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TORONTO EASTER FRATERNAL GATHERING - 1993

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Study #5

God Was In Christ, Reconciling The World Unto Himself

Brother Chairman, and our dear Brethren and Sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ, and our dear Young People and Friends

If we were in any doubt about the order of the importance of the things that we have already been considering together, brethren and sisters and young people, we need to read Galatians chapter 4 and verse 4. Because there, the apostle Paul says some very challenging things, verse 4 of Galatians chapter 4, 'when the fullness of the time was come'. Why did God wait for 4,000 years after sin entered into the world, to allow his Son to come, that He might make an acceptable sacrifice for sin, and a foundation (a bridge head) whereby God might be truly reconciled to His creatures? Why did He wait 4,000 years? And then the apostle says that 'it being at the fullness of time', in other words, it was the right time, no matter what we might think, it was the right time and God did what is outlined in the next part of that verse. And this is the order of the importance of the events.

'God sent forth His Son'. The first thing, brethren and sisters, is GOD. It was God, Who in the fullness of time, sent forth His Son. And the operative and the powerful part of that verse, is in those words 'sent forth His Son'. That's the important thing. Incidentally, God says, 'He was made of a woman, and even less than that, He was made under the law'. Three things we noted, brethren and sisters, apart from the timing of what God is doing, He sends forth His Son, that's the important thing. He was made of a woman, oh, yes, we easily identify with that, and He was made under the law. And Paul goes on to say that that was 'expressly designed by God for this purpose, 'to redeem them that were under the law'. To redeem them that were under the law.

We have in our studies so far, come across one law. The law which said, thou shalt not eat neither shall ye touch, the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And as we mentioned that law has never been repealed. It still stands. Because the only way a law can ever be done away with, is for it to be fulfilled. And using an everyday example, if for example, in this country, there was a maximum speed limit of 80 km/h everywhere in the country, no variation anywhere in the country, 80 km/h. And that's the law, if every car maker, only ever made a vehicle that could only attain to 80 km/h, what would happen to the signs? They'd be taken down, the law would be no

longer useful, because it would be fulfilled. And the apostle Paul says, that Jesus Christ was made under the law, so that He might redeem those who were under the law. And if we apply that principle right back to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we see this emerging. That, when that law would be fulfilled, it has no longer got any power, and that law, like the law of Moses, brethren and sisters, was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He never ate of the tree neither did He touch it. He neither ate of it, neither did He touch it; He fulfilled it. And it can then be laid aside, and we need to thank God for that, brethren and sisters, because that law is impossible of fulfillment by us. And the entire experience of the Jews was that the law of Moses, was impossible of fulfillment by human flesh and blood.

Come back into Matthew chapter 5, and the Lord Jesus Christ says something about His own mission and work. Verse 17, He said to them, 'I do not want you to misunderstand my purpose, Think not that I am come to destroy the law; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled'. What did He come for? He came to fulfill the Law of Moses, and if He didn't fulfill it, brethren and sisters, you and I would still be under it. We would have been under bondage from which there can be no release, if Jesus Christ had not fulfilled it. And since He has fulfilled it, it's been taken out of the way; it's been nailed to his stake. It's the law of commandments and ordinances that was nailed to His stake. He took it out of the way, and if He hadn't, we would still be serving under it.

Now, that just begins to highlight, brethren and sisters, what God did after He saw the monster, the hideous monster of sin, and its twin relation of death, come into His domain. How is He going to get rid of that? Because, when they came into existence, God made a law. And it was God's own law, and we title it today, The Law of Sin and Death. Is the law going to be fulfilled? Is God going to faithfully operate within the confines of that law? Or is He going to skirt the issue and say I'm going to do it some other way? Well, in Genesis chapter 3, He has told us that He's going to get right into the middle of it, and He's going to have a son, that's what Paul said, that in the fullness of time, God would send forth His Son. And we saw this afternoon, from the promise in Genesis chapter 3 and verse 15, that God promised that He would have a Son, who while being truly a son of man, nay, the Son of Man, He would not be the son of a particular man. He would be the son of a woman, but He would not be the son of a man. And God is opening up a vista to us, and He tells us that that's the way in which He is going to defeat the monster sin. He's going to do it in a SON, a SON who is made of a woman, and therefore, a being, who through His paternity, will inherit all the deficiencies and all the weaknesses, the physical ones, that came as a result of sin. Because, as we saw in our last class with the young people, there was something that came into being, when sin came into the world, which God stamped with eternal hatred, and He said, I'm going to remove it. I'm going to war against it until it is entirely destroyed.

