Supply that which is lacking

Part 1

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[00:00:01] I'd like you to look with me please at a phrase in 1st Corinthians chapter 16. 1 Corinthians 16 verse 17. I want you to keep that phrase in mind. That which was lacking on your part they have supplied. And my thought tonight is that we might seek to supply that which is lacking. We want to be on positive lines and we want to move on the line of supply and to supply that which is lacking. And with that in view I'd like to turn to 2nd Peter chapter 3. [00:01:02] And verse 3. 2nd Peter 3 verses 3 to 8. Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last day scoffers walking after their own lusts and saying, where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of that by the word of God the heavens were of old and the earth standing out of the water and in the water. Whereby the world that then was being [00:02:05] overflowed with water perished. But the heavens and the earth which are now by the same word are kept in store reserved onto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

But beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. Now the problem here is the matter of ignorance. In verse 5 there are those and it said of them they are willingly ignorant. I know in the new translation it says [00:03:07] this is hidden from them through their own willfulness and the contrast to that I think is in verse 8 where it says let not this one thing be hidden from you beloved or be not ignorant. We're living in a day of great ignorance of the things of God and sad to say it's a willing ignorance. It's people that are characterized as it says here by walking after their own lusts, their scoffers. They don't want God in their lives and they banish him from their thoughts. Simon and I were out in Nepal recently and we came upon a place and actually there was a bit [00:04:07] of a traffic jam because there were 300,000 people all trying to get to the same place at the same time and every means of conveyance possible on bicycles on foot and rickshaws on in buses and on buses and 300,000 people were all going to Hindus going to bathes in the river because they thought that they could wash away their sins in that way and they were doing that because no one had ever been there to preach the gospel to them. How shall they hear without a preacher? They need something to pray for. Lost souls. But the problem in our land is somewhat [00:05:09] different. The problem is that we're in a post-christian society. People have turned their back on the truth. Paul writes that they have itching ears. They're turning aside onto fables. Spoken earlier on about the apostasy. We are living in such conditions. There's a knowledge of God in creation. That's in Romans 1, very creation stamps it with his eternal power and Godhead. Then it goes on to say when they knew God they glorified him not as God. That was a knowledge of God that had been passed down. It had been passed down through Noah onto

the renewed earth. People knew God in that way and yet they glorified him not as God and then we have that [00:06:05] whole catalogue of corruptions and perversion and sinfulness that comes in through people turning their backs on God. Here we are in this land. Post-christian Britain morally in many respects is as bad as if not worse than heathenism. Privileges we've had from the time of the Reformation onwards when William Tyndale gave up his life crying Lord open the King of England's eyes. The Bible, the great Bible was chained in every church in the land so that people could go there and read it. It's come down to us. Some Ulster men have long memories and on a certain date in [00:07:05] July they celebrate the glorious revolution and the religious settlement under William and Mary, civil and religious liberty. One of the banners you see up round about the place is a portrait of Queen Victoria with an open Bible and the caption is the secret of England's greatness, an empire on which the sun never set incidentally and it's there attributed to an open Bible. For many people today the Bible's a closed book. The Bible's a book of ridicule. They just think it's fairy tales and we've had this rich heritage and some of us we've had the truth passed on [00:08:04] from generation to generation. Little children we've learned it in our home environment. We've been taught it in the Sunday schools and yet we're in the midst of this turning away from the truth and Peter here is talking about those who are deliberately ignorant. They're willingly ignorant. They have their own lusts. They scoff at the truth and he tells us precisely what they're scoffing about here that the Word of God, by the Word of God the heavens were of old and the earth standing out of the water and in the water. They're saying the world's going on forever and what are we worried about? He tells them about the flood. If you speak to people today about not to mention creation, intelligent design. They'll laugh at you. Intelligent creation.

[00:09:18] They teach it in Emanuel College in Gateshead and all the scientists in Oxford and Cambridge are up in arms and they're asking Prime Minister Blair to make a statement about it in the House of Commons because someone dares to say to the children in school that the hypothesis that God created the world out of nothing is also a possibility in contrast to evolution. If you tell them about a universal flood, catastrophe that overwhelmed the whole earth, I'm not going to discuss the merits of a young earth tonight. You know, if you're on that line, you'll be ridiculed, [00:10:07] thrown out of court, you'll be laughed at. But nevertheless, Peter is bringing it before us here.

