

# Kington Baptist Church

## MESSAGE BOARD – 82

The disciples weren't the quickest to catch on, and weren't always examples of great faith and trust. That's why we find, in the Gospels, that from time to time it was necessary for Jesus to give them a good telling off! – from time to time he rebuked the disciples. But what a beautiful thing to be rebuked by the Lord Jesus! I remember the hymn of F. W. Faber:

There's a wideness in God's mercy,  
Like the wideness of the sea;  
There's a kindness in His justice,  
Which is more than liberty.

There is no place where our sorrows  
Are more felt than up in Heaven;  
There is no place where our failings  
Have such kindly judgment given.

And as Charles Wesley, in that great hymn 'Love Divine', tells us: '*Jesus Thou art all compassion*'.

This is the Lord's character, his nature as the Good Shepherd. He 'laid down his life for the sheep'. He tells us that, 'Greater love has no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends'. And Jesus shows us love without equal; a kindness that knows no limit; a grace that is completely realistic about our weaknesses and failures, our sins and mistakes.

But because he loves us he'll not leave us to struggle with our weaknesses and failures without graciously, caringly, gently and lovingly correcting and rebuking us. We remember how tenderly and mercifully the Lord rebuked Peter after his atrocious denials. The Lord rebuked Peter to restore, rehabilitate and recommission him for new loving service. In the Lord's rebuke there was never a word of reprimand or accusation. Then there is also his patient and gracious rebuke of Thomas. Thomas, full of doubt and unbelief; insisting that he wouldn't believe the words of his fellow disciples, that the Lord had commissioned them to pass on, but would only trust this own investigation. When Jesus met Thomas he condescended to Thomas's demands! But then gently rebukes him: '*Reach here your hand, Thomas. Do not doubt but believe*'.

The Lord's rebukes are always gracious. Remember how we are told that the people marvelled at the words of grace that he spoke. That is how it always is with Jesus towards those who trust and follow him, however slow we are to follow, however shaky we are in our faith. Never be afraid to say to him, '*Lord I believe; help my unbelief*'.

His purpose is always and only to reassure, comfort, encourage and confirm our faith and hope. Our problem is just the same as the two on the road to Emmaus: we, like them, are *'slow of heart to believe the prophets'*. Slow to take to heart and build on the Word of God. We come to his Word with doubts, questions, prejudices and opinions. When we should come, as Mary in the Gospels, to sit at his feet and learn of him. Then, if our faith were but more simple, our lives would know more sunshine!

When we trust him, listen to him and take his word to heart, we find certainty, from certainty comes confidence, and we become persuaded that *'nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus'*. What more could we ask! This is *'strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow'*!

It is our Christian privilege to pray for each other and to ask others to pray for us. But never forget *'there is no heart like the heart of Jesus, filled with a tender love ...'*

He has a deep and long intention and purpose – to keep and save us! – not to lose us, that we are not condemned along with the world. When necessary the Lord's rebuke may be extreme. Paul tells the Corinthians that some of their people have been ill and even have died, the Lord needed to discipline these wayward believers. But this severe discipline was so that these individuals wouldn't 'be condemned along with the world'.

In the book of Revelation his discipline is more severe still – it was global and catastrophic. But even here his purpose is grace. His purpose is to jolt the world awake to its headlong drive to Hell. The tragedy, we're told, is that despite these tremendous shocks to the life of the world people repeatedly refuse to repent. Perhaps no age has experienced such shocks to the world's steady ways as our own – the list of catastrophes is unparalleled in intensity, persistence and spread. Will these tragedies move the world to repent? The book of Revelation warns that people remain stubborn and intransigent. But for those who do repent there is the promise of safety and glory. That's why the Lord's rebuke is always *beautiful* – he keeps us safe.

1. When this passing world is done,  
When has sunk the glaring sun,  
When we stand with Christ in glory,  
Looking at life's finished story,  
Then, Lord, shall I fully know-  
Not till then-how much I owe.

2. When I stand before the Throne,  
Dressed in beauty not my own,  
When I see Thee as Thou art,  
Love Thee with unsinning heart,  
Then Lord, shall I fully know-  
Not till then-how much I owe.

3. When the praise of Heav'n I hear,  
Loud as thunders in my ear,  
Loud as many waters' noise,  
Sweet as harp's melodious voice,  
Then, Lord, shall I fully know-  
Not till then-how much I owe.

4. Chosen not for good in me,  
Wakened up from wrath to flee,  
Hidden in the Saviour's side,  
By the Spirit sanctified,  
Teach me, Lord, on earth to show,  
By my love, how much I owe.