How did God then, go about that? And why did He say, 'it must be accomplished and it will be accomplished through My Son who is not the Son of a man? Well, it's simply

because, brethren and sisters, as we well know, that everyone who is born of human parents, cannot help themselves. We are all sinners because we cannot stop sin. We are not only bent in the direction of sin, but we sin even when we don't want to. And that's what the experience of the apostle Paul was all about in Romans chapter 7. He explains it in his own experience, that he just cannot help but sin, even when he has the highest objective in mind, he finds himself falling short and missing the mark. So, how is God going to get rid of it? Because God's conditions of acceptability with Him, God conditions for fellowship with Him as Adam and Eve enjoyed it in the garden, are that, 'one sin is one too many'. And one sin made all those differences; the serpent cursed, the woman cursed, the man cursed, the earth cursed, the beasts cursed. Because of one sin. Because God is never changing; He's unswerving. He says 'that's My terms, I'll never shift from those terms'. And He hasn't moved aside from those terms, brethren and sisters, but He's done something very wonderful, to accommodate the fact that He knows we are sinners, and inevitable sinners. So what did He do?

If we turn to Psalm 80, we are introduced to something that is very important in the work of God through Jesus Christ, that He might reconcile the world unto Himself, and it's very worthy of our utmost attention, that we should keep in mind, the title that we have drawn from the second of Corinthians chapter 5. That it was God that was in Christ, by which God, was reconciling the world unto Himself. We are not reconciled to Christ, we are reconciled to God. And He is the only one to whom we can be reconciled. It's done through Christ, but it's to God. In Psalm 80 then, and at verse 15, in a chapter that is devoted to a description and a brief rundown of the history of the nation of Israel, as they are depicted as a vine, verse 15 says after the request of verse 14, 'to look down from heaven and behold, and visit this vine; and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself'. Brethren and sisters, underline the words 'for thyself', because we look at that verse and we say, 'oh, yes, we're very thankful that God made a son, who was made strong for us. That's not what the scriptures say. They say that the Son was made strong for God, and if we needed it emphasized it says it in verse 17 again, 'Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man (not the son of a man) upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself'. So it's a request, by the psalmist, for God to do something, for God to made a son of man, who would be the son of God's right hand, who would be made strong for the express purpose of God's business. And then we read about this when we are told in Matthew chapter 1, to which we will turn, that the angel Gabriel had some words to say about this Son of God's right hand, when he spoke to Mary and announced to her the great tidings of the way in which she should conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit. Verse 21, speaking to Joseph he says, 'And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, (and notice the order, brethren and sisters, it's) God with us.' It's not God with us, it's God, with us. And there's a descending order there, the same as what the apostle Paul said in Galatians chapter 4 and verse 4, 'He would be God's son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem us'. That's the meaning of His name, He is 'God, with us' and we need to

remember that.

How high is our conception of God? What do we understand about the character and the personality of the Godhead? Can we see Him in our mind's eye? Have we come to know Him because, to know Him, is life eternal? Have we come to grips with His personality and with His character? He is indeed, a very great and wonderful person, brethren and sisters and young people. He's revealed to be so in the pages of His word. He made us after His own image and after His own likeness, so that we might be capable of reflecting His honour and His glory, and we're going to see, in the person of His Son, an exact impress, not only of His character, but of His personality as well. That's what we see in the Son. And therefore, we are going to see a man, who is completely devoid of even touching of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And yet a man, because He had a human mother, received all the disabilities, all the defects, all the physical weaknesses, that we receive as a result of our parentage. He's not exempt from that. He's not immune from those three things which leaped into being when Adam and Eve sinned, and when by which means they saw that they were naked, and they were ashamed and afraid before the Elohim. They were there, they must be there, brethren and sisters, or else He is not made of a woman.

