. The all-important question is: Has the Lord wrought by His Spirit in your heart? You have heard the history briefly set forth of this Cause of truth. Well my dear friend, what about *your* soul? What about the history of your soul, if I may so put it? It may be that you come in and out of this sanctuary. Have you ever spoken of what the Lord has done for you? Have you some sweet hope that He has called you by His grace? Ponder it over. Think also of the sacred times when the Lord’s people meet at the Table of the Lord: “This do in remembrance of Me”.

“Lord, in Thy house I read there’s room,  
And venturing hard, behold I come;  
But can there, tell me, can there be  
Amongst Thy children room for me?” (447)

Very precious and very sacred when a poor sinner at the Table of the Lord has such a sweet sense that the Lord has made room for him there! O my friends, seek after it, pray for it!

“O why did Jesus show to me  
The beauties of His face?  
Why to my soul did He convey  
The blessings of His grace?” (191)

But I pass on to this text: “*The Lord appeared unto him*”, and that is what I am setting forth to you now – the Lord and Isaac, something personal. It is so easy to be gathered together collectively, so easy to come in and out of the house of prayer, so easy to be called a Strict Baptist; but my dear friend, has the Lord appeared to *you* personally? You say, “What does this mean?” You may say that in the past, in the days of Isaac, it pleased God to appear sometimes visibly; sometimes a voice was heard, or a vision was given, or a revelation was granted; and that now for the most part it is not so. That is true. Then you may ask: “Well, in what way is it that we may speak of the Lord appearing to His people?” It is in this way to His dear people, those who are spiritually enlightened, those whose eyes are opened, those sinners called by grace, those with a new heart, with the opened ear – they will hear the voice of God, and the Lord will appear to them in the sanctuary, and He will appear to them in His Word. You may say: “In what way, and how can I know that the Lord has appeared to me?” My dear friend, has the Word ever been blessed to your soul? But wait a moment, we have gone one step too far. Has the Lord ever spoken to you from His Word, and caused you to tremble at His Word? Has the Lord ever brought you under solemn conviction of your sinnership and lost and ruined state? But wait a moment, you must be careful. You might have sat under the ministry of a dear servant of God, and you may have heard the word that he spoke, the word may have found you out; but as soon as the chapel was left and the restraining influence was removed, it was gone. Now that is not the appearing that I am speaking of; there may be a momentary alarm. The conscience is smitten, remorse and fear may fill the heart and mind to a certain extent, and a trembling under the judgment and justice of God. Then you might say: “Well, what does it mean then?” I believe it is this—by way of conviction, to show you something that you knew in your head, may have acknowledged verbally with your lip, but never felt it really in your heart. What is that? Your sin. Now if the Lord has convinced you of sin, appeared in this way to you by the power of His Holy Spirit, it will bring you with one that smote on his breast and cried, “God”. Now that is the vital

point. Where there is this work of grace in conviction of sin, that sinner feeling the burden, conscious of his guilt, of a holy God, of a broken law, no righteousness of his own, will be brought and drawn to that great and holy God to plead for mercy, with his “mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope”. Has the Lord thus appeared to you? Have you been shown this? Has the Lord appeared in His Word? “Be sure your sin will find you out.” Nathan went to David: “Thou art the man”. Has the Lord appeared in His love and mercy? O do not think too much of all those around you, or even just of the history of this Chapel, come now before God, if you may be enabled, with your soul and eternity before you. If you were called to die tonight, is there some Word here that your soul is resting upon, that God has given you, spoken to you? If you were called to pass the dark valley tonight, to cross that river, my friend, how would it be with you? Would you go over by ferry, the ferry of Vain-hope, like Ignorance did? He went across, but there was no welcome at the gate of heaven. Where were his credentials? He had none. So from the gate of heaven, as it were, there was a path to hell. My friend, how near! “Almost”, said one, “thou persuadest me to be a Christian”. A name to live and yet be dead. I say, it is solemn, it is searching. But one says: “If thy hope on Christ is stayed, Let Him Come when He thinks best”. “And the Lord appeared unto him”, in His love. Has He come in His love and His mercy to you? Has He come with, “Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine”? (Isa. 43 v. 1).

Well I must close. May the Lord lead us further into this Word. May you in the interval be enabled to think upon it, and examine yourself before a holy God, and pray that God may examine your heart and search out for you the sweet blessed evidence of His appearing. May the Lord bless the few scattered thoughts, for His name’s sake. Amen.

[from Gospel Standard 1970 page 279]

### *Evening Sermon:-*

Text: “And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I *am* the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I *am* with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham’s sake. And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac’s servants digged a well” (Gen. 26 v. 24, 25).

