

Introduction to 1.John 2

Part 4

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[00:00:00] Dearly beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ. As we approach the end of this conference, we've surely been impressed by the truths that have been brought out before us. What a blessing it is that we know the Father. How wonderful it is that we have been given by the Lord strength to overcome the wicked one. And isn't it a wonderful thing to be able to have fellowship with him who is from the beginning. We shall have to leave [00:01:07] this place very shortly, but surely we will be echoing the words of David. We have already quoted this afternoon from Psalm 133. We all know verse one very well, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. And the part of the last verse, there the Lord hath commanded the blessing. Of course the blessing there was that life forevermore. But what a privilege it was that we were able to come to this conference with that everlasting life. We shall have to leave shortly for our home assemblies and I trust that we shall take this [00:02:07] blessing with us. Some of us will be going to large assemblies, some perhaps to very small assemblies. We have been singing too about being in the presence of the Lord and how gracious he is. Where two or three are gathered together to my name, there am I in the midst of them. And I trust that the blessing of this conference will be filling our hearts too. You know we are so often occupied with other matters concerning our assembly life. It's a sad fact, but it's [00:03:01] something that we can only expect. We have also read the words that the Apostle Paul spoke to the Ephesians, how in these days even out of their own midst the Ephesians would realise there were people arising who were not teaching the truth. These are things that we have experienced too, and it may have made us despondent. But beloved, there is a remedy for despondence. We find the prescription in Hebrews chapter 12, verses 1 to 3, let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who for the joy that was set [00:04:06] before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him who endured such contradiction from sinners against himself, lest ye be faint and weary in your minds. You know when you get a prescription from your doctor, you take it to the chemist shop, you get the medicine and take the medicine home, but it will do you no good if you don't take the medicine. These words in the epistle to the Hebrews tell us three important things. The first, let us run with patience the race that is set before us. The Christian pathway is a long race, [00:05:09] not a sprint. So we need a lot of patience. We need a lot of patience perhaps too with our fellow brethren. Didn't the Lord Jesus exercise immense patience with his disciples? Doesn't he exercise immense patience with us? We have a wonderful Lord who sets us a wonderful example. Then we are told to look upon him, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, and to consider him. That is just what I should like to do with you here this evening. We should like to

consider what was [00:06:05] occupying the Lord Jesus Christ shortly before he set out to go to the cross. Can we turn to John 17? These words spake Jesus and lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour is come. Glorify thy son that thy son also may glorify thee. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they [00:07:01] might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Thine they were, and thou gavest them thee, and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them and have known surely that I came out from thee. And they have believed that thou didst send me. [00:08:03] I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine, and all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name. Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now I come to thee, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled [00:09:06] in themselves. I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but thou that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world, and for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one [00:10:10] in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me, for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not [00:11:06] known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me, and I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them. So far, the word of God.

What a concern the Lord Jesus had for those he was about to leave behind.

They had been with him for three years. He had told them what was to befall him three times in the course of their journeys through the land. They hadn't understood what he had said. The Lord Jesus gathered them together [00:12:09] in that upper room, and once Judas Iscariot had left, he gave them much wonderful instruction to encourage them for the time when he would no longer be with them. And he said in chapter 14, Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.

[00:13:05] This is a wonderful promise, and it was not just for those disciples, it's for each one of us who has eternal life. It seems to me that the prayer that the Lord Jesus expressed is the sequel to

these opening words in John 14.

He was going to prepare a place for them. What was that preparation? It was first the cross of Calvary, it was his resurrection and ascension, for the firstborn of every creature had to enter heaven before any one of us could ever dare set foot in that holy place. In that holy place. [00:14:02] We've been singing about our joyful future when we shall be together with him in the Father's house, but what did it cost the Lord Jesus to have to take this step so that we can be there?

During his life on this earth, he experienced amply that he was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. We only have to read John's Gospel from chapter 5 to chapter 11, and we see how he was affected by these things. How he was affected by these things. And yet the Lord Jesus began this prayer with these words, [00:15:02] Father, the hour is come.

What an hour that was. A little earlier he had said how troubled his soul was.

He asked, should he say, Father, save me from this hour?

But immediately he responded himself, but for this hour came I unto this world.

Father, glorify thy name.

Don't we see what was in the heart of the Lord Jesus? And how often does the Apostle John record this in his Gospel? That it was his meat to do the will of the Father and to complete his work. [00:16:04] He would never have been satisfied if one iota of that work had been left out. And the Lord Jesus, after uttering this prayer, set out on that pathway which was to bring him a much worse ordeal than he had ever suffered in those three years previously. It began with the betrayal by Judas Iscariot, it began with the betrayal by Judas Iscariot, one of whom it is said prophetically that his own friend, one who was very intimate with him, lifted up his heel against him.