But the thing which we wish to concentrate on this afternoon, is that facet about which we are sometimes frightened, and it's His divinity. And that frightens us, doesn't it, because we sometimes say, 'If He's divine, He must be the second part of the trinity'. The bible was not written to combat the absolutely false and totally infamous idea of the trinity. It was not written to combat that. It was written so we might know, what God did when He made His own Son, bringing Him forth from the womb of a woman, who just happened to be, a virgin. And, why was it a virgin, out of which God was to bring His Son? He could have brought His Son forth out of a woman who was 90 years of age, who had had 50 children. The only reason, brethren and sisters, why she was a virgin, was to supply proof that He was not a man's son. He was a woman's Son, that was evident, and the very character of Joseph and of Mary, cried aloud for their integrity, for their word to be trusted in the matter which was so important, that there should be proof, that He was not a man's son. He was a woman's son, and therefore, He must be God's son.

Sometimes we think, brethren and sisters, because the gospel accounts, only start their record of the Lord Jesus Christ at the age of about 13 and just have very little to say about His life in earlier days, that we've been deprived of something. We haven't been deprived of anything; we have been shown copiously through the scriptures, what that Son was like, and sometimes we run away with the ideas that this boy was just an ordinary little boy. He was no ordinary little boy, brethren and sisters and young people, He was the only begotten Son of the everliving God. He was very different and if we don't believe that He was very different, let's turn to Luke 12, and let's think about this bible principle. And it's just a little snippet that we get, about the way in which God deals with people. And it's quite fair and reasonable, the way in which God deals with people; we've found that in the rest of our studies, this weekend, verse 48 of Luke chapter 12, it's breaking in, in the middle of a parable, yes, but we just want to look at

the aspects that the Lord Jesus Christ speaks in this verse. 'He that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes'(Here's the principle) 'For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more'. Isn't that true in all reasonable men and women today? That, if there is a child in our family, of whom we know a certain level of understanding or accomplishment is attainable, we're not satisfied if they shot down there when they can aim there? We know their capabilities to some extent at least, and we want them to achieve in that area. It's no different with God, if He gives us something, He wants us to display the results of them. That's quite fair.

Now, you think of the role of Jesus Christ as it is portrayed in the bible. He was asked by God to be sinless; He was not only asked to be sinless, He was asked to be perfectly righteous. They are not really quite equated terms, brethren and sisters, because the one is negative; sinlessness is negative and complete righteousness is positive. He was asked to be both those things. He is also pictured for us in the bible as the King of kings and Lord of lords. We are told that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man. Not between man and God, between God and man. Same order, God with us. He's the only mediator, He's the only one who has been invited to be King of kings and Lord of lords. He's the only one since Adam was able to be sinless in the garden, He's the only one since that time, to whom God has given the tools and the ability, to have the dominion over the animals. He is the only one whom God has given the ability to manifest perfect righteousness in a human frame. Do you think God would be right if He didn't give Him the tools to fulfill the offices that are mark out for Him? We haven't been asked to be a King of kings and Lord of lords; we haven't been asked to be a mediator, we haven't even been asked to be righteous in its perfection, because God knows we can't be.