He's talking about the last things, isn't he? He's talking about the final stage of this earth. He's talking about the day of the Lord. He's talking about the heavens passing away. He's bringing in the new heavens and the new earth. So in the midst of all this deliberate ignorance, Peter says, beloved, beloved, that's you tonight, beloved, beloved brethren, beloved of God the Father, don't be ignorant of this one thing. And I suppose he's bringing prophetic light here, [00:11:09] and we do need prophetic light. It's a good subject to inquire into. In fact, there's a magazine called Truth and Testimony. Some brothers here put a lot of effort into it. And a forthcoming edition, I understand it's going to deal with this subject of prophecy. It'd be well worth speaking to the book table manager at the back, or one of the staff of a certain well-known publishing company, which is well-represented here today, and take out a subscription. Read it for yourself. Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest. Be in a position to pass it on to others. Or we've heard the announcement about the conference at Canterbury, [00:12:05] and they're taking up Paul's doctrine there. And I believe this year the subject will be 1 Thessalonians 4, the coming of the Lord, and 1 Corinthians 15, the resurrection of the saints, and the change. Subjects that are well worth looking into and studying. It was a real encouragement for me to see a brother here tonight. The last time I was in Canterbury, I met him, and he was there with a number of Spanish-speaking friends, and encouraged his friends to come along. And a translation was made available into the Spanish language. Well, isn't that an encouraging thing? In the midst of all this general ignorance, to try and spread a little bit of the truth, we need to learn for ourselves. And we're

privileged to come together [00:13:07] on numerous occasions at the Catford Lectures. We're privileged to have the Bible in our hands, and in our homes, we're privileged to have books and expositions. Minefields need to unstop the wells. We need to be instructed. Daniel's day, there were those who were called wise ones, the masculine, the instructed ones. We read about the masculine psalms, too. Those who are instructed, they turn many to righteousness. Here's an opportunity. Let's get to know the truth. So much ignorance around us in this so-called Christian land, and we have the truth, and we have the opportunity to supply that which is lacking. That's the challenge for us, to those around us, to know the scriptures for ourselves, and to spread the truth [00:14:08] to others. So that's the first point. Ignorance. We've not to be ignorant. Let's supply what's lacking. Next, I want to look at Luke chapter 17. And verse 12. And as he, the Lord Jesus Christ, entered into a certain village, there met him 10 men that were lepers, which stood afar off, and they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, go, show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass that as they went, [00:15:09] they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back and with a loud voice glorified God and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. He was an outsider. Jesus answered and said, were there not 10 cleansed, but where are the 9? There are not found that return to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, arise, [00:16:03] go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole. Now, the problem here is not ignorance. It's ingratitude.

And how characteristic that is of the day in which we live. Again, in Romans 1, it says, when they knew God, they glorified him, not as God neither were thankful. We're told in 2 Timothy 3 that in the last days, difficult times will come. Men will be lovers of their own selves. People will be disobedient to parents. I'm sure there's no one here tonight who would be disobedient [00:17:01] to parents. And it says that they are thankless, ungrateful. How much Christ has done. He died for all. God gives rain, he gives food. He's the preserver of all things, especially of those that believe. How seldom if you eat a meal in a public place, do you see someone stop and close their eyes and give thanks to God. I wonder, do we do it? But what I want to come to tonight is, do we give thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ for all that he has done for us? What an opportunity [00:18:13] we have in a thankless world, in a thankless generation, to be characterized by a spirit of thankfulness at the Lord's feet. And we have to ask this question today, where are the nine? Where are the nine? Is there not found one that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger? I want to apply it in a practical way. Where is the Lord to be found today? Well, he has told us where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I, [00:19:08] in the midst of them. And he said, do this in remembrance of me. Now, he doesn't just say, go along to the meeting and sit there and watch what's happening. It's not something we observe, dear ones here. It's something that we do, something that we do frequently because Paul says, as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, often. On the first day of the week, [00:20:01] we're told the disciples came together to break bread. Do you break bread to remember the Lord?

