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TORONTO EASTER FRATERNAL GATHERING - 1993

Speaker: Bro. Colin Hollamby

Exhortation

Reading: Psalm 51

Bro. Chairman, and our dear brethren and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ

We reached a point in our considerations last evening about the way in which God worked in His only begotten Son, so that a bridgehead, a platform, a foundation for future operations might have been laid. And in the laying of that foundation, brethren and sisters, we are able to clearly see that the love of God was strong enough to rescue the race; that the righteousness of God was real enough to confront the issue head-on; that the power of God was sufficient to make a man strong to do the job and, that He might have been able, brethren and sisters, to bring our lives to that focus whereby we might be able to stand in awe and to accept the thing that He has offered to us.

And in the book of Proverbs at chapter 18 and verse 10, the wise man Solomon says: 'The name of Yahweh is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe'. And it's that haven, brethren and sisters, that has been made to us, that have been given to us, of which we are partakers today. We have a haven, but when we come to that haven, Sunday by Sunday, that we might remember the covenant that our God has established with us through the blood of the everlasting covenant, what is our attitude when we come? How do we review the past week? And what are we going to lay at the Altar which is Christ? Or, have we only come to receive?

To receive is a very great necessity. But, to give is even better. and when we come to review our lives of the past week, we are all very much the same, brethren and sisters. We only vary slightly in the matter of degrees, but not kind. We are all the same kind of people, and if we don't understand one another, it will be entirely because we don't understand ourselves. And as we try to review our past week, how do we analyse and assess our life? And we cast our mind, and we try desperately to cast it over the past seven days, and we know we've come to confess our sins--but can we find any? Is there anything, brethren and sisters, that you remember in the past week in which you have sinned? And our minds seem to take a very low view, and the view is that we are very much conditioned by the environment in which we live, very much. And so we say to ourselves, 'Well, on Monday I can't find anything wrong and I can even remember doing a good deed, and on Tuesday it was rather the same. And by the time the Wednesday Bible Class came, I was feeling a bit down, but that changed me again, and Thursday and Friday continued much the same way.

There's something wrong with our thinking, brethren and sisters. There's something wrong with our thinking! And I'm no different. We have got to try and get God's view of sin! And when we sin, just say for the sake of argument at the moment, that we've each told a lie. What can we do about that? What can God do about that? Can God rectify the lie? Brethren and sisters, in that sense there is nothing that anybody can do about the lie, not even God. God can't change history and sin is history! There's only one thing that God can do about history and that is that He can choose upon a right basis to say that He doesn't attribute history to the person who brought the history into being. And when we think about sin, we very often think about the definition of sin that the world has. And they have a little equation and it says, 'Well, forgiveness equals forgetfulness'. Is forgetfulness a virtue? Do you think, brethren and sisters, that God will forget? Just look at it on the personal level. We have a difficulty with a brother, we may make it up very easily. Do we forget what has happened? Are we supposed to forget what has happened? Because if we just simply forget what has happened, there's really no obstacle in the way of forgiveness, is there? The very great value and virtue of forgiveness, brethren and sisters, is the ability of God and the ability of our minds, to treat the offender as though it hadn't happened. In other words, it's just to remove that action or that thing away from the person when we look at the person. It's still there, it's history. We can't erase history and neither can God, but He can choose to put it out of His mind. He can choose to look at us and say, 'Well, I'm prepared to treat them like I treated my son'. And God's unswerving faithfulness, brethren and sisters, has not changed since He formed Adam out of the dust of the ground. And the only basis upon which He will be accepted is total sinlessness and total righteousness, and He knows that none of us can accomplish that, so He accomplished the foundation, He accomplished the platform, He accomplished the bridgehead, in His Son. And He now has established a basis upon which He can invite future operations with the rest of His creatures. And that's the reason why we are here this morning, that's the reason, brethren and sisters, why we have come to confess and to forsake our sins. To seek the majesty of the grace of God in a forgiveness of those things which we have done or which we have failed to do. But our minds are very convenient! Our minds are very convenient because they always make allowances for ourselves. They don't make allowances for other people, they just make allowances for ourselves. And we, day by day, in common, sadly with the rest of the world outside, we serve that beggarly master, sin, whose dukes are happily serving him to earn the wondrous payment of eternal death--and here we have an offer of eternal life by grace through righteousness. And so, we will endeavour this morning, to look at the way that God has dealt with sin through His Son.

