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TORONTO EASTER FRATERNAL GATHERING - 1993

Speaker: Bro. C. Hollamby

Study #1

The Issues of Life and Death - Do We Know the Man God Made?

Bro. Chairman and our Dear Brethren and Sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ and young people and friends:

It is of course, our pleasure to be with you on this weekend, and although we come from almost half a world away, we do know that there is a likeness of mind which does prevail among us, and it is that likeness in which we are to indulge to the glory of our Father in heaven. Brethren and sisters, we come from a place, which though, it is only a very small hamlet by your standards of things, the population of which area is only 4,600 people, we can assure you that we are facing a tidal wave of violence and immorality like yourselves. And in that sense, we come from identical backgrounds.

Though they may vary in appearance, the same spirit of the power of the air works in the children of disobedience in our area as it does in yours. And we are, unquestionably, the people who will see the return of our Lord Jesus Christ in this generation. And as it has been in all generations, when the judgments of God have been eminent, there have been a people who have been struggling for survival. And we are involved in that warfare, brethren and sisters, which was begun in Genesis 3:15, when God said, 'I will put enmity'. And He is the Author and the Prosecutor of a war. A warfare in which we are all engaged. A warfare, brethren and sisters, which only see the peace, when the man of sin is completely demolished. When those lusts which work in our members, are completely eradicated from the face of the earth. And like our generations, which have preceded us, those which have been in the shadow of the almighty judgments of God, we are a people, brethren and sisters, who stand in jeopardy every hour.

We are a people, who are labouring to sustain our fidelity to God's word. We are a people, who are labouring to show forth the glory and the majesty of our God. And here's the warning for us! If we, as a group, if we, brethren and sisters, as a group of professed believers, in the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, if we succeed in mass, we will have defied the history of all our previous brethren and sisters. Because the scriptural record abounds with the carcasses of those who failed, especially when sin was at its highest power. And it is today, brethren and sisters, and if we are to survive, our faith must be garnished. Our faith, brethren and sisters, must be formed because, as iron sharpeneth iron, so the countenance of a

friend, sharpeneth His countenance. And unless we are successful in that desire, in that quest, we will fail as previous generations of believers have done.

But we do not wish to leave ourselves on that sort of a note. That's a warning for all of us. It's one to which we need to take earnest heed, lest the things whereof we have been persuaded, slip from our minds. And so as we embark upon our considerations of the Issues of Life and Death, and they are, they are issues of Life and Death. And whether it is the god of materialism of our age, whether it is the god of leisure of our age, or whether it is the intense persecution of those who have seen their blood shed, because they believed in the testimony of God and kept the commandments of Jesus Christ. The issues are identical. There is no variation from the end result. The method by which we are being tried, brethren and sisters, may vary, but the issues remain identical. Are we going to succeed? or are we going to be among those who draw back unto perdition?

This weekend then, we are going to conduct an investigation. Not an investigation into what is the truth, because we know what the truth is. But we are going to conduct an investigation into 'Why the truth is the truth'. And we altogether, brethren and sisters, give unfaltering loyalty to those doctrines which have been distilled out of the pages of the bible, by those we call our pioneers. They are essentially distilled for us in what we know as the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith. And we give assent to that. We understand that we all yield to the principle that that is the minimal basis upon which we invite one another into fellowship. But, overwriting those things, brethren and sisters, there is a concept upon which we would like to concentrate our minds for this weekend. Because those doctrines in themselves, though being right, will not be able to be as useful to us, unless we understand that there is an order among them. And that that order really develops a picture of a grand concept which arches over them all, and which is the concept which has been wonderfully distilled for us in the writings of those who have gone before us.

And while we are not going to draw attention particularly to those writings in any extent at all, we want to look carefully at what has been recorded for us. And we're going to interrogate what God has said, because it will be the only way in which we will be able to arrive at the concepts that God wants us to get into our minds. And its going to be, brethren and sisters, the condition of our minds that the great Judge of all the earth will be vitally interested in when He returns. It won't be what we do, it might and even be terribly much what we say, though both of those things will play their part. But, it will be as to whether or not, our minds have come to think like the Deity. And if our minds have come to think like the Deity, there will be an impression on our minds, and the impression will be a reflection of the Deity Himself. And if there is a reflection of the Deity Himself, brethren and sisters, in our minds, no matter how dim it might be, if the impression is there, if the reflection is there, the Deity will never reject that. He will say through His Son, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father'. Please don't get us wrong. We are not down grading the value of what we do. We are not down grading the value of what we say, but it is altogether the reason for why we say it and why we do it. They are the issues of Life and Death, brethren and sisters, and they are issues that are just as

constant and just as vital today, as they were when God created man from the dust of the earth. And so we want to try to have a look at the background upon which God created. And we're going to do that first of all by turning into Psalm 51, because we would like to establish 'Why God did what He did'. In the 51st Psalm, a psalm which is familiar to us all, we read of a great man of God, a man who is described as a 'man after God's own heart'. And 'heart' in the bible is simply a figure for 'mind'. He is a man after God's own mind. And this is what He said in verse 2, 'Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight': Why David? Why? 'That thou (God) mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest'. 'That thou God might be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest'. What does the word 'justify' convey to us in 1993? We suggest that in the mind, the word 'justify' signifies to us, making a person right when he really is not right, he's wrong. We justify ourselves we say. That's not what David did with God. David freely confessed that he was in very great debt to the Father, and in every thing, therefore, that David confessed, he was making it clear that it was only God that was right.