To whom much is given, much is expected. Can it be said of us, brethren and sisters, that we are one, or two or five talent people, how many did this man have? How many did the Son of God have? We have no idea, we can only guess, but we do know, that there must have been enough for Him to take charge of the world's affairs in the future. Must have enough for that. He must have enough, brethren and sisters, to be able to faithfully represent all of us here, in a moment of time, to His Father. That's a few talents. And then we turn into Psalm 22 and we read something about this man. We know Psalm 22 is a Messianic psalm, in fact we'll come back to this psalm in verse 8, in a little while, because verse 8 has a very strong bearing on what we want to talk about in a short time. Verse 8 says, and they are words that obviously our Lord Jesus Christ was rehearsing when He was hanging on the tree, and He didn't have to say these words; other men said them to Him. They cast the same in His teeth and they gnashed upon Him and they said, 'Ah, He trusted in God that He would deliver Him, seeming He delighted in Him'. And the next verse says, and this is so obviously the response of the Son, so that the vicious shaft might lose its power on Him, the vicious shaft of verse 8, the taunt, the mockery. The next verse says and it is said by the Son to the Father, 'But thou art He that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts'.

Have you ever heard of a child being able to hope in God before he was weaned? This

boy did. He hoped in God while He was yet upon his mother's breasts. An ordinary little boy? A very extraordinary little boy. And then we take another place, in the 50th chapter of Isaiah's prophesy, and we go right back to the beginning of time, brethren and sisters. We know that God was a Father, and here He is now, beginning to nurture His only begotten Son. His only begotten Son. Adam wasn't a son; Here's the only begotten Son, and here we have to do with the Father, who knows everything; Who knows the capacity of every human being and Who is able to meet any of the circumstances as they come along, in wisdom and in love and in strength and in righteousness. And in verse 4 it says, 'The Lord Yahweh hath given me the tongue of the learned' (it's a prophesy of Jesus Christ) 'that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned', and what the Spirit of Messiah through Isaiah is saying is this, that the nurturing and soothing voice of God was heard by the baby, every day of His life. He woke him up morning by morning and what He was doing, brethren and sisters, on the background of this, how many talented boy, we don't know, but how ever many it was, God knew how much wisdom that vessel could hold. And it didn't matter at what stage of His development, God could fill that little vessel with wisdom, and He was filling it with wisdom, and then it goes on to say in verse 5, 'The Lord God hath opened mine ear' (serpents don't even have ears) 'and I was not rebellious'. Have you ever saw a child that is not rebellious? Ever? This little boy was never rebellious, and being unrebllious, although all the qualities that suit rebellion where in Him; those three things that God hates were in there, but being not rebellious because God was His Father, He is very easily able to hear what God says. God can't get into our ears, brethren and sisters, because there is so much other clattered rubbish inside. But, here's a boy who's never had any other kind of education, and His Father is nurturing Him, day by day, whispering into His ears the wisdom that He knew would stand Him in good stead , for the job that was in front of Him in a few years time.

And then we turn back to Isaiah chapter 11, and we can see the capacity of this little boy, it's quite clear, in Isaiah 11:1. And in verse 1, we are given a picture of the origin of this young boy, verse 1 says, 'There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse' (and there's a picture of a tree standing there, above the ground, and there's a rod out of its stem). His genealogy is quite obvious isn't it? It was traceable back to David and to Jesse; He was the son of Jesse by descent through Mary, his mother. But then it says that 'a branch shall grow out of his roots', have you ever seen a branch coming out of roots? Where there might be a stalk, a branch is easily to be seen, but a branch coming out of the roots, you can't see the origin of that branch. He's the Son of God, because He has two origins; He's got one that's visible and one that's invisible. Oh, yes, there's testimony to Him that He's got an origin, but it's an invisible one. And what's God going to do with this boy? it says, 'that the spirit of Yahweh shall rest upon Him'. It will rest upon Him. There is nothing forced about it. The spirit of Yahweh rests upon Him and it's going to be seen in the 'spirit of wisdom and understanding' because there is nothing else in there to impede the progress or the procession of knowledge into understanding. He will have a spirit of wisdom and understanding; there will be a capacity that's just waiting to be filled, just like Adam was before he sinned. Because God was His Father and it also says 'that He will have the spirit of

counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Yahweh'. And what's that all going to add up to in practical terms? Verse 3, all those capacities, all those things that God was pouring into that wonderful little vessel, it added up to the fact that He 'was of quick understanding in the fear of Yahweh', and you see that brethren and sisters, no better than at the age of 12, when He was talking with the highest men in the country and they were astounded at His wisdom and His answers. And you can just see Him sitting there at the feet of these men, humble, unassuming entirely, but absolutely filled with wisdom that could overshadow and overpower theirs, as light is greater than darkness.

