

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

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FELLOWSHIP

1 Corinthians 1: 1-3, 9

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PAG We have been enquiring in these readings about the importance of recognising Jesus as Lord. We have spoken about Him as Lord of all, Lord of glory, and Lord and Teacher; and in this reading it is my exercise that we inquire about His lordship in relation to the fellowship. I was very thankful for the hymn that we sang because I believe the Spirit would use such a hymn to set the tone for the enquiry. We may somewhat fear to take up scriptures about the fellowship lest we be seen as negative or critical, but the fellowship is precious to God, and we sang in our hymn:

Never shall His love, so faithful,
Of our needs forgetful be:
'Tis a source that never faileth,
Inexhaustible and free. (Hymn 111)

The Lord is ready and willing and able to help us in relation to the fellowship, as He is in relation to any other matter. And then we went on,

If He claims our hearts' affections
Unreserved as His own,
'Tis because of love unchanging,
That in Him was first made known.

The fellowship represents a claim on our affections. The Lord has made a claim on our affections, and He has a right to that claim because of who He is and because of what He has done. Having an understanding about what the fellowship is and what it means to Him, and the principles associated with it, is a recognition not only of His rights but a recognition of His love. I hope as we speak of these scriptures together, we can do so in the spirit that the Lord's affections are bound up with what we are discussing.

What comes out where we have read in 1 Corinthians, first of all is "all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours", so in every place it is the same Lord, "both theirs and ours", "all that in every place". These matters that we discuss apply equally in every place. And then it is the fellowship of God's Son, so it

involves God's affections, and then "Jesus Christ our Lord", involves the Lord's authority. When the epistle to the Corinthians was written, there would be one assembly in Corinth, and Paul is able to write to it, "the assembly of God which is in Corinth". It was there, and it was identifiable; and there was only one assembly in Corinth. In the present day there are many denominations of believers and no denomination that has at least one believer in it is apostate. We need to find our way through in accordance with the principles of the fellowship and that is what naming the name of the Lord means; can I attach the Lord's name to what is proceeding? I cannot attach it as an endorsement to do what I like; I can only attach it to what is true to Him. So if we name the name of the Lord, we are associating the Lord with what is proceeding. That is the way we find our way through in the great house. We are all in the great house but there is mixture there, how do we find our way through that mixture? By withdrawing from iniquity, that is to say standing apart from what is not pleasing to the Lord. The end in view is what I have read in Jude: "to him that is able to keep you without stumbling, and to set you with exultation blameless before his glory, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might, and authority, from before the whole age, and now, and to all the ages. Amen." The end in view is our preservation and God's glory. That is what I have in mind, and I trust we can be helped to enquire soberly in relation to these matters to the end that God might be glorified and that we might be helped.

NJH "We love because *he* has first loved us", (1 John 4: 19) refers to what God is, but it refers to Christ too, and Christ has actually formed the fellowship; His love has formed it and we have to be true to that.

PAG Christ is God of course, so love really began with God because it is His nature, and the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit would all be involved in that love; they would all be part of it because they are one in every matter. Say more about the Lord forming the fellowship; what would that mean to us?

NJH While it is important on the basis of obedience to take the matter up, it is our affection for Christ that brings us into it. The Father loves to see persons having affection for Christ and committing themselves to the fellowship they are called into.

PAG Fellowship involves what we share equally and in common. What we share in common and equally is love for the Lord Jesus; that is the starting point. The motivation developed by that in our souls and

our hearts is to be true to Him.

GBG Mephibosheth was loyal to David because of David's kindness and grace towards him, 2 Sam 19. He had no other life; that is what teaches loyalty: grace from the divine side.

PAG Even when someone said things about Mephibosheth that were not true, and robbed Mephibosheth of what belonged to him, Mephibosheth said, "Let him even take all, since my lord the king is come again in peace", v 20. The one thing that mattered to Mephibosheth was that David was in his true place. One thing that matters to every true believer is that the Lord is in His true place.

RDP I was thinking about your remarks and our view of the fellowship. From these scriptures it is what is inclusive. We perhaps default to what is excluded, and there is that necessarily, but the accent here in these scriptures is what is inclusive and bound together.