We left the Word this afternoon, having attempted to consider the background, the changing scenes through which this dear man of God, Isaac, was called to pass: the famine and yet his prosperity; the envy, hatred, and contention that rose, and yet Rehoboth, the place of peace, where God “made room”; promises of fruitfulness. He journeyed to Beersheba, “and the Lord appeared unto him”. We asked a very important question in our closing thought: “Has the Lord in mercy, by His Spirit, appeared to you?” It may be said that the Lord does not appear as in olden days in a vision or by an audible voice, for the most part. No, that is true, but it pleases the Lord to appear to His people by His Spirit through His Word, in the conviction of sin and in the way of salvation. As with Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus to persecute the followers of Jesus, the Lord appeared unto him in the way which he went, brought him down, convicted him of his sin, stripped him of self-righteousness; and my friends, has He thus appeared to you? The Lord’s appearing to this dear man was to comfort him, to support him in his trial, to strengthen him in his weakness, to allay his fears. Has the Lord appeared to you like that? Has there been a time when you have been in such trouble, such distress, providential or spiritual, or both together perhaps, and you knew not what to do or how you could be delivered; you were ready to faint, and yet the Lord appeared to you in His Word to comfort your heart, drew near to you with the sweet assurance of His presence and that He would bring you through?

“And *the Lord appeared*”- as He appeared to a weeping Mary in the garden looking into the sepulchre, expecting to find the body of Jesus there; but she had forgotten that Jesus said that He would rise again the third day. She took so little note of the stranger that spoke to her, that she supposed He was the gardener, but the Lord appeared to her. How

were her eyes opened? O it was Jesus, He spoke! It was but one word; He called her by her name - Mary! And she uttered but one word. In some of our most sacred hallowed seasons in communion, when God condescends in mercy to speak to a poor sinner, there may be but very few words, but a blessed sense of His presence, a resting in His love, and the assurance of the fullness of that promise: "O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of Me" (Isa. 44 v. 21). "And the Lord appeared." Perhaps some say: "Ah, but I have failed. I have faltered. I have denied Him". When the two returned from Emmaus they found the disciples gathered together at Jerusalem, and they were speaking together: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to *Simon*" (Luke 24 v. 34). What sweet encouragement! "Yea", saith the prophet, "the Lord hath appeared of old unto me saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. 31 v. 3). "The Lord appeared unto him". How personal this is! We are gathered together, a goodly company this evening in the courts of the Lord, but do seek for the personal dealings of the Lord in your soul. It is good to gather with God's dear people, but you will need more than that, much more than that, when you come to die; it will be an important matter then. O to have the mark of a Holy Ghost religion, and the evidence of God's dealings and appearing to *you* personally, in love, mercy, and grace! "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."

*When did the Lord appear?* It was "the same night". The night season, the hours of darkness. When you are in trouble, when you are in pain, when you are anxious, how long the night hours are! The watches of the night seem never to end when the body is in pain, the mind is distressed, and the heart is broken maybe with some secret sorrow. I think of the words in the Gospel, "It was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them" (John 6 v. 17). That seemed to intensify the storm, and it showed those poor men how weak they were. But who appeared, who came to them walking on the waves? None other than the dear Lord Himself. He knew how weak and weary they were, He knew how dark the fourth watch of the night was, and yet there was stored up in that storm in that darkest night one of the most wonderful blessings that those disciples were ever favoured with, namely a glorious sight of their Lord walking on the waves. That is the way God teaches His people,

that is the way those blessed truths are burned in and made real. You will say then in humility: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day". "And the Lord appeared unto him the same night." Doubtless Isaac was afraid that his old enemies would pursue him and come against him; even as Abram too was once afraid, and the Lord appeared to him and said, "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15 v. 1).

"And the Lord appeared unto him the same night." What a mercy if the Lord appears to us and for us, and speaks words of love and peace to us! He will come again. "Did Jesus once upon me shine? Then Jesus is for ever mine." "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." "And said, I am the God of Abraham thy father." Doubtless Isaac had been told by his godly father how God had called him out of the land of idolatry, and how he had ventured forth, walking by faith and not by sight; how God spoke to him that promise which was sorely tried; how as the years passed by, it became more impossible to man that Isaac could ever be born. Yet God had spoken, and what God has promised He is able to perform and He will do it, beloved. "I will work", says God, "and who shall let it?" And how encouraged we are sometimes in our path to remember how the dear Lord appeared for our parents and the godly in days gone by, and we have a sweet hope that He will appear for us as He did for them, that "This God, our father's God, is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death". How the Lord encourages His people: "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee"! So my friends, it is a pressing forward, looking back, tracing God's goodness in days gone by to those in this place, godly fathers, godly mothers, whose lives are ended, and yet there is sweet memory of them: "The God of Abraham thy father".