We reinforce our minds again, brethren and sisters, that God has not changed since He brought man into the world. He has not changed His basis; He has not swerved away from His principle of total righteousness to be acceptable in the sight of Himself. That's an unchanging principle with our God, and whether it is with the man and the woman in Eden, or whether it is with us today, the principle remains the same.

We said that we have come to the safe haven of the name of Yahweh. And we'd like to go back into Exodus chapter 34, because in that place we read of the giving of that

Name. And before we look at those two verses in Exodus 34, three verses in verses 5, 6 and 7 are based upon the background of a very serious and moving incident in Exodus 32 and 33. Because in Exodus 32 and 33 when the children of Israel, under the hand of Aaron made a golden calf and began to worship it, they aroused the jealousy of their God, Who said, 'thou shalt not make any graven images'. And they made one, and as a result of that, brethren and sisters, the very presence of God was taken away from the camp. The angel Michael, who was put in the charge and control of the nation was withdrawn by God, and so Moses, very, very quickly, went outside the camp and established another tabernacle. And he went out there and he spoke to the Deity. And he pleaded with the Deity that he might return His presence to the camp. And in verse 13, rather verse 12 of chapter 33 we read, 'Moses said to Yahweh, see thou sayest unto me, bring out this people and thou hast not let me know whom thou will send with me, yet thou has said, I know thee by name and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now, therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight and consider that this nation is thy people. And He said, 'My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest'. And a very gracious answer upon the pleadings of Moses, brethren and sisters, is there seen. God now reinstates the angel of His presence into the camp of Israel.

And Moses said, 'If thy presence go not with me, I'm not moving any further. Carry us not up hence'. Verse 17, The Lord said to Moses, 'I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken, for that thou hast found grace in my sight and I know thee by name. And he said, 'I beseech thee, show me thy glory.' And, God in response to that said in verse 19, 'I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of Yahweh, which is a strong tower before thee, and I will be gracious and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy'. And then, we come to verse 5 and it says, 'that Yahweh descended in a cloud and stood with Moses there and proclaimed the name of Yahweh. And Yahweh passed by before him and proclaimed, Yahweh, Yahweh El, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgressions and sin, but by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children until the third and fourth generations of them that hate Me'. (And that little addition, brethren and sisters, is a proper addition, as it occurs in Deuteronomy 5:9).

Notice what the name of God is: Here it's just words; it's a proclamation. In Jesus Christ it's a demonstration! He was the fulness of the Godhead bodily and everything He said and everything He thought and everything He did, did not originate with Him, it originated with the Father. He was a demonstration of the words that Moses heard and God waited 4,000 years, brethren and sisters, to bring that demonstration into human flesh. It was just words before the Lord came. Now it's been made flesh, and in that thing to which God had worked towards ever since Adam sinned. 4,000 years of effort in the production of His only begotten Son. A demonstration of all the character and an exact impress of the personality of the Deity Himself. So that, the very emotions that stirred our Lord Jesus Christ were the very emotions of the Father Himself. It wasn't just the character, it was a character manifested through a personality which was

identical to the Father's. And that's the bridgehead; that's the name of God, and He's the name of God in manifestation in human flesh upon the earth. And so the apostle Paul could rightly say, 'that He was the fulness of the Godhead bodily'. And John could record that 'He was full of grace and of truth'.

But let us be a little more particular in what we say about the characteristics of the proclamation of His name, because it says in verse 7 'that it would keep mercy for thousands and that it would forgive iniquity, transgression and sin'. And those three things, brethren and sisters, are clearly separate things. There's iniquity, there's transgression, and there is sin. And let us come now into the reading that was read for us this morning in Psalm 51. Here's a man who made confession; we know what he did, don't ever let us think that David will be in the kingdom of God because he committed first degree murder and adultery. He won't be in the kingdom because he committed those things; he'll be in the kingdom because of the attitude and the greatness of the level of his understanding of God. He knew God. And you know, it is recorded of David that there was only one thing in his whole life that upset God, and it wasn't the matter of Bathsheba, it was the matter of Uriah the Hittite. That's the only thing in his life of which God said that that really upset Him. Why? Because brethren and sisters, his sin with Bathsheba was not premeditated; and you can search all the offerings under the Law and you will never find an offering that was made for a sin that was premeditated. Uriah, the matter of Uriah, was in cold blood and in premeditation. And that's why God said and that's why David said, 'I know there's no sacrifice for that'. There was no sacrifice for adultery either, whether it was a sin of passion or whether it was a sin of premeditation, there was no offering in the Law for that. But look what David says, and we began with these words on Friday afternoon, let's read from verse 1. 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness, according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin'. David knew the name of Yahweh; he knew what God had said He was prepared to do for men. He says, 'I know that in the proclamation of thy name, O God, thou hast said that thou wilt forgive iniquity and transgression and sin.