PAG That is very helpful, and that is why it says in verse 9 of 1 Corinthians 1, "by whom ye have been called into", not called to the fellowship, but "called into the fellowship". We are called to be part of something that the Lord Himself has set on.

WMP Would the inbreathing in John 20, and the expression of the Lord's confidence in His disciples at that point, have a bearing on it?

PAG Yes, it would! And what dignity was attached to that: "as the Father sent me forth, I also send you", v 21. They would have to go forth, they would have to be a testimony and they would have to face certain things. But it is striking, and it is in keeping with the spirit of the dispensation that He says, "whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (v 23); He puts remission first; He does not make it a punitive matter. If there is no basis for remission then the sin is retained, but our first thought would be to find a righteous basis to remit. We cannot do so if there is no basis, but we should always be looking for it.

GMcK If we are called into this fellowship will you help us about when it began?

PAG In principle it began when the Lord rose; it says in the forty days, "being assembled with them", Acts 1: 4. The thought of assembling was introduced in the forty days after His resurrection and it was consolidated by the coming of the Holy Spirit; that is to say there is one body and one Spirit. There needed to be one Spirit for there to be

one body, so that there was a uniting together. The nucleus of it was formed in His disciples. If you read from John 13 to John 17 in particular, you see how the Lord would speak to His assembly even though it was not yet there officially. What is formed is by assembling, that matter of drawing together with Christ as our object, and then by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit creating what is one.

GMcK It is important to see that those two aspects, Christ in glory and the Spirit here, are the keys to the beginning of this wonderful fellowship.

PAG They are, and John spoke in his epistle about the apostles' fellowship, what they enjoyed distinctively with the Lord (1 John 1: 1, 2), because they saw Him in person, but he says further in the first epistle of John, "that which we have seen and heard we report to you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is indeed with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ", v 3. But let us not forget the next thing he says, "And these things write we to you that your joy may be full", v 4. What we are brought into in the fellowship is in view of our joy being full, and divine Persons having a response.

PJW Is there a link between the true tabernacle and the fellowship?

PAG There is, but please expand on that for our help.

PJW I was thinking of what has just been said as to the Lord on high and the Holy Spirit here; it speaks of the "high priest who has sat down on the right hand of the throne of the greatness in the heavens; minister of the holy places and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord has pitched, and not man", Heb 8: 1-2. I wondered if you could tell us when it was pitched, whether it was at Pentecost or before?

PAG I think we should enquire together. I would want to re-emphasise what you have just pointed out from scripture - "which the Lord has pitched, and not man". The fellowship as we are speaking of it is not an arrangement made by brethren. The fellowship, the true tabernacle, was pitched by the Lord. My thought would be that He secured the nucleus of the assembly in His disciples and those who were with Him, the names that were gathered together at the beginning of Acts, and the tabernacle was pitched; but it also began to be in movement when the word of God grew and spread itself. I think when we talk about a tabernacle being pitched, that means it is established, it is set up. I think the material was secured in the Lord's work. Think of all that was brought to Moses in order for the furnishing of the

tabernacle system by the people of Israel, but then there came a point when Moses made it, and I think the Lord made it in the sending of the Holy Spirit, and He made it in the instruction that He gave particularly through the apostle Paul, which consolidated what Peter and John and others had. What would you say? We should enquire; we take this subject carefully.

PJW I agree with your impression that it was actually pitched by the coming of the Holy Spirit, and then your analogy to it being in movement is very helpful.

DCB Is the remark “God is faithful” the basis for it? It would link to what the Lord has pitched: it is His and is maintained by Him.

PAG Yes, and it is worth noting that the apostle Paul said that to the Corinthian brethren, who had not been entirely faithful in the way that they had proceeded, but “God is faithful”. I believe that the fellowship will be maintained until the Lord's coming. What I would be exercised about if the Lord leaves me here is to be in it. But “God is faithful”. Do you think that the fact that God is faithful should prompt a desire in me to be faithful?

DCB I am sure that is right. It would give exercise because we find in Timothy that matters have to be entrusted to faithful men (2 Tim 2: 2), and that is how matters are carried forward practically.

PAG That would be a challenge to me; have I been faithful? I cannot say I always have been, but the point is from this day onwards there is an opportunity to be so.