"*Fear not.*" It is evident then that the heart of this dear man was full of fear, but God comes and says, "Fear not". The Lord knows all our path. "He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold". "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." There are not too many "Fear not's" in the Word of God. When the Lord brings a "Fear not" it is like the "Peace, be still". There will be a great calm, the sense of the Lord

drawing near, the promise of His help, and the safety and security of His presence with you. Ah, perhaps it is in the night season, as it was with dear Paul “when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared”; but he could say: “The angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve, appeared and said Fear not, Paul”. Do you know something of this? Has the Lord come with a “Fear not” into your heart? “Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine”? “Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness”.

“Fear not, for *I am with thee*”; what a blessed promise this is what a rock for a poor sinner to rest upon, and what a support to this “Fear not”! Why my friends, one says:

“In Thy presence I am happy;  
In Thy presence I'm secure;  
In Thy presence all afflictions  
I can easily endure”. (1101 )

“Lo”, said Jesus, “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”, down to the end of all time, even to the very ends of the earth, even to the very end of your days. The I AM. Now we will try, as the Lord may be pleased to help *us*, to think what this means - the Great I AM: “I AM THAT I AM”. All that the Lord is, He is that to His dear people. “Fear not” then, “I am with thee”.

“The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,  
*I will not, I will not* desert to his foes;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,  
*I'll never, no never, no never forsake*”. (329)

“Fear not, for I am with thee”; yes, passing through the fire, through the valley of the shadow of death; yes, in that pathway of persecution and trial; yes, if you are called sometimes to bear reproach for Christ's sake, if you are led in that lonely path: “Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach”. “Fear not”, the Lord says to His dear people, “I am with thee”; and think of this - the Lord Jesus, all that He is in the offices He sustains, and the name that He bears, He is

all this to His people; unchanging and unfailing. And you a poor sheep, a lamb of Christ's fold? Then you need a Shepherd, you need One to look after you: "The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy". One to lead you, because sheep are prone to stray; you need One to defend you, One to lead you in the right path. One to provide pasture for you. One to restore you when you wander far away. One to love you with an unfailing love, One to be with you in the dark valley when the angry lion and the beasts roar against you, One to anoint your weary head with fresh oil and to bind up your wounds. Who is this? None other than Jesus. "I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends". *I AM*, "I am the Good Shepherd, I am the way, the truth, and the life, I am the resurrection and the life", "I am the door" - my friends, all that He is, "I am with thee". Ah, dear Paul then could say: "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus"! Therefore beloved, "Casting *all* your care upon Him; for He careth for you". "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble", and I speak with reverence, this shows how close God is to His dear people. None but the Lord can draw near you to help you on in that loneliness, in that path, under the pain that you may suffer, the cross you may carry, the "thorn in the flesh" that you may endure, and the bitter that may be in your cup. The Lord says, "I am with thee"; He will never fail, His eyes never close in slumber or in sleep. Of what a mercy that is!

*"And will bless thee"*; "the Lord hath been mindful of us, He will bless us". "And will". This is the promise then. Are you afraid of momentary, dying things? Do you fear as you enter the cloud? You are anxious about what you will eat and what you will drink; you worry as a fresh cloud of trouble gathers thick and thunders loud. "And will bless thee." What are the blessings that you seek for? You would pray for the grace of contentment, grace to trust the Lord to supply your daily need: "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things". You will thank Him and be grateful for your daily food, for health and strength, your home, and every providential blessing; but what is it you *seek*? Not silver and gold. One would seek for that which will keep one from taking His name in vain, and to be kept when riches increase in this world; but it is *the blessing indeed*, "Spiritual blessings in heavenly



places in Christ”, blessings flowing from Calvary, blessings enriched with the precious blood of Christ, blessings that flow into our poor sinful hearts. “Let Thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even Thy salvation, according to Thy Word.” Bless me; “I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me”. What is this blessing? The blessing of knowing the Lord Jesus, the blessing of sin forgiven, peace within, the assurance of heaven, hope of eternal life, clothed in the robe of His righteousness, justified by His grace, the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, “Abba, Father”, the sustaining and final perseverance of saints, and “He will give grace and glory”; these are the blessings.