Twelve! Where had He been? He'd been in the company of His Father, and the idea is, so I'm told, brethren and sisters, (I don't know anything about Hebrew, I'm told that the whole idea in this verse, is one of an expiry and a inhalation. That as the Father breathed out the spirit of wisdom and understanding and counsel and knowledge, and fear of God; the Son breathed it in. There was an affinity there that is just like the reciprocal intake and outflow of air that we experience when we involuntarily breathe. That's what God did. And then He grew up, and we come over into Luke chapter 2 and we see some pictures painted for us about what this young boy was like. It says, verse 40, 'that the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom:' Filled with wisdom, brethren and sisters. It we take a glass and filled it to the brim with water, that glass is full. There's no room for anything else. He was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him. John says, 'He was the fullness of grace and truth'. The fullness of grace and truth, the apostle Paul talks about Him in Colossians 2 verse 9, 'that in Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily'. Can we understand a man like that? Can we reach that high, as to even in our imagination, picture a man who was like us, identical with us, but yet, who was the fullness of the Godhead in human flesh and blood? He's a high man; He's a very high man.

And then it says down in verse 52 of Luke chapter 2, that 'Jesus increased in wisdom' and it seems almost like a contradiction, because He was filled with wisdom as a child and then when He grows up, He increases in wisdom. It's not a contradiction, it's simply saying that the vessel was expanding as God kept stimulating that mind. And the vessel was getting larger and larger as it grew, and God was equal to the task. He was able to fill it with wisdom, at whatever stage of development that young boy was going through. 'And He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man', till He got to about 30 years of age. Until He got to a stage, brethren and sisters, where the human mind could contain no more, and then God said, 'I want to put that wisdom to the test'. I want to put that wisdom to the test, and just like back in the days of Adam and Eve, God wanted that sin should not intrude into His domain. He's now going to put that man, no! not that man, brethren and sisters, the Word of God to the test.

And God said, 'these are the issues that we now confront as Jesus begins to be about 30 years of age. The issues that are at stake are these: Can God defeat sin, 4000 years on from when it first lept into being? Can He defeat sin? And the obvious answer is, 'of course He can, but can He defeat sin in the body of a weak human being

like you and I? Can He perfectly overcome sin in the body of a weak human being, who inherited all the physical and mental defects that his father Adam received, as a result of his original sin? Can God do that? Well, that's what we're going to see brethren and sisters, as it is put to the test, and we turn back into Matthew chapter 3, and this is what we have before us.

Matthew chapter 3 and verse 7, they are way beyond Jordan in the regions of Bethabara, where John was baptizing, and verse 7 says, 'And when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers' (we're right back in Eden; we're right back in Eden. There's the viper) 'O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?' There's something that was absolutely essential in the days of Adam and Eve, and there's something, brethren and sisters, which is quite essential in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then we come down into verse 13 and it says, 'Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptised of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness'. John, my mission, in co-operation with my Father, because it is He who doeth the work; my mission is to display perfect righteousness. It becomes me and my Father to display and to fulfil all righteousness, then he suffered him. And the record says that, 'Jesus when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'. Can you see the context, brethren and sisters? There's vipers there. They're the scribes and Pharisees of the day, who hadn't any ears. But they really do have ears and they do have a voice, and in the presence of the company of John and Jesus, it seems almost certain that these men heard the voice, and the voice said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'. Can you think of anybody who would be more interested in putting that to the test, of what they heard from heaven. 'This is my beloved Son', and we turn over our pages, brethren and sisters, into chapter 4 and it says in verse 6, 'If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone', and in verse 3, 'if thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread'.