GBG It is a distinguished fellowship; there is no fellowship to be compared to this; therefore it is a privilege to have part in it.

PAG In a sense no greater privilege could be conferred upon us than to be part of this, and so it is “the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord”. God has called us into it: there could be no higher calling! It is saints by divine calling; what is in view is the enjoyment of our heavenly calling by entering into this.

QAP In chapter 10, which looks at the fellowship as well, it is interesting that Paul puts the cup first and speaks of it as a cup of blessing, v 16. I wondered if that would help us to see the fellowship in that way, that it is a cup of blessing.

PAG The reason I think the cup is put first is because God's rights come first. When it comes to our remembrance the loaf is first. That is

what you get in 1 Corinthians 11, which is the inside position, what we enjoy collectively although there is testimony associated with it: we are showing forth the Lord's death until He comes. It begins with the Lord's body and then goes on to His blood because the body was given before the blood was shed. But when it is a matter of the fellowship in 1 Corinthians 10 the cup is first because it involves God's rights. The rights of God were satisfied, His righteousness was met in the shedding of the blood of Christ and therefore in that setting God's rights are first. We do well to remember that, that what we are speaking about involves, and is governed by, the rights of God.

AMB So what do you see in these expressions “called into”, and “by whom”, that is by God “ye have been called into the fellowship”? References have been made to what is distinguished and dignified; this is an initiative that God has taken in calling certain “into the fellowship of his Son”. What would that involve?

PAG One thing that comes to mind is that if we are called into something, by necessity we are called out of something else. Our brother has emphasised the fact that what we are speaking about here is inclusive, but it is also exclusive. There are things that do not belong in the fellowship of God's Son. Believers belong in it, whether we are in the good of it or not, but we cannot bring things into it that are not of God. What would you say?

AMB The expression seems to emphasise the special nature of this; it is different from every other fellowship, every other grouping, as has been said, but God has taken the initiative in calling persons out. We are called out when we come to know the Lord Jesus as our Saviour and accept Him as our Lord, and then God puts the seal on such by giving the Holy Spirit. These are tremendously dignified and elevated blessings that God moves to confer upon those that come to His Son in faith and belief. And then God has in mind that such persons should be formed into a company that expresses Christ here.

PAG The teaching of 1 Corinthians having established this begins with the cross; that is what excludes anything that is unsuitable to this fellowship. And then it goes on to the Spirit; that is what strengthens us for the things that are suitable for this fellowship, the things prepared by God “for them that love him”, chap 2: 9. And then there is the temple, the place where it can be enjoyed. The Lord has set this on but it is something that is set on by design, and there is a way in, and there is a way to be maintained in it, and there is a way to enjoy it.

JTB How far does divine sovereignty enter into being “called into the fellowship”?

PAG My impression is that it is a matter of divine sovereignty; it is really nothing else, but please say what you have in mind.

JTB Reference has been made to the tabernacle, and the position of the tribes around the tabernacle was replicated in the position of the tribes on the breastplate. So there is the side of responsibility as the tribes assume their assigned place around the tabernacle, but also the place on the breastplate was one of sovereignty.

PAG The fact that the tribes were thus arranged on the breastplate would remind us how near this is to the Lord's own affections. These arrangements involve His own affections. It is striking in relation to the teaching of the tabernacle system that it says that the breastplate was not to be loosed from the ephod, Exod 28: 28. What does that mean? It means that the Lord's priestly service is continuously available for the maintenance of the fellowship and for the support of those who have part in His affections.

NCMcK You get three references in Corinthians; the fellowship of His Son, giving it dignity; then the fellowship of His death in chapter 10; and then the communion of the Holy Spirit at the end (2 Cor 13: 14), the privileged side; it is helpful to see how Paul opens this up to the Corinthians. Could you say something about that?

PAG The fellowship of His death is important, the recognition that His death applies to us and the fact that as sharing - speaking carefully, we did not share in the death of Christ - but sharing in its effects on us, its application to us that what is not suitable to this fellowship is immediately excluded; it all went in the death of Christ. But the fellowship or the communion of the Holy Spirit; communion involves interchange, that is another aspect of this fellowship, it involves interchange with the Holy Spirit. We can speak to Him; He is active in it.