Let God be true and every man a liar. Let God be true and every man a liar. But David is not satisfied with saying that. He's not just simply satisfied with saying, 'God, I desire that you might be, shown to be right. But I desire something else as well, and that is, that Thou art also put in the clear when you make a judgment.' That's the very basis, brethren and sisters and young people, of everything that God has done. He has done it with one singular purpose and intention, and that is, that all the world might know and might endeavour to show that He is in the clear. That, when there is an issue between God and man, God always must be given the benefit of the doubt, if there is a doubt. He has got to be shown to be in the clear. And that, brethren and sisters, is our profession in life. It is our profession to uphold and to promote God as always being right. And if He's always right, why did He tell Adam and Eve to refrain from eating of a tree that He Himself called a 'good tree'?

And why did He ever curse a serpent who was unanswerable to His laws? Is He right? Or is He not right? Does He mean what He says? Or is He playing with words? Can we trust Him with the treasure of our life? Or is He indeed, whimsical and not to be trusted in just some of His ways? They are issues of life and death. And we have to come to grips, brethren and sisters and young people, with what is sometimes behind the words that we read. We have got to be intent on studying the facts and then we've got to learn the principles which govern those facts. So we're not going to have a look at the creation of man from the dust of the earth. We're going to try and ask God why He made him like he made him.

And we come back to Genesis chapter 1 and at verse 31 and we read, 'That when the angels surveyed the work of their hands for the previous six days, verse 31 says, 'that (the angels) saw every thing that (they) had made, and, behold, it was very good.' Behold, it was very good. Now let's just think about this statement? Does it mean the man was perfect? Does it mean the man was bad? NO, it doesn't mean either of those,

it means he was very good. We have a very lovely bowl of flowers in front of you, brethren and sisters and young people, and we would say they're very good. But, you see them in 4 or 5 days time, they're still very good in one sense, but they have certainly deteriorated in another. Because, as to the kind of those flowers, they will always be very good, but as to the condition of them, they will deteriorate as we know, because they are subject to the viciousness of the elements. So, when we look at something which God pronounces as 'very good', we are looking at it in two dimensions. We are looking at the kind of the thing that God made and we are looking also at the condition in which He made it. And in both aspects we are led to believe that God made the man 'very good'. He didn't make him bad, and He didn't make him perfect. And then we come into verse 7 and it says, 'that the man whom the Elohim had made was made a living soul'. It doesn't say a dying soul and it doesn't say an everliving soul. It says he was a living soul and again we can quite easily see that that statement 'living soul' is something which we can understand as being between one state and another. So we've got a man who is very good according to the kind that God made, he's very good according to the condition in which God made him and we are led to understand that he is neither dying nor everliving. He is a very peculiar creation of God. He's not like us today, and he's not like we can be in the future. He's not dying nor everliving but simply living.

Now, brethren and sisters, look in chapter 2 and at verse 16. And the record says that 'Yahweh Elohim commanded the man saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But, of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die'. Let's not worry about what the particular tree was at the moment, we are going to enter into that in a short while, but there's a law. There's a law which said, 'Thou shalt not eat of that particular tree', and we've got a man who is very good, who is a living soul and who is now placed under the dominion of a law. It is not the only law under which he was placed, but it is the only law, disobedience of which invited a penalty. He's placed under the law. Now, brethren and sisters and young people, God is a Father and He is a very good Father. As a matter of fact, He is a Father who has never made a mistake. And we're not like that. We may be many of us parents, but we can never claim to have been able to instruct our children and correct them and discipline them, 100% right. If we're wise we probably say we've come a long way short of that, which we certainly have. God is a Father who has never made a mistake. Now you just think of a parent, the husband or the father in a family and he wants to wisely regulate his family. And he's going to give them certain laws of the house. He going to tell them to do this and the parameters of their freedom are bounded by these certain things. If that law, if the area under which that father says his children can operate, if that was impossible of obedience, would you listen to that father when he punished his children for disobedience to that law?