If you are the Son of God, do this. And there were three temptations that were set into the mind of our Lord Jesus Christ. And what are we being told? We are being told this, brethren and sisters, that these are very real temptations, and if they are to come, and they have nothing to which to appeal in the Son of God, they're just a mockery. Just a mockery! He's got all the physical defects of his father, Adam. Have you ever being out in a field, brethren and sisters, and been hungry and seen stones that might look like a loaf of bread? Would it be a temptation to us to make stones into bread? You know, the strength of any temptation is that the person who is under the temptation, has got to be able to do that which is suggested. That's no temptation to us! It would just run off us like water off a duck's back. Would it be any temptation for us to jump down off the wing of the temple, and be in possession of the certain knowledge that nothing



would harm us? That's even a twisting of the context of Psalm 91.

And then coming forward another 3-1/2 years, there were some people at the very foot of the stake that said to him, 'If thou art the Son of God, come down off the stake?' Was that a real temptation to Him? Do you think, brethren and sisters, if we had the power and we were hanging there on that stake, at the very softest spot in all our being would be, that we'd get down off of it as fast as we could? But, would it be a temptation to us, if we were hanging on the stake and somebody said 'come on down and we'll believe you?' It's no temptation at all; we couldn't possibly do it. But He could, and it's touched Him in the softest spot, brethren and sisters. His temptations were absolutely real and crucial. They drove in like darts and arrows, the same as ours do. But, if we can't be tempted in those ways, and we can't, what's that telling us? It's telling us, brethren and sisters, that His temptations are in a far higher field. Still a temptation to put to the test the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life, but in another field. Because He is being prepared to be the King of kings and Lord of lords, He is being prepared to be the only perfectly righteous bearer of the weakness of our human frame. He is being prepared to be the mediator for mankind, between God and men, and His temptations therefore, are equivalent to the office that He will fulfill if He overcomes. Could it be imagined that this man, who at the age of 12, positively knew who His Father was?

And then He gets to the very threshold of His most important work, and He's got a doubt? And He's filled with wisdom? They're issues of life and death for that man, brethren and sisters, and consequently they're issues of life and death for us, because when we consider this man, if He failed once, there is not even a scope for forgiveness. How is He going to obtain forgiveness for one slip? By what? Through whom? Animal blood? There's nothing left after one sin. Nothing left. And all the work therefore, that God has put into the last 4,000 years, has gone straight down the tubes. He knew that and He knew something, brethren and sisters, that we don't very often bring into focus, and He knew that one little thing, SIN, was His arch enemy. And we so often treat it like a friend. And that is part of His success. He was just so sensitive to sin, and we want to look now at a couple of passages, that will help us to see what a grand victory was won, because we were saying this afternoon to the young people, and it's true, that there is more than one definition of sin around.

You know, sin today, outside, is only if you get caught. Sin today is only sin, if the person against whom you are sinning, finds out. You might be cheating against somebody for years and they don't know, and so it's all okay. But, what does God say about it? Let's turn to first John chapter 3. In the first of John chapter 3, we have the apostle giving to us a little definition, and he says in verse 4, 'Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law'. And that's true, sin is the transgression of the law. It's more than that, because Jesus said, 'Thou shalt not steal'; that's what the law of Moses said, 'thou shalt not steal', and a man could say, 'well, I'd really like to have those things over there, but I'm not going to actually take them, so therefore I haven't sinned'. Do you think God would be happy with that understanding of things, brethren and sisters? He also said, 'thou shalt not covet'. So

