

Record of Sermons delivered during the month of July 2016

(added progressively after each Sunday)

Delivered Sunday 3 July 2016

Back to Basics:

Lord Jesus Christ (1a) – who He came for

We continue the series of Bible teaching which we call “Back to Basics”.

Last week we concluded our notes on SIN.

We learnt that there is nothing that commends us to God, because we haven't any righteousness of our own. Our whole nature is corrupt so that every word and thought – even our best thought – is corrupted and polluted by sin and therefore unacceptable to God.

We learnt that in fact because of our corrupt nature every day in word and thought, and deed – in all that we are and all that we do – sin is present. We're in a very terrible state!

We also learnt, last time that this state of being, is miserable: because we were built to have communion with God and we haven't this communion any more, so immediately this makes our life miserable. We're completely disoriented. Everybody has this sense of loss inside them. Even if they can't actually define what it is.

We learnt that we're under God's anger because we break His Law every day. Either by not doing what He says or by doing what he says we shouldn't do.

Famine, suffering and pain and disappointment are all part of a world where sin is to be found. Those are things we experience every day.

We learnt that that we're all going to die. Even the best person and the bravest is afraid to die. God intended that we should be afraid. It's part of the curse of sin.

We learnt that, left to ourselves, we're running as fast as we can to everlasting punishment and misery.

If that were the end of what the Bible said it would be a most miserable book!

But thank God the Bible says: Christ Jesus came into the world. And it goes on to say that Christ Jesus came into the world to save not good people, not better people, not the best people. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Today we going to learn about the Lord Jesus Christ: who He came for.

God could have left us all to perish but He provided a way of escape. That's **love!** But we are unable to take the way of escape so God has made certain sinners capable of taking it. That's **power!**

Another word for love is **grace**: because it's undeserved.

Another word for power is **sovereign**. So today's title is **Sovereign Grace**.

We're going to recognise what the Bible says about who Jesus Christ came for: You'll see on the sheet that there are 4 sub headings and they're all important. The first is called Unconditional Election. This is summed up in 4 sentences as listed on the sheet. Then we'll look at some Bible verses that show this is not being made up by Stuart Olyott, me or anyone else! This is what the Bible teaches:

1. Unconditional election means, that here is the whole human race. But God has chosen definite people to be saved. He hasn't left the whole of humankind to perish in sin and misery. God has chosen definite individuals to be saved. They'll be released from their sins and taken everlastingly to His dwelling place.
2. He chose them out of sheer kindness. It wasn't because this person had something that the others hadn't. It wasn't because this person was going to become something that the others were never going to become. It wasn't that there was something particularly appealing about that person, or that this one was strangely clever. The reason God chose anyone at all, was sheer kindness. And the reasons were only in God. There's no human reason that can be given. All the reasons for why God chose some and passed the others by, are in God Himself. None of the reasons are in the people chosen.
3. The third thing is that God didn't just chose then willy nilly. He chose to save every person, He was going to save, through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ would live in the place of that person and Jesus Christ would die in the place of that person. And nobody, but nobody, would be saved without Jesus Christ.
4. And the 4th thing regarding unconditional election is that this choice was made in eternity. Before the world was made, before the universe was there; before there was such a thing as matter, before there was even one molecule; before there was even an angel. When it was only God in the glorious mystery of His three-ness and His oneness. That's when the choice was made.

So that's what we mean by unconditional election! In history mockers have called it, 'Augustinian-ism' or 'Calvinism' or a number of other things, but it is the plain teaching of God's Book.

Now we consider the references shown on the sheet:

In the first one our Lord Jesus Christ is speaking. John 6 starting at verse 37.

³⁷All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. ³⁸For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁰For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.'

Wonderful isn't it!

I've come to save those people and I'm going to raise them up at the last day. We know who those people are because they will see and believe. And everyone who sees and believes in the Son of God will have everlasting life. Jesus came to save the people the Father had given Him!

Next is Chapter 15 at verse 16, still in John's gospel:

Jesus looks His disciples in the eyes and says, *"¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you ..."*

Couldn't be clearer than that! And it will become even clearer if you read the verses before and after.

Acts 13:48. This is a verse that had made a lot of noise in History: But there's no reason why it should have. It's meaning is perfectly clear. The noise wasn't made by the verse, but by the people who didn't **like** the verse. In Acts we read about some preaching which took place by Paul and Barnabas in Antioch. Then we learn: *⁴⁸When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honoured the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.* All recognised translations say this in effect.

However in a museum or an old library you might find Bibles which say: *⁴⁸When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honoured the word of the Lord; and all who believed were appointed for eternal life.* (Belief and appointed are reversed !!!!!)

As the Germanic tribes were being developed there was a group called the Cessinians. They could just not take the clear teaching of verse 48 and so they changed it! Remember what God's word says: *and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.*

So as Paul and Barnabas preached there were some who God had appointed to eternal life and when the gospel was preached to all, who was it that believed, only they did! Because as we saw In John chapter 6, that was God's will that they should do so. Nobody will be saved without believing in Jesus Christ, but those who believe in Jesus Christ are the ones who have been appointed to eternal life. This theme runs through the New Testament.