RWMcC I was thinking to confirm what was said earlier that in Romans 8 it is “called according to purpose” (v 28); that would link with the thought of sovereignty, and then it goes on to develop how that is worked out.

PAG That is important too because in Romans we are taking up the fundamentals of the truth. The foundation of the truth is there, but already God is anticipating what He would have as a result of our taking up these fundamentals, He is anticipating that He would have a

company. In Romans 12 you begin to find your place in the body, you find that there is a system of things in which you can have a part and function and be useful, and then you get instruction as to how to conduct yourself in the present course of things. What you also get in Romans 15: 6 is, "that ye may with one accord, with one mouth, glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"; that is really a very exalted thought. We are being quickly brought into the height of God's thoughts.

NCMcK It is "with all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"; what was going on in Corinth was severely bad, and it was of interest to everyone in the whole fellowship.

PAG We all care for one another; so if a locality is going through difficulties, we would care about that: it would be a matter of prayer. We would have confidence in the Lord to place in that locality what is necessary to resolve anything that may arise in it, but we would all carry such in our prayers, "all that in every place". We are all part of the one body.

JAB This is going back a little to the matter of sovereignty. The fellowship is not a special stratum that is reserved for certain Christians! Just as God has not predestined anybody in this world to eternal loss, in the same way, it is God's mind that every believer should be in what we are speaking about now. And while we might say from one point of view we have questions about how that could happen, the point is that God has in mind that the blessings of fellowship are for every believer. Is that right?

PAG It is absolutely right! What has come into Christendom in terms of mixture is because of man's weakness, but that is not God's thought; and when the church is called to be with Christ in glory it will be one! There will not be denominations in the holy city. It will be one; one pearl. There is something valuable about keeping God's thoughts in our minds while seeking in faithfulness to walk in a way that is pleasing to the Lord in a scene where there has been departure.

TWL Does it help us to see how this starts out, that we are "sanctified in Christ Jesus"; that is Christ as He is before the face of God? We are sanctified in Him, not just by Him but in Him. If we hold the glory of what that is, then the fellowship will be maintained according to that glory, and we will be subject to that.

PAG It is a wonderful thing, that the Lord sets us apart in Himself: "in

Christ Jesus”, the Man whom God anointed, the Man who is at His right hand. We have spoken about the fact that this is a distinctive fellowship, believers have a distinctive place, they have a place in Christ Jesus. If we had some sense of what that means to God, I think it would energise us to maintain what is due to Him.

TWL I was thinking that because sometimes we think that we arrive at things by the regulation of ourselves, but rather we arrive at it by the regulation afforded by the glory of Jesus, what that is to us and what we are in Him. That regulates us according to fellowship.

PAG We are governed by what we know, and one of the things we know is that the place of the believer is “in Christ Jesus”. Am I governed by that?

AMB Would that be walking in the light, as John says in his first epistle, “if we walk in the light as *he* is in the light, we have fellowship with one another”, chap 1: 7. As to sanctification in Christ in glory, would the moral result of that be walking in the light, and we find others walking in the light, and we are privileged to have fellowship with them?

PAG If we are moving as directed by Christ in glory, then in His grace He will see to it that we come into contact with others who are doing so as well. One might wonder whether it will be a lonely path. I would say two things: firstly, you will always have the Lord and the Spirit, you will not ever be separated from them; nothing can “separate us from the love of God”, it says in Romans 8: 39. But the Lord will lead you, guide you, to those who “call upon the Lord out of a pure heart”. There is a drawing together as we are faithful to what the Lord has asked us to do.

RDP Do you think the fellowship is a provision of divine love? We have referred to various ones such as Mary of Magdala at the tomb, where she says, “they have taken away my Lord” (John 20: 11), and Mary of Bethany at the feet of Jesus. God has made a provision in divine love in the fellowship, do you think, for persons like this, in His love and in His care?

PAG The true tabernacle has been referred to; the tabernacle was a provision of God's love. Within the tabernacle there is the ark and on the ark was the mercy-seat. God says, “And there will I meet with thee, and will speak with thee” (Exod 25: 22); so it was a provision of His love. We have a provision of God's love in the fellowship and in a sense we can take up these words, “there will I meet with thee, and will speak with

thee". He will speak with us in grace and in love, and He will speak with us in mercy, but He will speak with us in Christ.