Not just sin, not just transgression, not just iniquity, not just two of them. All, all of those things, brethren and sisters, make a composite whole and they define for us beautifully, what sin, what missing the mark, really is. And if we are to go home and analyse the meaning of those three words, iniquity and transgression and sin, we will find that the apostle Paul, in Romans 3:23 says, 'that all who have sinned and come short of the glory of God--iniquity and sin and transgression combine together to mean anything but that which is deliberately directed to the glory of God. Anything but that which is deliberately directed to the glory of God is sin, is missing the mark, brethren and sisters! Now what were our lives like for the past seven days? How much time have we spent in other pursuits? How much time have we spent just taking our ease and resting, and our minds are anywhere else than on the things that are holy and just and good and pure and righteous? that's the victory of the Son of God, brethren and sisters! And when we see the definition which the bible gives of sin, His victory is great and high. It's far from attainable by us. And therefore, we come across a statement in the bible, and the statement (and we often use it) that the death of Christ was for the

forgiveness of our sins. Brethren and sisters, it wasn't! That statement, even though it is a biblical statement, needs to be properly understood. Because if that statement means that in a mechanical sense, then it's just like the 'church' tells us--that Jesus did it all long ago and we don't have to do anything. We just confess him as our personal saviour and everything's fine.

I wonder if that attitude slips into our lives, brethren and sisters? and we just have too mechanical a view of the atoning work of God and His son Jesus Christ. Do we understand the effort, do we understand the trauma, do we understand the pain, the despair, the excruciating pain that went into the sacrifice that is for our sins? Yes, but if it was done long ago, there's absolutely no scope for forgiveness and mercy from God; if it's all done long ago. That's only a basis for operations. And what does the cross of Christ mean in the world outside? Men and women hero-worship it! They think it's something honourable and glorious! Was it anything else than something that was ignoble and despised? That's what it was. The church has got it all upside down, brethren and sisters, they think it's something of notoriety, it is only a matter of despise. And we need to associate with that, we need to understand that, it is indeed true as the apostle Paul said, 'that Jesus Christ came to save sinners'. Can we say the words of Paul 'of whom I am chief!' Is that how we feel when we come to the table of our Lord Sunday by Sunday, that we review our lives and we can honestly and with integrity before God say, that that is how we feel? I imagine we would all say that Paul is a better man than us. That's how he felt.

We've got a desperate need, brethren and sisters, and the need is that we should come to grips with how God sees sin. Because if we don't come to grips with how God sees sin, and we don't feel in our hearts like the apostle Peter felt when he said, 'Lord, depart from me for I am a sinful man'. Is that ever a thought that permeates our chest? These men saw the demonstration, we only see it by the eye of faith. And what was David intent on doing? What was David's whole intent through the confession of his sin and his iniquity and his transgression? It was one thing. To put God in the clear. And if we don't properly analyze our lives, we can never ever put God in the clear. We can easily deceive ourselves. We cannot deceive God. He knows our innermost thoughts and intentions and it's only through His word that we are enabled to analyse ourselves.

If the apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11, in the midst of the warrant that we very often use on Sunday morning before we partake of the emblems, if Paul could say to the Corinthian believers that 'many of you are weak and sickly and many sleep', doesn't that also apply to us? And may it not just be because we do not really honestly understand God's view or what we are?

He tells us in Jeremiah 17, that 'the heart of man is desperately sick, who can know it', he says, 'who can know the heart of man'? Have you ever, brethren and sisters, caught a thought that flies through you mind of which you are heartily ashamed? I wonder how many pass through and we don't even know it? And we are oblivious because of the deceitfulness of sin and because we haven't really come to grips with who we really are, what we are really by nature. God's description of us is not a very

pretty one. And God knows that we cannot be righteous people. He knows that ever since sin came into the world, it is a physical and a moral impossibility except in His Son whom He made strong for Himself. He knows that it is a physical and moral impossibility, so what has He done about it? He's offered to us, the Bridgehead, His Son, Jesus Christ.

He knows we're sinful people, He knows that we will sin as sure as light follows darkness, even when we are trying not to sin, even when we are trying to do the things that are right, we miss the mark at which we are aiming; we miss the mark of the glory of God.