We now read some of the remaining references practically without comment:

Ephesians 1:4-5 Here Paul writes to Christians and says, *"⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – "*

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14. Paul again writing to Christians, *"¹³But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. ¹⁴He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Please read the verses listed. They speak for themselves. Roman 9 is the classic passage for this topic.

Clearly the 4 points that make up 'unconditional election' are there in the Bible.

Jesus Christ did not come for all men and women. He came for those whom the Father had already given to Him. The understanding of this Bible teaching is necessary to be able to understand the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

The second section on the sheet instances some matters that need to be kept in mind. We will make a start on them now and complete them next week.

1. People say, "Well isn't this all very unfair!" But when you say that you're a man or a woman – a human being – saying that. Remember what we have learned previously: even our best thought is polluted by sin. It can never be pure. It can never be a thought like God's thoughts. Jesus in a parable, has an owner of a vineyard. In the parable the owner represents God. (Since it is a parable of the Kingdom) He asks, "Is it lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things?"

This then is your state and my state: We belong to God. By creation and invention. God has the perfect right to do with what He has created (made out of nothing) what He wishes.

Of course, by definition, God is Just. God is Good. God is fair. By definition!

We can't understand, with our poor sin polluted minds how God can be perfectly fair and yet how unconditional election is a Bible truth. Of course, even we must agree that God would be perfectly fair if He saved nobody, since we all justly deserve to die. What we have trouble with is why He chose some and passed by the others and left them alone to suffer the punishment which they deserve. But He did! And it's lawful for Him to do whatever He wishes with His own things. There can be no injustice with God. "Who are you," says the Apostle Paul, "You who have been created to reply to the creator? Can a mass of clay, which is in the potter's shop, speak back to the potter, and say, 'Why did you make me like that?' "

If you believe God is God and you're a creature of God, then all you can do is humble yourself before God's teaching. That God is God and He's free to do what He wishes with His own.

[1861]

May this be so for all the saints gathered here today.

There are further misunderstandings which will be explored next week.

Delivered Sunday 10 July 2016

Back to Basics:

Lord Jesus Christ (1b) – The Covenant of Redemption

Further misunderstandings which follow on from last week.

2. God chose people whom He gave to Jesus Christ, since Christ died for those people and no others. But they don't just come to salvation like that! They have to be called, made anew and brought into a personal enjoyment of what Jesus Christ procured for them and bought for them.

Romans 8:30 makes it quite clear that everyone who is predestined is called (everyone of them) and then ... there's justification – being put right with God and finally they end up in glory. Nobody ends up in glory who's not been predestined, but nobody ends up in glory who hasn't been called! Which is why we must go out and call people, in God's Name. Every predestined man or woman, boy or girl can only be brought to glory by passing through calling. Now as we walk out into the world do we know who Christ's sheep are. I don't! So you must speak to all people. You must tell all people the truth, that if they repent and turn to Jesus Christ they will be saved. That is true of all people. Now, the only ones who will repent and the only ones who will believe are Jesus Christ's sheep.

So we freely offer the gospel because the gospel is true on it's own right: we know that the gospel will not succeed in most cases. But we also know that it will succeed in some cases. Thus we can't get discouraged in evangelism. That's an impossibility if you believe in predestination. [Sovereign Grace] because you know the decree of God guarantees that certain people, when they hear the gospel will be saved. So you don't have to be an optimist. You don't have to be a pessimist. You just have to be a realist! Because God has decreed that that's what will happen.

Now says somebody, "Well I don't know if I've been elected (or Chosen or predestined) by God. Of course you don't. God says to every man and woman, "Repent". If you repent you may at that moment know that you've belonged to God from eternity. If you believe, you may at that moment know that you've belonged to God from eternity. But you will never know it whoever you are, without repenting and believing. All who repent and believe will be saved. You will! But by repenting and believing you will then have proved that God has given to you the gift, which He promised to give to all the people He had given to Jesus Christ as a present. So you see that election does not in any way hinder evangelism, but encourages it. It does not in any way discourage the Christian worker, but encourages him. It doesn't in any way discourage the person who wants to be saved, because whoever you are, if you repent and believe you will be saved. Thus by this Spirit given ability (to repent and believe) you will have the proof that you are one of the people we have been talking about.

When we have said all that however, there are still some people who deny, unconditional election. They deny what God's Word says. The Bible says that, but

they stand elsewhere. The Bible points in that direction but they point in the other direction. There are many reasons for that: some people just plainly are filled with unbelief, that's why they reject election. Others say, "It's not reasonable." In that answer they believe and show that they believe, that human reason (in all its sin) is better than the Bible. That's a terrible situation to be in. Some people just prefer certain parts of Scripture, with which they are comfortable, and prefer not to look too hard at other parts. Which is just a nice way of saying, that you know better than God, who gave it to us. All of it! Some people of course have an invented God in their mind. A God who never elected anybody. But such a God doesn't exist because the only God who exists is the God of the Bible and He says that He did chose certain people. **Some people love themselves so much they can't bear the idea that their salvation depends on God and not upon themselves.**

And there are many other reasons. Unconditional election however remains a fact.

3. The everlasting Covenant:

The word Covenant is one of the most important words in the Bible. But few mention it, in discussion, in prayers or see it leaping out of the pages of the Bible. It's a chief Bible word but it has been largely forgotten in modern watered down Christianity. But Hebrews 13:20 talks about the everlasting Covenant: what does it mean?