If it was impossible to keep that law, and then the child subsequently broke that law, which was inevitable from the start, and then the father proceeded to punish it, would that be right? would that be proper? Do you think, brethren and sisters, that you would trust somebody like that? And if, on the other hand, it was even impossible to disobey, and then the father went on to reward the obedience, would that be right? Do you think

you would be inclined to put your life in the hands of someone who dealt like that? Does God really mean what He says? Does He really mean 'I do not want you to eat of that tree'? Or is He just playing around with words? Brethren and sisters, our job is to prove that what God said is right, and that God really means what He says. That He can be trusted in everything that He does. That His laws will be right and that God Himself will be prepared to take the responsibility for obedience for the laws. And a good father would do that. If a good father in a house set certain rules and regulations for the house, he would be prepared to take responsibility for obedience to that law. But would he be responsible for disobedience to that law? No, he won't be responsible for disobedience to that law. That's something that will be on the man's own head, the child's own head. And so we are beginning to build up a picture, brethren and sisters, of what his man really was. He is somebody who is very good, he is somebody who is living, he is somebody who must have had it in the power of his own free will to receive teachings from outside of himself, and thereby to direct his steps on a path of godliness.

And then we think of something else about this man and we try to crystallize those ideas and we say this, that neither disobedience nor obedience were a certainty in the man's life because of the way that God made him. Neither disobedience nor righteousness were inevitable because of how God made him. He's got free choice. He's got a power to choose and the man has been made with a full grown body but yet without any experience, without any characteristics, without anything having being implanted in his mind so that God through the angels will invite him along a course of instruction, which will slowly lead him up to the ability to reflect the One who made him. And that was the intention of God, brethren and sisters, in the beginning. He had but one intention and that was as we know from Numbers 14:21, 'to fill the earth with His glory'.

He did the work of creation that we see around us today, in just six days. And He created the resplendent verdure that we see. The magnificent scenery that we see. He created the infinite diversity of life, both human and animal and plant, all over the face of this earth in but six days. How long has it taken Him so far, to fill the earth with His moral reflection? 6,000 years have past, brethren and sisters and young people, and we don't see much evidence of it upon the earth yet. 6,000 years have past, and sometimes brethren and sisters and young people, we think that the work of God is maintaining what we see with our eyes.

Let us turn to John chapter 5. For in John 5 we have a little insight into the mind of God. In John chapter 5, I'm sorry, it's chapter 6 and at verse 29, Jesus answered them and said, 'This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent'. And that is telling us that there is no greater energy, there is no more vital power, there is no more fixed intent that the Deity has than to work a work among men which gets them to believe. And you just ask yourself brother or sister or young people, why is it that we tell a lie? It is simply because the truth is not convenient. We don't believe that we ought always to tell the truth. That's why we tell a lie. And whether it is so-called a white one or a full blooded one doesn't matter. It's because we don't believe. And there was a God from the very beginning, brethren and sisters, who placed these two in altogether lovely circumstances, and what did He say to them? He said, 'I want you to believe'. And when

His word came to them there was no impediment.

We want to conclude this session by looking at the first of John chapter 2 because in this place we are told something about God and something about ourselves. We've just looked at the law under which Adam and Eve were placed. What happens to us today when we see a sign, WET PAINT, DO NOT TOUCH? Straightaway, something leaps into our minds and it tells us, don't believe. It tells us, experiment. Find out for yourself. It says that in little children. It's an attitude of mind, brethren and sisters, which doesn't believe. In the first of John chapter 2 and at verse 15 we read these words, 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world'. Did Adam have those three things when God created him out of the dust of the ground? Obviously, he didn't. Obviously, he didn't. They are not of the Father. That's the bible saying that. That's a fact, brethren and sisters. All we can do is believe it. They are not of the Father. And when you go back into Genesis 2 and you see that law proclaimed, what was the reaction of Adam and Eve to the law? There's none recorded because there wasn't that reaction that Paul experienced in Romans chapter 7, when he said, 'I had not known sin except the law had said, 'Thou shalt not covet. And when the law came to my attention, he says, 'Instantly there leapt into my mind, great feelings of concupiscence. Evil concupiscence'. Didn't happen to Adam and Eve. God didn't make them like we are. He made them very good and those things are certainly anything but very good. They were not part of the man as God formed him, and so brethren and sisters, what God made were two creatures. The man and the woman and they were both equal. They were both equal in their ability to believe God. They were both equal in their ability to be instructed by the angels so that they would lead them along a path of development which God would reward at an appropriate time in the future. But they were different and God made them different. And in a few moments when he begin our next session together, we will take up our story from that point.

But what have we seen? We've seen that what God wants us to be, is people who implicitly believe Him, like little children believe their parents. We've seen that Adam and Eve were created in a very good estate as regards their kind and their condition. That they were living souls, that they were under a wise law and that God really wanted them to obey. And that when they disobeyed, there were certain results going to come, that were not the direct responsibility of God, who gave to them a good law. He wanted them to maintain their stance before Him, but He wanted them, brethren and sisters, just as obedience is valueless when there is no scope for disobedience, He wanted them to be put to the test. And put them to the test He did. And we will see the next part of our story in a few moments time, God willing.