what really is 'sin'? And here in this passage, the Greek implications of that statement in verse 4 reads like this, 'that sin is lawlessness'. SIN IS LAWLESSNESS, that means to say that it is an attitude of mind that will not submit to the Father's requirements. When we turn back to Romans chapter 3, the apostle gives us a definition that cannot be gainsayed. In verse 23 of Romans 3, he says, 'for all have sinned, they have come short of the glory of God'; THEY'VE COME SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD. That, brethren and sisters and young people, is a very high ideal because the Father's glory is His character, is His personality, is the fact that it is impossible for Him to think, speak or commit anything inconsistent with His own nature. Now, it's not impossible for Jesus Christ to think things that are against God's own nature. But, sin is anything that is not a moral reflection of the glory of God. That's what Paul is saying, and when we apply that definition to our Lord Jesus Christ, what a victory! What a man! And why was He thus? Well, the potter made Him thus; the potter made Him so that He could be. He didn't make it a certainty because of the condition in which God made Him. He made Him like Adam and Eve, but, with all the deficiencies that came as a result of Adam's sin, plus, the factors that He received from His Father, by means of the Holy Spirit begetting Him in the womb of His mother Mary. And it brought Him back, brethren and sisters, to an equilibrium, where once all mankind were heavily weighted with a bent to sin, He's now able to be perfectly righteous. And He was, because He wasn't rebellious. He didn't turn away back; the Lord God had opened His ear, poured in all the wisdom and all the love and all the strength and all the righteousness that He needed, so that He would be equipped to do the job that He was called upon to perform. And He performed it; and He performed it, brethren and sisters, to the honour and to the glory of His Father. And in Romans chapter 3 we can see what He did when He died. And His death, his death, is the only positive death that has ever been seen. His death was positive! because His death declared God's righteousness and it declared God's righteousness in this way, that it showed to all the world, by being lifted upon a stake, it was a public declaration that God is right in sentencing the diabolos to death.

God was entirely right in doing that, and here was a young man who He had nurtured, who He'd cared for, who He'd nourished, who He'd protected, to whom He had given immense favours and power. And His life was taken from Him. HE GAVE IT and He gave it to the honour and the glory of our God, and as a side issue, because it wasn't the main intent, HE MADE A BRIDGE HEAD, and it made a bridge head, brethren and sisters, so that operations might be successfully negotiated between God and man. That's what it did; it made a bridge head. It made a meeting ground between God and us. That's who He was. HE WAS GOD WITH US. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. And that how He did it, by making a man strong for Himself.

Now we'd like to conclude our considerations tonight by turning back to Psalm 102, because in Psalm 102, and we know we're right in saying it's a Messianic psalm; it's quoted in Hebrews chapter 1, verses 10 to 12, and Paul tells us it's a Messianic psalm, and there's a wonderful secret in this psalm about the intimacy about God and His Son. It's prophesied in Genesis chapter 22, because in Genesis 22 we have a man, Abraham, the faithful friend of God, who was asked to sacrifice his only son, and he took him on a three days journey, and he was about to slay him with a knife at the end

of the third day, and that man Isaac, was as good as dead for three days and three nights. And it says at various points of that expedition that they went both of them together, and you can feel, brethren and sisters, the very feeling of the Deity, as He is watching a faithful friend of His, rehearse an action in which He would be involved, come 1500 1600 years later. And in Psalm 102, we have the psalmist saying this, verse 23, 'He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days. I said, O my El, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations'. What is the spirit of Messiah saying to us here? He came to do His Father's will and after all the nurturing and energies the Father had put into the growth of His Son, in the fullness of grace and truth, after He gets to 33-1/2 years of age, the Father knows that there is a necessity that He must go into the article of death, because the law of sin and death can't be circumvented. If God is going to defeat sin in a weak, human body, He's going to defeat it inside the law that God Himself imposed upon man, the law of sin and death. And He's going to go right into the midst of that law and He's going to smash it through His thumb. And it says, 'take me not away in the midst of my days' (that's Messiah speaking); is He trying to advert the pain and the anguish of the stake? He set His mind like a flint to go to Jerusalem, brethren and sisters. He wasn't going to be diverted from that course; He knew that for that hour He had come into the world. He wasn't trying to advert that. He knows that that is an absolute necessity. Glorification of His Father; it's a commandment of His Father that He might lay His life down to the intent that He might take it up again.