It means this: There is a people that the Father decided to save; there is a people who Jesus Christ died to save; there is a people who the Holy Spirit calls into the experience of salvation by the gospel. But not three different groups of people. The people who God the Father chose; the people for whom the Son of God died; and the people who are called into salvation by the Spirit are all exactly the same people. Exactly the same because God the Father; God the Son; and God the Holy Spirit, – although they are 3 Persons – is one God, (there being no contradiction; tension; or difficulty in the interior of the God-head). The folk the Father loves; the folk the Son of God loves; and the folk the Holy Spirit loves in a particular and special way, are the same people. God the Father; God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are in perfect agreement concerning that one people.

When we talk about that agreement within the God-head. Agreeing together about who should be saved. They're Covenanting together. We call that the **Covenant of Redemption**.

When we talk about the fact that God speaks to sinners and says that you can never be saved by your own work, but because of this eternal Covenant, you may be saved by My grace and kindness, through Jesus Christ, at that moment we call this the Covenant of Grace. [the Covenant between God and each elected person]

Growth in the Christian Faith involves, recognising that there is an overarching Covenant – of Redemption – made between the members of the God head, and the Covenant of Grace (as part of it) made with us. If we will believe in Jesus Christ and come to Him we will be saved, not upon our own ground (merit) but on the ground of what Jesus Christ has done for us.

Once you understand the Covenant of Redemption, you begin to understand the Bible! We have in it, the Old Covenant (Old Testament) and the New Covenant (New Testament). They are the great eternal Covenant being dispensed at different times. Still only one Covenant! We hear mention of other covenants in the Bible: with Noah; with Abraham; and with the Nation of Israel, but they are all reflections of the great Covenant. Jesus says, as He starts the Communion Service, "This is the new Covenant in my blood", but He is still talking about the great Covenant of Redemption. Covenant ties the whole Bible together. We're not Old Testament believers, not even New Testament believers. We're Bible believers. What unites all the 66 books together into one great wonderfully-divine, inspired document is the Doctrine of the Covenant.

This is what Hebrews 13:20-21 is speaking about:

²⁰ Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, ²¹ equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The Father Covenanted to give us to the Son; the Son Covenanted to die for us; and the Holy Spirit has now called us, bringing us into the Covenant.

John 17 – that wonderful section of the Bible – is clarified also:

We have one Person of the Trinity talking to another Person of the Trinity.

Although the One is on earth, as a man, He's still a Person in the Trinity. A wonderful experience for as us we overhear one member talking to another.

Listen to what Jesus says in verse 4-5: *⁴ I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.*

Verse 6: *⁶ 'I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.*

Verse 9: *⁹ I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.*

Verse 12: *¹² While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.*

Verse 24: *²⁴ 'Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.*

Isn't that marvellous teaching?

Adam represented us all. When he failed we all failed and so we're all damned.

Jesus Christ represents all those whom the Father gave Him in the Covenant of Redemption. So His is reckoned to be their life: which means if you're a believer you're considered to be as righteous as Jesus Christ is.

His death is reckoned to be their death. So your sins have already been punished.

His resurrection is reckoned to be your resurrection, so you are already to be seated in heavenly places with Jesus Christ.

His ascension is reckoned to be your ascension, so your place is already in heaven.

His glorification is reckoned to be your glorification, so there is no chance you'll be lost. Because it doesn't depend on you or me, but on God's kindness in Jesus Christ.

What then is our response, when we come to truths like these taught in a book we can hold in our hands? Be filled with awe and wonder! There's no book anywhere in the world which contains truths like these. We can't understand the mystery. We can't get to the bottom of the reason, but we can see what God has promised and already done. We humbly worship Him for it.

We're wicked, but God saves wicked people. We're miserable, but God saves miserable people. He does it because He is who He is! He doesn't do it because we are who we are. All our salvation is entirely in the hands of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. It's not in our hands at all.

Tomorrow I'll be as much a failure as I've been today. My salvation won't be affected. Tomorrow the world will be more wicked than it is today. My standing in God won't be affected. One day the world will end, but God's Covenant remains.

There's no hope outside Jesus Christ. Oh but what hope there is in Him!

Why do you stay away? Why do you stay away from Jesus Christ? Why? What keeps you from Him. He's the sinners only hope. And if you come to Him, at that moment you will know that your calling and election are sure.

Read again 2 Peter 1:3-11

[1962]

May this be so for all the saints gathered here today.

*Back to Basics:
Lord Jesus Christ (2a) – His Person and Work*

As we continue to study the Basics of the Christian Faith, surely we ask ourselves the question: Why is so much of this new to us? Why is there so much confusion and disinformation talked about and preached in so many Churches? Why has present day Christianity, as it is taught and practised, been 'watered down' to a point of practical impotence?

Over a period of a Century the great Reformation was fully and clearly refined and established. First in Europe and then in Britain. The final definitive summary of the teaching, found only in the Bible, was formalised as the Westminster Confession of Faith. This statement of Faith is very detailed and wide ranging in its scope. And was once well known, accepted and followed.

Presbyterians, Congregationalist, Baptists and other reformed Churches adopted it by Act of Parliament and declaration. In Europe, attempts to distort the basic reformed faith, through 'man centred' misunderstandings (heresies), were condemned and corrected by such proclamations as the Canons of Dort.