“I am with thee and will bless thee and *multiply thy seed* for My servant Abraham’s sake”. We may consider this word spiritually, in a godly increase; we may think of it *personally*: that ye may “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”, to bear fruit. Yet how needful the pruning! How needful, my friends, that we should be cut back that we may bring forth fruit! The chastenings of the Lord are all needful. I would think of this *collectively*. O that we may yet live to see a gracious reviving in Zion, the ingathering of the “other sheep” for whom Christ died! “Them also I must bring”, and He will do it. The powers of darkness will not overthrow the purpose of divine grace and love to every vessel of mercy. This is close work; O tremble! for you have a never-dying soul, each one of you. I say, how do matters stand with your soul? “Am I made a real Christian, Washed in the Redeemer’s blood?” May we be enabled to pray for the seal of the Spirit, the evidence of the work of His grace. “And multiply thy seed”. O that we may see this, a gracious increase in the churches, a building up.

This also teaches us that the Lord’s people will need patience to wait for the fulfilling of God’s promise. Abraham had to wait long before Isaac was born, and you will know that Isaac and Rebekah were married twenty years before Esau and Jacob were born. So there may be a long waiting time before God’s promises are fulfilled. My mind stretches beyond all and rises to this: “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus”. It is a long wait. The bodies of the saints now in the graves, under the earth, under the seas, wait for the glorious resurrection morn. The child of God, in

bondage largely, in darkness, persecution, and trial, waits; but the Lord says, “*Surely*”.

I want to pass on to the second consideration of this Word, and there are four things that we must attempt, if the Lord may be pleased to help, to notice. The Lord appearing to His servant and speaking words of such gracious blessing, comfort, and strength did not lead Isaac to indifference, nor just to sit back and say, “Well now, that is all”, with a kind of a fatalism. No, there is seen a gracious activity in the fear of God. As God speaks, Isaac then attends to *four things*: there is *an altar built*, there is *prayer made*, there is *a tent pitched*, and there is *a well dug*. Let us try and think of this. Old Testament history? Yes. Spiritual instruction? Yes, as the Holy Spirit is pleased to reveal it to us, and yet I ever beg of the Lord in the ministry to preserve me from wrongly spiritualizing God’s Word.

*First, the altar.* In a way this day we would rear a spiritual altar with our dear friends in this Cause, to mark out the Lord’s goodness to them in maintaining them now for one hundred years. Truth, and this is the most important, is preached here and maintained in these dark and solemn days. Now you will find in the Old Testament how the patriarchs in particular, in special seasons reared an altar. Abraham in his journey reared an altar; Isaac and Jacob at Bethel, and then Jacob went back to Bethel and reared an altar again. Now as you think of Isaac building an altar there, I feel I should not be stretching Scripture at all if I say, that dear man Isaac could never have built an altar without something being most vivid in his memory and in his heart. At every altar he built he would remember himself being laid on an altar, expecting to be offered as a sacrifice, and then the voice from heaven calling to his father to stay his hand; then standing by his father’s side and watching as the ram caught by the horns in the thicket is offered instead of him. Now what is it that the child of God sees in the altar? The Lord Jesus Christ, the Sacrifice in the sinner’s place: “Behold a scene of matchless grace, ‘Tis Jesus in the sinner’s place”. That is sacred, very, very blessed; Jesus instead of me. “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for *me*”. Think of that, my friends. And again, as prayer

ascends you may think of the altar of prayer, family worship and worship in the house of God.

“But since my Saviour stands between,  
In garments dyed in blood,  
'Tis He, instead of me, is seen,  
When I approach to God”.

(119)

Put it this way then. As a poor sinner seeks to come in prayer he will come with this desire, to look by faith as he, a sinner, approaches a holy God, to plead the name and blood of Jesus Christ. There is also the sacrifice of praise. Our praises need cleansing; they do, they need the blood of Christ. There is also this - when the poor sinner blessed with a felt interest in the blood of Christ, rejoicing in that blood and mercy so sacred to the soul, is enabled thus to sing: “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood”; the soul of the living child of God drawn out to Calvary, the precious blood of Jesus, that finished work, the altar. We might speak of it also as offering ourselves, as the dear man of God writing to the Romans says: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”. This is the standard of God’s Word. If the Lord has loved you, died for you, shed for you His precious blood, my friends, I say, what manner of people should we be? “Ye are not your own, for ye are brought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s”. O think of it!

“Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were an offering far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all”.

My attention was drawn to a Word in the Gospel according to Mark, how a scribe came to the Lord Jesus and asked Him, “Which is the first commandment of all?” And Jesus answered: “The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment. And the second *is* like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy

neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these". What grace one needs! The scribe said, "To love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love *his* neighbour as himself, *is* more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices". Jesus said, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12 v, 28-34).