Do you fall at his feet, come into his presence, bow before him, glorify God, speak to him, give him the worship of your heart? We can ask the question today, where are the nine? So many ecclesial organizations, they listen to a pastor or a clergyman. They have a clear preaching of the word of God. Well, we hope, perhaps sometimes it's not so clear, but where God's word is faithfully preached, no doubt it will be blessed. But this is not what the Lord [00:21:03] has asked us to do, you know, to listen to a sermon and tag on the Lord's Supper at the end as a sort of afterthought, as an appendix, maybe once a month or once a quarter or twice a year. Sometimes there are others in their ecclesiastical associations, they go through life. They've never had the privilege to break bread, to remember the Lord, to be found in his presence, to fall at his feet. And this is what the Samaritan, this

outsider, he was the one, he wasn't taken up with religiosity, he didn't go to the priest, he didn't go to the Old Testament system of things [00:22:01] to be cleansed. When he discovered what Christ had done for him, the first thought of his heart was to get into Christ's presence, to be found where Christ was, and to get before him in worship and in praise and in thanksgiving. And that's a possibility for you today, but we have to ask the question, where are the now? We were hearing about King David's new cart, and you know, we can follow the religious innovations of Christendom, we can do things man's way, or we can have the priests carry the ark. We can be found, gathered in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. In a thankless [00:23:12] world, with all the ingratitude that's found around us, do we take time to remember the Lord in his own appointed way? Do we give thanks and be found amongst his people? Now we're going to move on to Luke chapter 7. And we're sticking with the challenges. There's someone here who's prepared to restore that which is lacking, to give Christ his rights. We've looked at the matter of ignorance, [00:24:02] and we've looked at the matter of ingratitude. Now let's read from verse 44 of chapter 7 of Luke's gospel. And we're in the home of Simon the Pharisee, and the Lord Jesus turned to the woman and said unto Simon, seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet, but she hath washed my feet with tear, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss, but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil [00:25:07] thou didst not anoint, but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins which are many are forgiven. For she loved much, but whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meet with him began to say within themselves, who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, my faith hath saved thee. Go in peace. I think what we find here is indifference.

[00:26:09] The Lord Jesus was invited to the home of one of the Pharisees, and he went to partake of a meal.

But you have the feeling that it was a cold sort of a place, and things were going on in a very formal manner. This Pharisee, he was instructed in the scriptures. The people that were together there were knowledgeable, but there does not seem to have been an appreciation of Christ's person. [00:27:10] But this woman, and she did not have a very auspicious background. She was a woman of the city, which was a sinner. We know what that means. That characterized her past life. We'll draw a veil over it. Not the sort of person you would find in a Pharisee's house, but the Lord Jesus was there. And that was the attraction for her. And so despite the surroundings and despite the criticism, she went there. And she made much of Christ. And those are the possibilities for ourselves.

[00:28:13] There was a lack here. A lack in attitude, a lack in appreciation, a coldness, a deadness, we shall say. But she was able to introduce something. Don't we desire to do that, dear brother, dear sister? Seek to introduce something amongst us in the way of appreciation of Christ. Seek to make much of him. She washed his feet with tears.

Tears. Paul remembered Timothy's tears. Paul called the Ephesian elders. He talked about [00:29:22] his service amongst them. And he said it was with tears. I wonder, have we ever shed any tears over our sins and shortcomings like this woman? Shed any tears over the brothers we've lost?

Over the state of the testament? Over the wreck and ruin we've made of things?

Shed any tears over the havoc in our families and the worldliness that has invaded our home?

[00:30:12] This was a precious feature. He took account of these tears. And you know, it talks about the Lord treasuring up our tears in a bottle, doesn't it? Those tears that have been shed over divine interests. Our value to God. Those that go forth weeping. Weeping. Bearing precious seed shall come again rejoicing. So there's the matter, beloved, of tears in regard to the things [00:31:03] of God. She washed his feet with tears. And she wiped them with the hairs of her head.