In Worship Services and family devotions, the Faith was taught and the Catechisms learnt by heart. People knew what they believed! The basics of the Christian faith were studied, understood, accepted and applied. Christianity was serious about its Faith and taught it.

We can't say that today. Human inspired ideas of all kinds are invented by Church leaders and find ready acceptance by the members because they don't really know the Faith that they profess. Is there any wonder the Christian Church in Western society has every sign of being a 'spent force'. A Church needing to return to the rigour of the first enthusiasm of the Reformation. For a revival!

Last week we talked about who Jesus came for. Just one of the tenets of the reformed faith that has been attacked by humanist preaching.

Today we make a start on the detail of Christ's Person and His Work.

If we think incorrectly about the Lord Jesus Christ, everything can go wrong.

Every time we think about the Lord Jesus Christ, who He is and what He does, we should immediately think of the numbers 1,2,2,3. Otherwise we are in danger of thinking incorrectly about Him and the Gospel is in peril!

He is 1 Person; has 2 Natures; 2 Estates; and 3 Offices:

1. One Person:

The Lord Jesus Christ, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is the everlasting God in the glory of the Holy Trinity. He is that from all eternity. Then He took upon

Himself, by addition, a human Nature. He lost nothing, He continued to be what He always was. This new nature was added to His existing nature. The the Messiah, the Person, who took to Himself an additional nature, and therefore has two natures, is not a different Person from the Person who exists from all eternity.

He lived in these two natures 'down here'. And then after His Ascension He lives in His two natures, in Heaven. But the person who is now in heaven is no different from the Person who was 'down here', living in His two natures.

And when of course, the final judgement takes place and at last we're ushered into the eternal state. When the full glory of Jesus Christ is seen and unveiled. The Person, who will still be God and man, who will exist throughout all eternity, and whom we will see and worship throughout all eternity, will be not one whit different from the Person who has existed from all eternity.

There is only one Christ! You must not think that somehow this One, who now has a human nature is different from He who existed eternally. You must not think that He who is now exalted is somehow a different Person from the One who lived beneath. And you must not think that after He comes again that He's in anyway different from anything that He's known before. There is only one Christ. One Person.

2. Two distinct natures:

Our Lord was God, which is why we had the first New Testament reading (John 1:1) – *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.* So when the beginning took place He was God.

Our Lord, IS God, so that's why He's called Emmanuel – God with us.

And that's why Paul says (Colossians 2:9), in the present tense:⁹ *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.*

And He always will be God. That's why Paul calls Him: (Romans 9:5b) *who is God over all, for ever praised! Amen.*

He is the second Person of the Trinity, as we noted several weeks ago. He is God in exactly the same sense as the Father is – which is what Athanasius was saying. He's God in exactly the same sense as the Holy Spirit is. He was and is and will be God. He therefore has a Divine nature!

He BECAME man. Conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. He took to Himself a real body. That's why He was able to say as the Psalms tell us:

*'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
but a body you prepared for me;*

[Quoted in Hebrews 10:5 from Psalm 40:6-8 (see Septuagint)]

And this is why Hebrews also says, that whereas the people He came to save had flesh and blood, He Himself took the same. That He would in all points be made like His brothers. It was a real body. It was not a phantom. It was not a 'superman' type body. It was without sin, but it was a real body: Jesus slept; walked; thirsted; ate; got tired – had to be carried sometimes because of His weariness. It was a real body!

But He was human not just in His body, but also in His soul. He had a reasoning soul!

Don't fall into this mistake: Here is a human body, but it doesn't have a human soul. Now comes along the Divine nature and drops into the human body. So we would have a human body but not a human soul. We just have God inside a human body. That is false – that is wrong – that is untrue and that is heresy.

Jesus had a human soul. That's why we read: He grew in knowledge as well as in stature. He grew in wisdom as well as growing up as a boy. He developed psychologically; fully, humanly. It was a true body and a reasoning soul. That's why He was able to say in the Garden of Gethsemane: "My soul is sorrowful even to death." That's why we see human emotions in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the eternal God became a man. As John went on to say: The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Fellow Christians. He is still a man! The Bible says so. When Stephen was dying he said: "I see the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." He saw Christ. Paul says: "There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the MAN Christ Jesus." He says that 30 years after the ascension.

He always will be a man. That's why when Peter preaches his great sermon on the day of Pentecost, he talks about Jesus Christ a MAN approved of God among you. And then in the next breath he talks about the same Jesus sending the Spirit down. Jesus Christ is still a MAN!

The eternal Son of God became man, and so was and continues to, be both God and man in two distinct natures, yet one Person for ever. He has two distinct natures.

Without conversion; composition or confusion:

The human nature didn't become divinised. The Divine nature didn't become humanised. One wasn't changed into the other or modified. Therefore **without conversion**.

Without composition: He was not something in between God and Man. He was fully God and fully man. And is!

Without confusion:

Some people say: "Well, aren't there three Persons in the God-head?" Yes.

"Well, isn't there a Divine Person and a human Person in Jesus Christ?" NO.

There are two centres of consciousness and two centres of reflection and two wills. But they are so perfectly harmonised that the two distinct natures are still only one Person! That's the mystery of what we call the 'hypostatic union'

The glory of God, become man.