JL Do you think we should immensely appreciate the privilege of being called into such a supremely dignified fellowship? I sometimes wonder if we do not hold it sufficiently in the height of its dignity. It is the fellowship of "his Son Jesus Christ our Lord". These words and titles and glories seem to be extremely dignified as connected with the fellowship.

PAG There should be no more dignified person in the world than a believer. I do not mean in a sense of outward show, that is not what I have in mind, but a believer is a dignified person. When the question arose in the book of Judges the response was "each one resembled the sons of a king" (chap 8: 18); the answer was, "They were my brethren, the sons of my mother", v 19. There was a resemblance, you might say a family resemblance, in every one that Gideon spoke of. The Lord's stamp upon a believer develops that family resemblance and it is not mere physical resemblance; it is resemblance in the light of the dignity of sonship. He says to His Father, "the glory which thou hast given me I have given them", John 17: 22.

JL It is closely connected with a foundation and a seal and a practical course for its maintenance; it is so dignified it has to be kept so in our thoughts and activities as well.

PAG When the younger son he came back in Luke 15 his father asked that the best robe be brought out so that the son would be clothed in it, and he should have a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. That was all the dignity of the house. I have heard it said that nobody would see the younger son's rags any more. I do not think that they were covered by the robe; his rags would not be seen because they would be gone. Sonship does not cover up what you are, sonship *is* what you are, and it is important for us to understand that. It is not a constant suppression of what is old and gone. If the death of Christ truly applies to us then what is old *is* gone, and what replaces it is a dignity that comes from heaven itself.

GBG This is maybe a little aside, but Christian responsibility all flows from relationships. The responsibility does not exist if there is not the relationship. If I am not in that relationship of a son to a father, I am not responsible to act like one. You can see it perfectly in the Lord Jesus. He says, "I ought to be occupied in my Father's business" (Luke

2: 49); so the obligation was carried out in the enjoyment of relationship. I refer to that because while it is not exactly to do with fellowship but in relation to sonship it takes the duty out of things.

PAG What it does is it reminds us of the dignity of the revelation. God has revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He has revealed Himself in a Name that involves relationships. We baptise our children to the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and in the name of the Lord Jesus. That does not create the relationship between the babe and the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, but it commits them to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, and it commits them in faith in view of their entering into these relationships at the time when they become responsible and accept the Lord Jesus as Saviour. The way that God has revealed Himself gives us an indication of how our responsibilities are to be filled out.

BWL I was wondering about Peter and John in Acts 4 where the lame man had been healed and they are before the scribes and the Pharisees, and there is dignity attaching to them. Those present wondered, because Peter and John were uninstructed and unlettered men, and as they wondered at them “they recognised them that they were with Jesus”, v 13. The man was with them, and I wondered if that was an example of fellowship, and then when they were let go “they came to their own company”, v 23. Is that an expression of fellowship?

PAG It is; it is a great thing to be able to identify our own company, those with whom the Lord has set us. We spoke in an earlier reading about the value of being set in a certain place and recognising the Lord's ordering in that. It may be necessary at times for some brethren to move for various reasons, that too is all under the Lord's ordering, but recognising our own company is important. There is something wonderful about seeing the brethren in this setting; there is also something wonderful about being in your local setting and enjoying what is available there under the Lord's hand. Both settings work together.

BWL You go over certain things and the brethren are all together in it, and then confirmation comes in. These are real matters.

PAG It is striking that 'together' is a characteristic word of Ephesians. The truth is enjoyed together. We can enjoy it individually, of course, but it is best enjoyed together because we get the advantage of what is brought by all, and the Lord has opportunity to open things up

to us.

RDP You read the early chapters of Acts at the time of the coming of the Holy Spirit. They were moving instinctively and they gathered. The Lord had said to them that they were not to do certain things until the Spirit was come and it is after that, the Spirit at Pentecost, that they persevered in the fellowship. It is as though the Holy Spirit animated the whole thought of the fellowship, and the impulse and desires in relation to the fellowship all seemed to come to life as the Holy Spirit came.