*"And called upon the name of the Lord there"*. You will notice that little word "*There*" three times in the text. Your "*there*"; a spot in your life when the Lord appeared, where the altar was built and you called upon the name of the Lord, praying for pardon, for forgiveness, for a spirit of gratitude to God for His mercies to you; seeking for fresh grace, fresh strength, fresh courage; grace to serve Him, to walk in His fear, to deny yourself, to take up your cross and follow Him; calling upon Him for all that the poor soul needs, living a life of prayer, walking in communion with God.

*"And pitched his tent there"*. What does this signify? We have no abiding city here on earth. The mansions are in glory for the child of God. Their treasure is in heaven, their affections are in heaven, their Jesus is in heaven, their inheritance is laid up for them in glory. Here on earth they are as it were in a tent. But where are you pitching it? Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom and Gomorrah, the cities of the plain; where are you pitching *your* tent? "Be content with such things as ye have; for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee". "And pitched his tent there." There is instruction here; our body is just like a tent. "We that are in this tabernacle" (in this tent) "do groan, being burdened". A tent can soon be taken down, in a moment, and so one day our earthly tabernacle will be taken down. What then? Eternity - for ever and ever, and my friends, where will you spend that "for ever and ever"? Think on it!

Then lastly - I can only touch this briefly – "Isaac's servants *digged a well*", needful for maintenance of life. Now what about this well? What does it signify? Strengthening, living, refreshing, reviving water. How precious to a thirsty soul! Are you a thirsty soul? You are all thirsty, thirsting for something, but what? Some may be thirsting for pomp, for glory, for the riches of this world. If it is for worldly riches and nothing

else, then one day all will die. When you die, *it* will, it will come to nothing, and it cannot carry you into heaven. A great mercy if your chief desire is this: “Give me Christ, or else I die”. Are you thirsting as the hart panting after the water-brooks, thirsting for Jesus Christ, His love, His mercy, His grace, His pardon? “O”, you say, “I wish I had some sweet intimation of His love”!

“O ye who long to feel and see  
Your interest in His blood,  
This thing is proved beyond a doubt,  
Because you thirst for God”. (986)

O to tarry by the well! The well is deep, but it is inexhaustible, and the mercy is that it is ever full and ever free.

“The vilest sinner out of hell,  
Who lives to feel his need,  
Is welcome to a Throne of grace,  
The Saviour's blood to plead”. (527)

“He must needs go through Samaria.” There was a woman, a sinner indeed, by the well there, and Jesus spoke not just of the literal water but of the water of life, and she went away and said; “Come, see a Man, which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?” “With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.” Then how is it drawn? The well was dug by Isaac's servants. Now this well spiritually is provided for the dear people of God. It is finished, it is done; the work is done. O full salvation's in it! But there is, if I may so venture it, a drawing as there is a waiting on the Lord with a panting desire and a longing thirst that the Lord alone can and will satisfy; there is a coming in prayer and desire to draw from this well and to tell the Lord that nothing else will satisfy your poor soul. It is abiding by the Word of God, which is in itself like a living well; the words of life, precious words, words of the gospel. To receive a morsel, and “esteem it more than your necessary food”. One wrote:

“If such the sweetness of the streams.  
What must the fountain be?  
Where saints and angels draw their bliss  
Immediately from Thee”. (472)

Another says:

“O Christ, He is the fountain,  
The deep sweet well of love!  
The streams on earth I've tasted.  
More deep I'll drink above;  
There, to an ocean fullness,  
His mercy doth expand,  
And glory, glory dwelleth  
In Immanuel's land”.

How many from this place have entered glory I know not, but I believe this is the path, this is the way. It is a personal religion, God and the sinner; and my friends, it is that personal hearing the Word upon which your soul will rest find hope: “On the Word Thy blood has sealed, Hangs my everlasting all”. “He builded an altar there” - trusting and looking solely, humbly, reverently, and in faith to the finished work and precious blood of Jesus Christ. “And called upon the name of the Lord” - constant prayer. “Pitched his tent there” - not choosing your path; “If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence”; but Lord, may my tent be pitched where Thy truth is preached, may my life, walk, and conversation be kept close to Thy Word. “A well” - there to draw from that well with joy those waters; “There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God”; the streams of His mercy and love. O wondrous truth!

To have a sweet hope at last to be in the full and blessed enjoyment of this Word: “For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes”. Amen.

[from Gospel Standard 1970 page 308]