ONE Person TWO distinct natures.

And our minds begin to stretch and struggle to try to understand how one person can be completely and entirely God and at the same time the same person can be completely and entirely man and yet the Divinity isn't made human and the humanity isn't made Divine. Our minds can't grasp it! But it's there on the page of Scripture. It's

one of those truths which persuades us again that the Bible came from God. Because of the majesty of its teaching!

One Person; Two distinct Natures;

Now – Two Estates (States):

His **Humiliation** and His **Exaltation**.

For God to become a man is His humiliation! For that Man to live in poverty; and oppression, without citizen's rights. His Humiliation: low position! For the giver of the Law to be subject to the Law and to have to obey it. That's humiliation.

And for God to become a man and be amongst us, whether it be tiredness and hate and persecution. That's humiliation. And for God to become man and have to cry, “My God, My God why have you forsaken me?” Is a mystery, that we can't understand, but that's humiliation.

And for He who said, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree!” To be crucified on a cross of wood. Is humiliation.

For God to become man to be buried and to remain under the power of death for a time: is humiliation. The Bible speaks about that.

But the story doesn't end there, that's why we had a second New Testament reading. (Philippians 2:9) *Wherefore has God also highly exalted Him.*

One Sunday morning they come to the grave and it is empty. But the grave clothes are completely and entirely undisturbed. This is resurrection. He has passed through the grave clothes and they have just collapsed, like an empty cocoon. The stone is rolled away, not to let the Lord out, but so that we can see that He's gone. The grave is empty. The Lord is seen: in so many different places and by so many different witnesses. **The disciples are changed.** Even His unbelieving half brothers are transformed from unbelievers into Christians. The Christian Church is born.

The resurrection is the best attested fact in history!

That's exaltation!

And this great Lord who presents Himself alive by many infallible proofs for 40 days – nearly six weeks – ascends visibly. The disciples see Him! Because He had been appearing and disappearing – in His resurrected body He had new powers – but so that they might know that He had actually gone He was seen to ascend and the cloud received Him out of their sight.

And the great God who had become man and remains God and remains man. Went back to where He had come from. And as a man He ascended to the place of honour and power. The right hand of the throne on high.

That is **exaltation!**

And there our Lord Jesus Christ is today. That's what the word “Session” means. He's in session.

Our Lord is not pleading and crying. He's not sobbing and groaning. He's in Glory – the great God/Man – and His very presence there, is enough to speak for the sinner. God the Father, if you like, looks on Him and sees that all that sinners deserve, He took upon Himself. So if you come to Jesus Christ and put your faith in Him, what happens is that God sees you through Christ. Your sins have been dealt with on the Cross and Christ's perfection and righteousness is put to your account. His very presence, in heaven, speaks for you and guarantees your acceptance. That is exaltation!

He's presently secure in heaven, but we haven't seen His final exaltation yet, because the One whom we love and haven't seen, we're going to see. He will come again with all the Holy Angels. He will divide the nations. He will judge the World.

He will embrace all those who believe in Him and take them to His heavenly home. He will put the wicked into the furnace where they will remain forever. And He will do it by His own Word in perfect justice. At last He will take the Kingdom – the mediatorial kingdom, which God the Father put into His hands (what a mystery this is!) – and as the Man/God, Christ Jesus, He will present the Kingdom back to His Father, who committed it to Him, and at last God will be 'all in all'.

The final future of the World and the last moment of history, and the whole of eternity is in the hands of Jesus Christ who you crucified. That's exaltation.

One Person; Two distinct Natures; Two Estates; Three Offices! (next week)

[2200]

May this be so for all the saints gathered here today.

Delivered Sunday 24 July 2016

Back to Basics:

Lord Jesus Christ (2b) – His Work (3 Offices)

Review of part (a) from last week.

Several weeks ago it was pointed out that much of the flow of the Bible's revelation of God and His purpose for mankind is made clear by the understanding of the Covenant of Redemption (from which all the other Covenants mentioned in the Bible flow). Another of the important keys to the Bible is the three great functions (Offices) of Jesus Christ.

There are three great things that He did and does! He is Prophet, Priest and King. He is always all three. Never just one. If you can understand the concept of Prophet Priest and King, you're well on the way of understanding the harmony and majesty of God's book.

Let's go back to the Garden of Eden: (note the chart on the sheet)

Here is Adam. Adam is in some senses a prophet, because he has enormous knowledge. That's why he was able to give the animals their names – he knew what they were. Adam is in some sense a priest, because he actually walked with God. And served Him in spiritual Worship. And Adam is in a very real sense a king, because he's completely separate from every other living creature, having been made in the image of God and ruled over them all in God's Name.

But then he sins against God. (We move to the second line on the chart)

Man as he is now, fallen:

Man today, since Adam's fall, is ignorant. He has enormous knowledge of certain things, but in spiritual things he is blind. Spiritual things are foolish to him. The great realities, the real realities, he can't grasp. Man today is guilty – he sinned in Adam, but he repeats those sins. Every day he violates God's Law and Word. He does this deliberately. He's got no righteousness that will commend him or recommend him to God.

So knowledge has been turned to ignorance, righteousness has been turned to guilt, and holiness – which he had – has been turned to sinfulness.