That places the truth of headship in a very attractive light. What an example for our young sisters. God's creatorial order brings to mind 1 Corinthians 11. Tells us there what a woman's glory is. So she washed his feet with her tears. And she dried them with the hairs of her head. And then it says that she hadn't ceased to kiss his feet. That's affection for Christ. [00:32:04] That's appreciation for Christ. Brought out into expression. Even in the midst of opposition, because they all turned to her and they said, what's she doing here? Even Simon said, if he were a prophet, he would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touches him. She's a sinner. He spoke within himself. It's good to know that when we speak inside ourselves and nobody else hears, that God knows our innermost thoughts. That showed that he was a prophet. Simon, he wasn't saying this. You know, we all fall into that, don't we? We all say things about our brothers and sisters, about this and that within ourselves. We think as long as they [00:33:08] don't hear us, it's all right. But the Lord heard. He reads our thoughts. Man looks on the outward, God looks on the heart. And then this ointment or this balm, it was an alabaster box of ointment. And anybody that knows anything about customs in the Middle East will know that this was of great value. It cost her something. Does our devotion to Christ cost us something? David said he wouldn't offer to the Lord that which cost him nothing. Some have come here tonight, today, [00:34:01] public transport across London. That cost something in effort. Some here continuing faithfully, Lord's day after Lord's day, in small meetings and reduced circumstances, shouldering the responsibility. I do trust that the brothers here do seek to shoulder responsibility their own localities. This cost her something. How precious it is that there are opportunities, even today, 2007, to give expression to the appreciation of Christ in our lives.

And the Lord takes account of it. It's not lost on him. He singled her out. He says, [00:35:04] did you see this woman? There she is. The Lord's there and she's there. And he says, look at this. See her? Dear sister here tonight, not one thing that you do for the Lord will ever fall to the ground. The day to come, it will be rewarded. It comes under the eye of Christ. The Lord will be able to point it out to a wandering universe. You're going to be displayed in glory with him in the world to come. Isn't it worth it, dear ones, to have the commendation of Christ, to have his approval, to do that which gives him pleasure? [00:36:04] We want to seek to move in this line and to, as I said at the beginning, to supply, supply that which is lacking. Where there's ignorance, bring the knowledge of God to people, the knowledge of the scriptures, the knowledge of Christ. Where there's ingratitude and everything, give thanks and particularly come together at the supper to break the bread and drink the cup and remember the Lord as he has requested. Do this in remembrance of me. Follow his feet and give thanks. In a world of total indifference where people couldn't [00:37:03] care less about Christ or Christianity, to be devoted to him, that's the challenge. Those are the possibilities. Then just to move on, let's look in the Old Testament in 1 Samuel chapter 25. We couldn't follow up on the word this afternoon, could we, without going into 1 Samuel. We read about Abigail here. Abigail was a beautiful looker. It says she had a beautiful countenance. She also was a woman of good understanding. There may have been external [00:38:03] beauty, but there was a moral beauty. There was that which undergirded it all. Here's the situation in 1 Samuel 25. We have this character by the name of Nabal. He is a man of some possessions. He was shearing his sheep. David was in rejection and David's young men were out in the fields and they helped look after things for Nabal. In a moment of need, verse 8, David tells his young men to say to Nabal, ask thy young men and they will show [00:39:05]

thee that I've been peaceful towards you. Peace be to thee, verse 6. Peace be to thine house.

Let's not forget our households. Peace be to all that are ours. David was coming in the way of peace. Picture of Christ, no doubt. He had these men with him, his young men. They were in need and they go and make a request to Nabal and they say, give, I pray thee, it's in verse 8, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants and to thy son David. Have an interest in David, [00:40:02] have an interest in David's young men. Have an interest in the Lord, the things of the Lord. Have an interest in the Lord's people. It wasn't ignorance. It wasn't ingratitude. It wasn't indifference. It was plain insolence in this case. Churlish character, this Nabal. All these words in the name of David. David, the rightful king in rejection. And what does he say? Verse 10. Who is David? Who is David? Who is Christ? So much insolence today. Jerry Springer, blasphemous [00:41:05] operas. Turn on the television, the name of Christ is blasphemed. Words used in the street as a byword. Insolence, the treatment that was given to Christ here in this world. He says, who's David?

Who's this son of Jesse? Many servants nowadays that break away from their masters. In verse 11 he says, why should I take bread and water and my flesh? It's all his. Me, me, and mine. That's the attitude all around us. Why should I give you anything? It's for my shares. I don't even know where these men come from. In regard to God, in regard to Christ, in regard to the things of [00:42:05] Christ, in regard to Christ's people, people around us just don't have any time for it. Why should we be bothered? Along comes Abigail. Hello, Abigail. And she supplies what's lacking. She was in relation to Nabal. It must have been quite a trial to her. But she got to hear about it. And she supplied what was lacking. Here's the response here. Verse 18, Abigail made haste, took 200 loaves, two bottles of wine, five sheep ready dressed, five measures of parts corn, and a hundred clusters of raisins and 200 cakes of figs. So much indeed that she needed to lay them on asses and got her [00:43:10] servants to go before her. You might wonder where she got all this provision. Husband said nothing, no time for David. Who is he? Who's David? Who's the son of Jesse? Don't know anything about him. She appreciated his worth. She made provision for him. And she spoke to him in a conciliatory way and prevented David from resorting to bloodshed. In any case, God dealt judicially in verse 36.

Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken. That's what we find all around us [00:44:13] today. But when the wine was gone out of him, his heart died within him and he became as a stone.

David didn't have to deal with Nabal and his insolence because God dealt with it. God will deal with this world. He's appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he's ordained and he's given proof of it in that he's raised him from the dead. That'll be the judgment of the living. After the thousand years, the dead will be raised, stand before the great white throne, Christ. All judgments being committed to the son of man will [00:45:08] not be any insolence or disrespect to Christ shown in that day. But we have the possibility today, dear ones, of ministering to Christ, to our David, to ministering to Christ's people, David's men, wherever we find them. We bring him blessing with us to those we come in contact with. Isn't it encouraging that even in the midst of all these difficult times in which we're trying, we can bring something positive, that we can supply what is lacking? And then the last one I want to look at, back in the New Testament, in Luke 23. And here, I would call this injury. We've had ignorance, and we've had ingratitude, [00:46:21] and we've had indifference, and we've had insolence. Fifth and last injury done to Christ. He said, they hated me without a cause. And in verse 32, we read, and there were also two other, and then there's a very important comma. Never read it without the comma. There were two other [00:47:03] malefactors. The two other comma malefactors. Christ is not in that category at all. Led with him to be put to death.

And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him. And the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left. The most cruel form of death that the human heart could devise. Reserved for the dregs of society.

And this is what they did to our Lord Jesus Christ. And if we were to read back to the [00:48:05] previous chapter, it says, they mocked him and they smote him. When they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face. The spotless son of God struck on the face. The creator of the universe with men's spittles running down his cheeks. They plucked the hairs from his cheeks. Injury. No, man is made in the image of God. Even at the great, quite strong judgment, God will not smite man in the face. Man will receive the just reward of his deeds. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? But man will still be treated with that [00:49:05] dignity that is appropriate to a creature made in the image of God. Yet they can hit him and buffet him in the face. And sit down and mock him. Offer him vinegar. Injury. Injury done to Christ.

And there are believers today who are suffering for Christ's sake. Christ suffered at the hands of man in the 20th, 21st century. There have been more martyrs, I understand, than in any previous period of the world's history. It says, if we suffer with him, we're also going to reign with him. We suffer with him. There are those who suffer for Christ. Here, the whole world was united. The political powers, the religious authorities, the common people. In verse 38, [00:50:12] the superscription is in Greek, the cultured language, the educated, the universities, the intelligentsia. Latin, the language of the empire, the political authorities. Hebrew, the religious element. They railed on him. If thou be Christ, save thyself in us. Injury was being done to our Lord Jesus Christ. There were two malefactors, and one spoke up and said, [00:51:07] don't you fear God to his companion? One solitary voice in the whole universe that spoke up for Christ. The world was united against him. His disciples, they forsook him and fled. Some followed at a distance. Women were standing by the cross. Silence only broken by mockery and contempt and injury. This voice was heard. This man has done nothing amiss. How precious that [00:52:04] must have been to heaven. What a wonderful testimony rendered in Christ. Our need and then the recognition of his authority. Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom. And he was told, no, don't wait for the kingdom. Today, today, while she'll be with me in paradise, beyond death, beyond the reach of these Roman soldiers, beyond the breaking of the legs, you'll be with me. What a reward for his faithfulness. All this injury was being done to the Christ of God. One voice was heard. Is that going to be your voice in the workplace, [00:53:09] in the street, with your friends and neighbors? You're going to fly the flag of the kingdom? You're going to speak up for Christ? A little word recognizing his beauty, his worth. Perhaps a gospel tract slipped in a letter or given to someone. There was only one there to supply what is lacking. There are a number of us here and there are a numerous company of believers. Thank God down here in this scene to represent Christ. We have the opportunity to speak up for him in the midst of all this injury. May God help us to supply what is lacking where there's been ignorance and when there's been ingratitude, where there's been [00:54:04] indifference, where there's been insolence and where there's been injury. May God help us to be faithful to Christ for his name's sake. As we sing number 57 in closing, On the Lamb our souls are resting.

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