PAG One of the things we know about the Holy Spirit is that the Spirit quickens, and quickening involves life in our affections; He brought their affections alive in relation to what the Lord had set on. But in bringing them into life He also brought them together; the unity of the Spirit existed from Pentecost onwards. We do not have to make the unity of the Spirit; it is all there; we need to keep it and that is a responsibility.

RHB How is the apostle able to salute them as the assembly of God and speak of the fellowship when we read of what was going on there? As we read through this epistle, we see there was immorality of a particularly serious character, there were divisions, and yet they are still addressed as the assembly of God.

PAG If and when any matter may arise, the first thing to do is to regard the saints as God regards them. If we put it the other way round, why would it have been necessary to resolve the moral issues that were extant in Corinth? If they had *not* been the assembly of God, they would have been no different from the rest of Corinth all around, in which these issues were of little moment, although Paul does say that what was proceeding really exceeded what was going on around; it was excessive. But the point was that it was the assembly of God which was in Corinth, they were called saints and for that reason it was essential that anything that was intrusive should be dealt with, in order to preserve what is for God, but also in order to preserve them. Even the man who had committed the wicked act was to be recovered; he was to be restored and not to “be swallowed up with excessive grief”, 2 Cor 2: 7. There is power and authority in the fellowship to deal with any matter that may arise and to do so in view of recovery.

CAS I was wondering if you thought that Paul got an impression as to the fellowship when he was converted. It says, “Ananias went and

entered into the house; and laying his hands upon him he said, Saul, brother” (Acts 9: 17); it was a special welcome, was it not?

PAG Yes, he laid his hands on him, he identified himself with him and that is something that is very dignified about the fellowship: we are identifying ourselves with one another. That means that what I do affects everyone; I am not a stand-alone person in the fellowship. If we speak about what we share in common and equally, that means that any action I take whether it is known or not affects the whole. That would mean, if we are conscious of the Lord's love, we would be acting in view of building up in view of edification, in view of supporting what is for the Lord and for His saints. But if I do something that is not in line with that then I am affecting the saints by doing that.

EJM There is the matter of the golden calf in Exodus 33; the result was that “Jehovah spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend”, and “Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, departed not from within the tent”, v 11. Moses acted in pitching the tent outside the tent, far from it (v 7), and everyone who sought Jehovah found there was a place to escape to, was there not?

PAG That is helpful. It might help us in our consideration of where we read in 2 Timothy, that if all that we have said so far is true and right, and I trust and believe it is, why then do we need 2 Timothy? Why do we need this injunction about a great house, and why do we need this injunction about “separating himself from them”; that is the vessels to dishonour, and “calling on the Lord out of a pure heart”; why do we need these injunctions?

NJH My mind was going to having the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2: 16), which would be a mark of the fellowship, and with that thinking faculty we should discern by the Spirit if things are inconsistent with it.

PAG We certainly should, and I think we have general help to do so. But we need these injunctions because the conditions in Christendom have become mixed. I am not about to embark on any criticism of other believers. That is not my intent, and I am not sure that it helps, but we have to recognise that there are things that we have been delivered from. For example, we have been delivered from the thought that one person would give a lead in every occasion, that you would have a minister or a pastor or a priest. That means if we have been delivered from that we need to remain separate from it and that is what this scripture provides a basis for.

DAB Can you explain these vessels? I am particularly thinking of verse 20, “gold and silver, but also wooden and earthen; and some to honour and some to dishonour”.

PAG I think the mind of Christ, which our brother has referred to, would discern what is there whether it is gold or silver or wooden or earthen. I think what we are called on to separate from is those that are to dishonour. We do not separate from persons because they are not very intelligent or because they are not as dignified as they might be; we separate from what is dishonouring to the Lord; that is how I would understand it.

JL It is not the house of God in that verse, it is “a great house”, and there are certain vessels that do not properly belong to the house of God.

PAG I think it would be good for us to understand the distinction between the house, that is to say the house of God, and the great house. What is the distinction?

JL Well, the house of God as such is what is of God and pleasing to God and wherein His presence is to be known and enjoyed, but a great house is what it has degenerated into publicly in which there are things which are unacceptable; hence the action to be taken is set out in this section.