Before the fall – under God – he was king of everything. Now we see men who are enslaved. Man was never intended to be enslaved. All of us are enslaved by death. It will reap us all. Can't do a thing about it! All of us are enslaved by sin. Every day we sin.

So man needs a Prophet! To bring him out of his (Spiritual) ignorance and bring him back to the truth. He needs a Priest to bring him out of his guilt and restore a state of peace with God. He needs a King to bring him out of his sinfulness and his enslavement: into liberty, and pardon and forgiveness.

Right from the beginning of the world God promised the Prophet, Priest and King who would deal with the situation:

Only prophets, priests and kings were anointed. God promised THE anointed One. In Hebrew, *Messiah* in Greek, *Christ*.

God gave His promise through the Nation of Israel.

Moses is a Prophet – he speaks God's word. But he says, “I'm a prophet and there will be other prophets after me until ... “ Note the word “until”. Until the Great Prophet comes, the Christ!

Aaron is a priest and so are his sons after him. These are the priests who pray for the people and offer the sacrifices and in the name of the people speak to God and mediate between the people and God. “But I am a priest”, says Aaron and his descendants, UNTIL. Until what? Until THE priest – not from Aaron's order – but from Melchizedek's order, comes.

David is a king. He rules the people of God. And his line will rule the people of God UNTIL. Until what? Until David's great, greater, greatest son comes.

There's always the UNTIL.

Some prophets were also priests; some priests were also kings and some kings were also prophets but nowhere in the history of the fallen world was there anyone who was prophet, priest and king. There was only going to be one Christ. One who was anointed to all three offices.

He came in His humiliation. (4th line Christ on earth)
In His estate of Humiliation, the one Christ with two distinct natures, in His first Estate was Prophet, Priest and King.

Prophet: He is and was the Word and so looking at Him you saw God. And also what wonderful teaching. Never man spoke like this man. Prophet!

Priest: The same Christ, in His Humiliation is Priest. For any sinner to come to God blood must be shed. For a multitude of sinners to come to God there must be someone whose blood will be powerful and avail for a multitude of people. For God to come to man (and for man to then come to God) the sacrifice must be someone who is a man – because it is man who sins – but whose blood has the power of God. See how necessary it is that Christ has the two distinct natures to be able to save us! He dies in the place of sinners.

He is the priest. Not only offering the sacrifice, He IS the sacrifice!

King: He's the King, by His claims (before Abraham was, I am); His miracles (the winds obey Him; the demons obey Him; sickness obeys Him; Lazarus 'comes forth'

from death – death also obeys Him).

Prophet, Priest and King even in His humiliation, because He didn't stop being God then, His Deity was 'veiled', but it wasn't absent!

He's still Prophet, Priest and King.

Who inspired the Scriptures? Peter tells us, "The Spirit of Christ moved the prophets to write." The Apostles of Christ wrote the New Testament (or people wrote it under the superintendency of the Apostles of Christ). So Christ is still a Prophet. He's given us the Scriptures and He has sent His Spirit. And His Spirit works through the Scriptures. **And that's the ONLY way that Christ ever meets anybody!**

He's still a Priest, because His presence (at God's right hand in heaven – as we mentioned last week), speaks for all those who will come to God by Him.

He's King because He has all authority in heaven and on earth. There's absolutely nothing that occurs anywhere, without the express decree of the Lord Jesus Christ (although He's not the author of sin).

Every conversion is a display of the Kingship of Christ: because we are against God by nature.

Who conquers us? He does! How? By His Spirit. Working how? Through the Word. He works all our circumstance; all our jobs; all our moves; everything in our life to bring us into contact with His Word. Then He works the miracle Himself through the Word by His Spirit making us new creatures. He does it! Which is why there's hope. [If it was left to us there would be no hope. No hope of salvation for any of us!]

Prophet, Priest and King.

Now we can understand what conversion is and what false conversions are.

Do you need a prophet? Yes! Nobody can be saved unless the mind is taught the Law and the Gospel.

Do you need a priest? Yes! Nobody is converted who is not conscious and aware of his need of righteous and pardon.

Do you need a King? Yes! You need a king who is so powerful that He'll transform your nature, giving you a new will, so that you will choose what you couldn't chose before. Being able to activate your new will is also given to you.

That's what conversion is. It's still Prophet, Priest and King. It's still Christ working in the world in His three great Offices.

Now Christ has given to the world three institutions: Two of them for all men and one only for Christians. For all men is given the family. Every attack on the family is an attack on Christ. For all men is given the State. Any attempt at anarchy is an attack on Christ.

But to look after His people and to keep them persevering to the end, He's given the Church. THE Church and churches. But How can we tell what is the Church of Jesus Christ and what isn't? Easily. If Jesus Christ is Prophet, Priest and King a true Church is a gathering of believers, where His prophetic, priestly and kingly ministry is seen.

Now two believers could be found together on the golf course, but that doesn't make them a Church. But where believers gather together and the Word of God is preached, purely, faithfully and in dependence on the Spirit of Christ, there is Christ's prophetic ministry. That's how He looks after you as a Christian and keeps you 'in the way'. In the local Church where the Scriptures are taught.

How does He exercise His priestly ministry in the Church? Through the Sacraments: Baptism speaks of Christ's death and resurrection. And thus our death and resurrection with Him. It's a portrayal of Christ.