He was a man who had walked alongside the Lord Jesus Christ for three years. [00:17:08] He had seen the grace and mercy that had been shown to all those in need. He had himself experienced the love and provision of the Lord. What did he do? He went to the chief priests and bargained with them on the worth of the Lord Jesus. There are some young boys and young men here. When you next read in the newspapers that a famous footballer has been sold for millions of pounds, then remember this, that they could only value the Lord Jesus Christ for 30 pieces of silver. [00:18:02] The only one who ever did good, and good that lasts into eternity.

Judas obtained a troop of men, they came and took the Lord Jesus captive. They bound him, the one who had said, if the Son shall make you free, you will be free indeed. And here was this one who could give true freedom, himself being led away captive. They took him to the high priest's house, there he was reviled, there they asked him if he were the Christ, and his answer was, if I told you, you would not believe me. There he was struck on the face. [00:19:03] The high priests sought false witnesses, it didn't matter to them that the law that they so respected said, thou shalt not bear false witness. It didn't matter to them that the law that they so respected said, thou shalt not bear false witness. Of course, they themselves were not bearing false witness, it was others who were doing that. And yet those high priests, what did the law really mean to them? They were quite well prepared to quote before Pilate that it was unlawful for them to put a man to death, and yet when Pilate said, what shall I do with Jesus, after he had thought he might escape his own responsibility by setting him

free after he had scourged him, [00:20:11] they said, we have a law, and by our law he ought to die. Notice the way they formulated it, we have a law, and by our law he ought to die. Nothing about God's law, and there before them was one who was God himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who fulfilled that law so that it could have nothing against him. Pilate gave the Lord Jesus into the hands of brutal Romans, he was scourged, he was beaten with a rod on his head, [00:21:05] he was beaten otherwise too, and a crown of thorns was pressed on his head. They put a robe on him and mocked him, and then he was taken back to Pilate, who eventually gave him over back to them to put him to death. What pain the Lord Jesus must have suffered when they drove those nails into his hands and his feet, when they drove those nails into his hands and his feet, when the cross was erected and the whole weight of his body hung from those four nails, and yet in all that he uttered hardly a word. There was no word of reproach. [00:22:02] That innocent one condemned to death.

I don't know whether any of you have ever been punished for something that you have not done. As a 15-year-old schoolboy I had this experience, it wasn't very serious, that I was punished with a very light punishment for something that the boy sitting next to me did. In Hebrews we read, despising the shame. You know the last thing I did was to despise the shame of being punished. I protested that Lord Jesus said not a word about the accusations that were brought against him. No, I did not despise the shame. What I did was despise the Master who had given me the punishment [00:23:06] for some time afterwards. Then when we think, all that happened on the cross, the way he was scorned by those who passed by. Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by, behold and see if there be any sorrow, like unto my sorrow? The lamentations of Jeremiah. And yet, when we think of all these sufferings that came from men, the worst was still to come. Three hours of darkness in which God forsook the Lord Jesus Christ because he was bearing our sin, your sin and my sin.

[00:24:10] What must that have been to him? All that suffering and yet, let's come back to our prayer. Father, the hour has come. Glorify thy son, that thy son also may glorify thee. Not a word about all this suffering, all that was to come upon him that he already had known. His interest was that the Father should be glorified by this work which he had set out to do and was now accomplishing. It is often said, when the Lord Jesus prayed this prayer, [00:25:01] he was looking beyond the cross. He was looking at that which was future, both for himself and for the disciples he was leaving behind. Glorify thy son. You know, glory is the manifestation of perfection.

And the Father could acknowledge the perfection in the way the Lord Jesus had carried out his work here on earth, had fulfilled the mission given him, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And so the Father could glorify the Son. He brought out all that perfection. He brought out all that perfection. Then in verse 2, it says, as thou hast given him power over all flesh, [00:26:04] that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. Notice the first word, as. It brings in a comparison. The Lord Jesus was given power or authority over everyone, not just the Jews, Jews and Gentiles over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. In this prayer, the Lord Jesus speaks seven times that the Father had given him the disciples or the disciples and ourselves. The Father had a gift for his beloved son, but he held that gift in abeyance [00:27:04] but he held that gift in abeyance until the work was done. The Father gave him all power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. We have no doubt, perhaps had the impression in our gathering together in these three days, that we have had perhaps a very small foretaste of what things will be like in heaven. We have felt the sense of unity. We have had wonderful fellowship together.