And just listen for a moment, brethren and sisters, at the things that have gone on in the 4,000 years before Jesus reached the age of 33-1/2. Just consider for a moment the time of Jesus' life on the earth, and consider also that it is now 4,000 years since Adam was created. It is now 4,000 years since sin made it's ugly intrusion into that lovely garden. It is 4,000 years since death made it's bold obtrusion into the domain of the everliving God. It is 4,000 years since God said in Genesis 3:15, 'I will enter into the middle of the arena of sin and death, and I will show Myself well able to bind and to destroy the strong man of sin'. It's 4,000 years since God has had upon the earth, a man who had it in his potential to live a life of perfect righteousness. It is 4,000 years of the history of the race which was almost terminated in the days of Noah, during which, all of mankind had been more or less eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and making an endless procession to the grave. It's 4,000 years since the shadowy institutions of animal sacrifice had been proven to be impotent in the real purpose God had with this world. It is 4,000 years since God has had an opportunity to perfectly show His glory in a man. And here is the man! He's begotten by the power of the Holy Spirit; He's nurtured, He's developed, He's matured, He's filled with wisdom and grace. No one could resist the wisdom by which this man spake, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased'. Can we begin to imagine, brethren and sisters, that after 4,000 years of labouring, God has at last got a being, who is in perfect harmony with Him. And what has to happen? What has to happen is that those two lines, that had always been so beautifully intertwined, just like the involuntary action of breathing in and breathing out, are going to be separated for 3 days and 3 nights. Do you think that didn't bring the Father grief? That brought Him immense grief, brethren and sisters. Take away the fact that God knew what the results of these things were going to be, it's still 3-1/2 days; and that's why the Son is saying, 'Look, we've built up

this relationship, O Father, take me not away in the midst of My years, because we are just so much in love with one another'. Have we ever been deprived of a loved one? Was he our pride and joy, or she? Was it timely or untimely? The Father is filled with emotion, brethren and sisters, He can feel that; It's even testified of Him in Isaiah 63, that in the afflictions of His children in Israel, He was afflicted. He bore those things just as much as they did, and here is that God, who has spent 4,000 years, slowly but surely working to produce His Son, His only Son, who walks before Him all His days and there's not even a trace of guile in His spirit. And then, for 3 days and 3 nights, there's darkness. There's no fellowship. They've both been deprived; and here's that Son, who from day to day, and moment to moment, and hour by hour, has been in perfect mental affinity from the day He was born to the day of His death.

Do you think the Father could be happy about that deprivation? No, but He certainly was happy at the results, because the Son has made it possible for there to be an endless procession of people, whose procession towards the grave is now been arrested and turned around, so that whereas the first man brought death into the world, this man will likewise bring resurrection because of righteousness, through grace. And that's the way God worked, brethren and sisters, it's what God did so that He might enter into the affairs of man, who had made a complete mess of things, by allowing sin and death to come into the world. And why did He wait so long to bring His Son? Well, brethren and sisters, do you think that it would have shown a triumph by God, if He had immediately produced His Son, when sin had hardly even got a foothold in the earth? And then said, 'Look at me, I'm triumphant over all sin'? No, He deliberately waited until the fullness of time. He deliberately waited until sin was absolutely and solidly entrenched in all the earth. And He said, 'I can defeat it; and I can't just defeat it in an abstract sense; I can defeat it in the person, in the body of a person who has been completely riddled by all the physical defects that came as a result of the first sin. I am triumphant over sin; and when Christ was put to the test, brethren and sisters, it was the strength of God's Word that was put to the test, and it was the strength of God's Word, in human flesh and blood; and He overcame to the glory of the Father, and to the ultimate salvation of all those who come unto God through Him.