The Lord's Supper speaks of His broken body. And His shed blood. Shed even for you and for me. Given for us as sinners! So we are brought back, always to Jesus Christ. His Cross the centre of it all! And there we see portrayed, very simply, but powerfully His once for all offering up Himself for us. And we Commune with Him, whose very presence in Heaven speaks for us this very moment.

You can't have a Church without the Sacraments! A body of believers, even where the Word of God is taught, where the Lord's Supper and Baptism aren't celebrated is NOT a Church! It's a Christian Movement, but not a Church.

How does Jesus Christ exercise His kingly ministry?

As the Word is explained, and our conscience is touched, He comes to meet with us Himself and He puts a thousand things right in our life by admonition, exhortation and simple teaching.

Also, He Himself has instituted, in the local Church, Scriptural discipline.

So that when we go out of 'the way' our [Christian] friends exhort us and tell us to come back in again. Exhortation.

If we start living (even though our profession of faith still remains believable) really out of tune with the gospel, then we have suspension. We're suspended from active participation in the life of the Church.

But then if we persist until our lives become a contradiction of the gospel and we thus make it plain that we won't even listen to the voice of Christ, speaking through the Scriptures by the Church: then we have excommunication. Which is saying: as far as human eyes can see we don't belong to this Church of Jesus Christ and there will be no evidence that we do until our lives are straight and until we repent of our sins and we come back to Him **and to His people**.

In those ways, our great Lord by His prophetic, priestly and kingly ministry keeps us in 'the way'. In the enclave and folds of the local Church.

One Person; Two distinct Natures, Two Estates and Three Offices. This is the Person

and Work of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

[1866]

May this be so for all the saints gathered here today.

Delivered Sunday 31 July 2016

Back to Basics:

The Holy Spirit (1a): His Person and Work

Review of last week.

The Holy Spirit: His Person (who He is)

The Holy Spirit is unique. There is only one Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit never divides anything except Holiness from un-holiness.

We were all unholy before we were converted. The Holy Spirit worked in our life: He gave us Holy desires and Holy ambitions and He separated us from unholiness to holiness because He is the Holy Spirit. But amongst those with whom the Holy Spirit is working, He does not divide them. Because there IS only one Spirit. When Paul writes to the Ephesians he says that one of the reasons why the local Church should not divide, why there should not be clans and divisions, is because there is one Spirit. This is important, because today, all over the world Churches are dividing, in the Name of the Holy Spirit. That then MUST be another spirit that is at work. Not the true Holy Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit is ONE. He does not divide those in whom He is working! If He's dividing holiness from unholiness, that's fine. That is His work. But amongst those who are being made holy by His Spirit, He does not divide them.

Secondly the Holy Spirit is a Person (briefly mentioned some weeks ago).

So called Jehovah Witnesses knock on your door: They will have told you that the Holy Spirit is a 'power'. He's a 'force' and He's an 'influence'. Have you been able to answer them? Have you been able to open your Bible immediately and show them that they are wrong. Because if you haven't, that's one of the reasons why true Christianity is being lost to the world!

In John 16, our Lord Jesus speaks about the Holy Spirit as a He.

(John 16:7). (Firstly we must do some grammar: In some languages everything is masculine or feminine or neuter – in French for example the seat you're sitting in is masculine. But the glasses I am wearing are feminine. It seems crazy in English, but that's how it is. In Greek everything is a male or a female or neuter. The word 'spirit' in Greek is neuter. Look at John 16:7, this is what Jesus should have said if He were obeying the rules of Greek: “Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it's to your advantage that

I go away, for if I do not go away the Helper will not come to you, but if I depart I will send it to you, and when it has come it will convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgement.” But He didn't say that. Our Lord broke right through the rules of Greek grammar and refused to call the Holy Spirit an 'it' and insisted on calling Him a “He”. To stress the fact, of course, that the Holy Spirit is a Person. He is influential, but He not merely an 'influence'. He is powerful but He is not merely a 'power.' He does blow like a wind but He is not merely a 'wind'. He is a Person. We are talking about the Person today. That's why in other passages of John's gospel (of Jesus Christ) – which are mentioned on the sheet, Jesus gives names to the Holy Spirit. He calls Him the Comforter (or in some translations the Helper). You don't give names of that sort to 'winds' or 'influences' or to 'forces' and 'powers'. Throughout the New Testament we read that He does what only people can do. Romans 8 says that He 'intercedes' – He speaks to God for us. Can a power 'intercede'? Ephesians chapter 4 tells us that the Holy Spirit can be 'grieved' or saddened. Can an influence be grieved or saddened? And acts chapter 5 tells is that the Holy Spirit can be lied to. Can you lie to a simple 'influence';?

So we're speaking about a Person.

Turn now to Acts chapter 5:3-4 Ananias and his wife Safira have tried to deceive the early Church: 'but Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained was it not your own and after it was sold was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart?

You have not lied to men but to God!” ' Note the double thrust of that: The Holy Spirit is obviously a Person, because you can only lie to a person. In verse 3 Peter says that they had lied to the Holy Spirit, but in verse 4 he says that the lie was to God. Which brings us to our next point:

The Holy Spirit is called God! He is God and He is called God. He has the attributes of God. You can say things about the Holy Spirit that you can only say about God. So Paul says, writing to the Corinthians: that the Holy Spirit knows everything. But only God 'knows everything' [is omniscient].