And we'd like to look at one passage in the New Testament, brethren and sisters, in Colossians 2, to which we have already referred during the course of our remarks, where the Lord Jesus Christ is held up as a representative of God and then as a representative of us, and see if, in what relationship God has invited us, so that we might be acceptable to Him in Christ Jesus our Lord? He says in verse 7, 'that we should be rooted and built up in Christ and established in the faith as we have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy of the serpent and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ. For in Christ dwellest all the fulness of the Godhead bodily' (that's God's name-that's all the wonderful characteristics of the name of God embodied in a human being). A demonstration of them all, in His breath, in His words, in His actions, in the totality of His life from birth to death; and even in the manner of His death, He declared the righteousness of God. He is the fulness of the Godhead bodily. He represents God to man, He is God with us.

And then it says in verse 10, 'And ye who believe, who are rooted and built up in Him, ye are complete in Him'. But notice, brethren and sisters, only in Him. Ye are complete! We come here on Sunday morning, brethren and sisters are we complete? We are anything but complete! But in Christ, we are complete! What a marvelous extension of the grace and of the love of God, that He is prepared to treat us as He did His only begotten and beloved Son. Ye are complete in Him, and ye are complete in Him which is the head of all principalities and power, in whom (not outside of whom) in whom ye also are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands. And circumcision being a cutting off of the flesh symbolizes negatively sinlessness and positively complete obedience and righteousness. So that in Him we can become circumcised by the circumcision that is not made by human work. It is by the power and by the glory and by the righteousness of God. And that is, says the apostle Paul, 'that we must put off the body of the sins of the flesh by being within the circumcision of Christ'.

And that's first begun in the next verse 'by being buried with Him in baptism, wherein, that is in baptism in Christ, going down into the water with Him, we likewise come up out of the water with Him'. And in our minds, the apostle goes on to say in verse 12, 'we are risen with Him through faith, through faith of the operation of God who has raised Him from the dead'. Brethren and sisters, there's the principle. You think of David. If

we had all done what David did, how easy would it be for us to believe, to have faith in the forgiveness of God? Would we be able to believe, even 12 months later, as it was, that God had forgiven the things that we had done? How's our belief going, brethren and sisters? That's what faith in the operation of God consists in, it consists in us, personally believing that the sacrifice which was made is a sacrifice that was made for us, and that we agreed, we agreed with putting our hand to the death of Jesus Christ. Is that how we see the transaction in the forgiveness of our sins? That we ourselves, personally, need that sacrifice so greatly that it is us, personally, who are putting the knife to that man?

That's what we need. He is our sacrifice and just as every man when he offered sacrifice under the Law, laid his hand upon the head of the animal, showing identification, that's us with our Lord Jesus Christ. And by identifying with Him, we say we know it was necessary for us personally and that long ago the bridgehead was established so that we could come to God in prayer and we could freely confess, we could unconstrainably confess, what manner of persons we are, and that through faith in the operation of God that that was entirely right what God did in asking His Son to die that kind of death, associating with that kind of trauma, associating with that kind of despise, that's what we need. That's what we personally need, brethren and sisters. And it is only upon the basis of our accepting that in implicit faith that we can have, like David did, remission and forgiveness.

And what did forgiveness mean? Wherever we find that, brethren and sisters, it means 'to send away', to send away like on the head of the goat on the day of Atonement. Aaron put his hands on the head of a goat, and he was, by a figure, transferring (and you'll notice it in Leviticus 16, that this is what it says), it says, 'he was putting on the head of the goat for all the iniquities and all the transgressions and all the sins of the people of Israel for a whole year'. And the goat went away into the wilderness, the sins were still there, they just went away. And that's what David was asking for in Psalm 51; it's what he was asking for in Psalm 32; and it's what he also realized in Psalm 103. This is forgiveness, brethren and sisters!

In Psalm 103, and the record says, verse 8, 'Yahweh is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins nor rewarded us according to our transgressions, for as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him'. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us; What has He done? He's taken our iniquities and our sins and our transgressions and He's put them over there. And He says, 'through your faith in the operations that I've performed in my Son, I am prepared to look at you as though you had never, ever sinned.'

And how high is faith? How wide is faith? How demanding is faith? It's demanding, brethren and sisters, and it's powerful, and if we have it we can appear this morning, we can appear this morning in Christ, just as Christ appeared to His Father every day. Totally sinless and having the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed unto us because

we believe. We aren't called upon to be sinless and perfectly righteous. We can't be! And God brought to bear a new formula. A formula that would righteously and that would justly deal with sin, but one which is attainable by us through faith. The righteous understand that 'the name of Yahweh is a strong tower, they run into it and they are saved'.