We have had the person of the Lord Jesus Christ before us. And how wonderful it has been. There is

another thing that has impressed me. During the day, [00:28:08] I looked at the list of nations that have been represented at this conference. 23 nations in 300 people. What is it going to be like when we are in heaven?

When we are in heaven, when out of every kindred and town and nation and people and nation, those who have been blood-bought by the Lord Jesus Christ will be there in heaven with him, beholding his wonderful face. Or isn't it an encouragement for us now to do what the hymn writer said, turn thine eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth [00:29:05] will turn strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace. But let us never forget what it cost him. Something that we can hardly comment on, but we have some wonderful hymns that do comment on that time when he was the sin-bearer. Oh, what a load was thine to bear, alone in that dark hour, our sins in all their terror there, God's wrath and Satan's power. And in that hour of woe supreme, did Jesus bear our sin, the patient, holy, suffering lamb of God forsaken then.

[00:30:07] When we consider things in this light, how our hearts must go out to him in gratitude that he left the glory on high, that glory which he had known throughout eternity with the Father. And there is the point in this prayer where he asks for the glory to be given back to him that he had had in eternity. But he says, this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. This is an extremely important verse. [00:31:01] We have been talking this afternoon about other religions. We have been talking about the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ by one certain religion and also by many, unfortunately, in Christendom. But what a sentence that is, or what a phrase, the only true God and Jesus Christ.

Here are the two who worked together for our salvation so that we might receive eternal life. Then the Lord Jesus sees that the work is done beforehand, before he has gone to the cross. He says, I have glorified thee on the earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. [00:32:01] I wonder if there is anyone here present who could truly say that he is absolutely satisfied with an item of work that he has done. Was it absolutely perfect? Probably not.

But the Father was satisfied with the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. With him was quoted today, thou art satisfied with Jesus. We are satisfied as well. How could it be otherwise when we think of what he did for us? Then he requests the Father to glorify him again with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. [00:33:03] And then we have a section which deals primarily then with the disciples. The Lord realised that he had been looking after the disciples and caring for them in every way possible while he was with them. And now he would be away from them. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Thine they were and thou gavest them me and they have kept thy word. We have here the word word in the singular. Two verses later we have the words in the plural.

They were different words in Greek. When we have the word in the singular it normally means the entire word of God. All God's mind as it has been revealed unto us set down in this book [00:34:12] which we have the privilege of possessing. We heard yesterday of the need of the word of God in parts of Africa. And this is true of so many places. Probably this country or our countries included. They have kept thy word. Dear brothers and sisters, can we truly say that of ourselves?

I remember dear brother Wiltz giving an address when he was speaking on Romans 5 and was talking about sins. And he suddenly said, how many lies do you have to tell to become a liar? How many murders do you have to commit to become a liar? How many murders do you have to [00:35:05]

How many lies do you have to tell to become a liar? How many murders do you have to commit to become a murderer? How many sins do you have to commit to become a sinner? Let me take that one step further. How many of the sayings of the Lord Jesus do we have to ignore to become disobedient to the word of God? Isn't that an indictment? Isn't that something too that makes us ashamed when we realise what he was prepared to do for us? The Lord Jesus revealed the name of the Father to his disciples. Here again we have, which thou gavest me out of the world. [00:36:05] He had been sent into this world. Six times in this prayer we have the fact that the Lord Jesus was sent. Thirty-nine times in this gospel do we see that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Isn't that emphasis enough to show the importance of the gospel message? I find it a little ironical, this number 39. Down the road there is an establishment here. They have 39 articles of faith. In John's gospel we have one very important article of faith. Thirty-nine times. [00:37:02] Then in verse 8 the Lord Jesus says, I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me and they have received them. Isn't it a privilege that we have been granted the Holy Spirit to indwell us so that when we hear the words that the Father has given the Son, that the Son has given to us, that we receive them? Do they truly take root in our hearts?

Do we give thanks that we have the privilege of hearing words of eternal life?

Eternal life, as Simon Peter said, Lord, to whom shall we go?