In Hebrews chapter 9: the Holy Spirit is called the 'eternal' Spirit. Only God is eternal. So we are talking about one Person who is a Spirit and is actually God.

He does the works of God. In psalm 104 we're told that the Holy Spirit created. In Romans 8: that the Holy Spirit raises from the dead. These are things that only God can do! And has done. But the greatest proof of all, that the Holy Spirit is God is in Mark chapter 3: (Please turn to verse 28) Here is our Lord Jesus Christ talking: “Assuredly I say to you, all things will be forgiven the sons of men and whatever blasphemies they may utter, but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation.”

The word 'blaspheme' means to drag the Name of God through the mud. You can only blaspheme God. Not anyone else. But Jesus says that there is one sin that cannot be forgiven. That is when you blaspheme against the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit then is the third Person of the Trinity.

Jesus taught His disciples to go into all the world to teach all nations and to baptise them in the Name (singular) of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28) He didn't say, "the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" One Name: of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Because the Father is not the Son; the Son is not the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is not the Father. But there is only one Name. We saw this several weeks ago because there is only one God. The Spirit is the third Person of the Holy Trinity.

The Holy Spirit's relation (in the Trinity) is this: Jesus, the second Person of the Trinity, the eternal Son of God, sends the Holy Spirit from the Father. Sometimes the Bible talks as if the Father sends Him, in Christ's Name, and on other occasions Jesus sends the Holy Spirit "from the Father". That's the way God works in the mystery of His being. The Father is first the Son is second the Holy Spirit is third (though none is greater than the other) The Holy Spirit is always 'sent'. He proceeds from the Father and the Son. He acts for the Father and the Son and (especially) He reveals the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's whom we're talking about. What is sad today is that when people talk about the Holy Spirit they seldom stop to ask who are they talking about.

We are talking about one Spirit, who is a Person, who is God, who is the third Person of the Holy Trinity. Not in any other way.

As we continue this series of Sermons on the Holy Spirit we will be covering what He does and eventually the specific way He works in the life of the individual Christian.

As we come to the end of today's sermon we will make a start on what He does and complete it next week.

The Holy Spirit is the agent of Creation:

Why do we use the term agent (of creation)? The Father is the Creator. And we're also told in John 1, nothing was made, that was made, except by Jesus (the eternal Word of God). But the Holy Spirit is also the creator, because, when the Father creates, He does it **THROUGH** the Son, **BY** the Holy Spirit. [This is another way of expressing the Economic Trinity – what God does, versus the Ontological Trinity – what God is, that we discussed a few weeks ago.]

So here is the unmade planet; God made the heavens and earth and here is the early chaos and here is the Holy Spirit *brooding over the waters* and all the work of creation which God the Father will do THROUGH God the Son, He will do BY the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings order out of chaos.

That's why the book of Job says that the Holy Spirit 'adorned' the heavens. We stand under the stars and we admire them; astronomers look into the furthest galaxies that they can see and admire them; people see surpassing beauty, even in this 'fallen' universe, with all its sin. For wherever there is beauty in the universe says the Scripture, you are looking at the work of the Holy Spirit: he adorned (ornamented, decorated) the heavens.

And He gave life to man!

So here is the dust of the earth. It's been formed into the shape of Adam. God breathed into him the breath of life. But that breath which God breathed, that 'spiration', is the work of the Holy Spirit. Which is why the book of Job can also say: 'His Spirit gave me life'.

That's the work of the Holy Spirit. He was there working in creation.

Now we come to: Author of Scripture.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (or by the breathing out of God).

The Holy Spirit is a Person but He is often spoken of as a breath. All the 'breathing out of God is the work of the Holy Spirit', because the Son sends Him from the Father. So Peter can say (in 2 Peter 19-21 note correction from 29-21) talking about the Holy Scripture and how prophesy was ever given to the world, that Holy men spoke as they were 'moved' by the Holy Spirit. So every time we read a Bible book, every time we put a hand on a sacred page, we are putting our hand on the Word that has been breathed out by God. The Holy Spirit has worked on the consciousness and the talents

and the experience and the vocabulary of the writers. The very words they penned (although they haven't been dictated) are none the less the Word of God. Because of the agency of the Holy Spirit.

This is why Jesus said, when He was talking about the Psalms, "that as the Holy Spirit said by the mouth of David". While David himself said, "by the Holy Spirit". It was David who wrote, but it was the Holy Spirit who was the author.

So every time you pick up the Scriptures, these Scriptures bear witness to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps you might encounter one day a person, who claims to be a Christian, saying that he doesn't need to read his Bible, because the Holy Spirit speaks directly to him. So that, since God speaks directly to him, he doesn't need to read the Bible. However this is making a completely false distinction between the Holy Spirit and the Bible. He's treating the Bible as if it wasn't the work of the Holy Spirit. He's certainly not an 'evangelical'. Most likely not even a Christian! Because the Christian faith starts, and is built by the fact, that this book has been breathed out by the Holy Spirit and IS the word of God.

Next we will cover the final two headings on the sheet. Next Week!

[2042]

May this continuing understand of the basics of Christianity be so for all the saints gathered here today.