[00:38:07] Thou hast words of eternal life. We can turn to none other. Even brothers who are so gifted at expounding the word will themselves say there is nothing more precious, nothing more instructive, nothing more that we should attend to than the word itself. We have been emphasising the need for studying the word in depth, for making it a part of our own life so that it fills our hearts and that it also directs our conduct. I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me and they have received them and have known surely that I came out from thee and they have believed that thou didst send me. [00:39:05] And then the Lord Jesus prays for them. He says, I pray not for the world. How could he pray for those who were his enemies? He says in verse 11, and now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are. We have been speaking too of difficulty in finding a demarcation line, demarcation line between worldly and earthy. Now, if the Lord was speaking here of his disciples and this unity mentioned here had [00:40:07] more to do with the disciples being one in their, presumably, in their testimony as they went forth without the Lord Jesus in this world, I myself find it very difficult to make a distinction a distinction between unity among those who form the family of God and those who form the assembly of the living God. Unity is unity. As we are one, said the Lord Jesus, the Father and the Son were always of one mind. They had one purpose and they were united in the way that one purpose [00:41:01] was to be achieved. They had one affection, or wouldn't it be wonderful if that were always the case with us in our own assemblies, in our circle of believers. That is what will warm the heart of the Lord Jesus. Twice more he comes to this point. In verse 21 he says again that they all may be one as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee that they also may be one in us that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. How shameful it is what has happened in the history of Christianity.

[00:42:06] All these divisions. We might well ask ourselves, how can the world possibly believe when they see the disagreement between this church and that church, this chapel and that chapel, this assembly assembly and that gathering?

The Lord Jesus sought unity. How grateful we can be that when he looks down from heaven he sees

all those who are his own, all his blood-bought children, and he sees them as one body. And that is the privilege that we who seek to follow the word of God [00:43:07] in the manner in which we gather, that is this wonderful ground on which we can gather and on no other. That we recognise that there is one body.

And the last occasion is of course 22 and 23. The glory which thou gavest me I have given them that they may be one even as we are one. I think the Lord Jesus here was looking even further into the future. I in them and thou in me that they may be made perfect in one and that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them as thou hast loved me. [00:44:03] This time will come. We shall be seen in glory, with glory given unto us by the Lord Jesus Christ himself. And this unity, which is not just a unity of believers among themselves, verse 23 says, I in them and thou, the Father, in me. That makes us perfect in one.

When the Lord appears and is seen by the world, then they will have to admit that the Father they will have to admit that the Father indeed sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world and [00:45:02] did so. They will have to acknowledge the love that the Father showed, not only to his own beloved Son but to all those who were redeemed by him. Let us go back a little to verse 17.

The Lord asks that the Father would sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth.

Sanctification, we heard this afternoon, is setting apart. But I believe it is always setting apart with the intention of preserving the holiness of God. Why did Nehemiah repair the wall and the [00:46:04] gates? It cannot have been to stop the Jews from getting out of Jerusalem because many of them lived outside. They had to go outside. It was to keep the enemy out of this place where God had promised to dwell among his people. Or when we think of sanctification in that light, that the Lord Jesus desires that we should be set apart so that the holiness of his Father and his holiness himself and even the place where he promises to be is kept holy. Do we seek to adhere to that or not?

[00:47:05] That is the wish of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then we come to verse 24. This wonderful wish that the Lord Jesus expresses, Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am. I go to prepare a place for you. Now I want to have them with me where I am.

Why? That they may behold my glory which thou hast given me for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world. You know, our appreciation of the glory of the Lord cannot be separated [00:48:02] from his sufferings. The Apostle Peter writes of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that was to follow. And didn't the Lord Jesus himself, when he joined those two on the road to Emmaus, say, ought not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory? And God gave him glory that our faith and hope might be in God, or what a privileged position we have been brought into. But now the Lord Jesus says a very solemn thing at the end of this prayer.

At the end of this prayer, O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee. When the Lord Jesus has the unbelieving world in mind, he can only consider his Father [00:49:11] with this attribute of righteousness. Because God has appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath appointed. And then he says, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

Or this is another item of knowledge that we have been brought into and can enjoy. And I have declared unto them thy name. In verse 6 he had said, I have manifested thy name. He had revealed

the name of the Father. That was something that had not been done in that way before. [00:50:08] But here, when he declares the Father's name, he brings with it all the blessings that we enjoy in the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have declared it, and I will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them. When the Lord Jesus came into this world, when he started his public ministry, the heavens opened, and the Father said, this is my beloved son. He made it known how he loved that son, and that is the love, too, that he bestows on us. Poor, worthless creatures that we were, [00:51:09] and yet we have come into this privilege of knowing him as our Father, and knowing, too, and knowing, too, that there is a place awaiting us where we shall be together with his beloved son, our dear Lord and Saviour. Not only that, we shall be in a condition then in which we can appreciate it. Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we await the Lord Jesus Christ, who is going to change our, the authorised version says, vile body, the body of this humiliation, that it may be like unto his body of glory, [00:52:04] Philippians chapter 3, verse 20. Or, are you looking forward to that time when you are going to see him face to face, the one who died for you? I close with a verse from a beautiful gospel hymn. He loved the souls for which he died, not ours to question why, but ours to fall before his feet who came to die. That is what we shall be able to do with gratitude in the glory.