PAG So if you read Luke 14 and Luke 15, they actually stand together. They relate to the house of God, and the house of God is the place from which the gospel goes out with a view to securing material for the assembly and with a view particularly in chapter 15 of recovering material for the assembly. In chapter 14 it is to be secured; in chapter 15 it is to be recovered. So that is the house of God, and Peter speaks of it as a spiritual house (1 Pet 2: 5); it is spoken of in Ephesians 2 as “a habitation of God in the Spirit”, v 22. The great house is the public side which includes things that have no place in the house of God.

PJW This is an enquiry; can a gold vessel be a vessel to dishonour?

PAG It is possible.

NJH My value might change by my actions and become dishonourable, and therefore we have got to be preserved from thinking that we are the gold and silver, and everyone else is to dishonour; which is a view that marked us years ago. We have got to be sure in the public setting that we are seeking after what is

honourable to the Lord.

PAG I would count myself no more than an earthen vessel, but I would still trust I was a vessel to honour. We have seen in the history of the testimony brethren who have helped and been helped who have subsequently gone astray. That does not mean that the value of what they did is denied or set aside, but still if they now go on with things that I cannot go on with, then I have to separate from them. There are believers whom I would readily count as more righteous, more pious, more dignified, and better taught than I am, but I cannot go on with them in fellowship.

RDP The reference to honour is honour to God; it is not exactly honour to me or to you: it is vessels to honour. I remember someone saying once that later on it speaks about “those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart”, and it was said that that is a heart that would not knowingly do anything that was dishonourable to God.

PAG I think what you say is helpful. If we are thinking about honour, it is honour to God.

GBG Is it a figure here of the normal furnishings of a house. Mr James Taylor said (vol 10 p258) that we have to be careful not to say that every Christian in other companies is a vessel to dishonour; that would link with what our brother was saying. Our exercise is to keep a place right for the Lord and it involves actually withdrawing from persons.

PAG No, otherwise we go back to claiming as a company that 'we are the church'. We would be saying that only the members of that company are the vessels to honour, and we cannot possibly say that because we cannot possibly know what God is doing universally; we do not have the capacity. What we are not doing is creating some kind of exclusive fellowship because the fellowship is for everyone; but this is about how we find our way through, and generally if we have to separate from something we are separating from what is not honouring to God. There may be vessels to honour in the one of the churches, but we must separate from what they go on with, and therefore we cannot have fellowship with them. We must separate from the wrong teaching that is held. It is essential to do so and to be kept separate from it.

QAP The Lord Jesus says as to Sardis, “thou hast a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, because they are worthy”(Rev 3: 4); that is an infinitely

righteous and fair assessment.

PAG Well, the Lord's assessment is always righteous and fair, and it would behove us not to defile our garments by our associations, whether seen or unseen.

RHB Our brother referred to a pure heart; those words are added. In Corinthians it is, "all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"; there is no reference to a pure heart there but in Timothy it is, "with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart". I was wondering why that was added and if a person were seeking a right path for their feet how would they discern a pure heart to pursue these things with them.

PAG A pure heart would be untarnished affection for Christ and what we sang:

If he claims our hearts' affections
Unreserved as His own (Hymn 111).

His affections were without reserve. The bondman said distinctly in Exodus 21, "I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go free", v 5. His affections were unreserved. A pure heart has unreserved affection for Christ.

RHB It would help us in this matter not to be over-occupied with what others are doing or what they are going on with, but to be exercised for oneself to have a pure heart and to promote that feature among one's brethren.

PAG I remember a brother speaking about flooding the local meeting with goodness; pour in Christ! If we bring the Lord before our brethren, we are helping to create the conditions in which purity of heart is secured. He is the answer.

TWL Is that the difference between naming the name of the Lord and calling upon the Lord? Naming the name of the Lord is testimonial, but calling upon the Lord involves fellowship as it is in its affections for that Man. The background to calling upon the name of the Lord would be communion; it would be the freedom and liberty in love of speaking to the Lord and the Lord to you.

PAG Yes, "with those that call upon the Lord"; so not only are they unreserved in their affection for Him but He is their only source; they call upon the Lord. We can be united in having the Lord as our only source.

JB Calling is in view of pursuing: it is wonderfully positive. The exercises as to withdrawing are sometimes very sad and negative but what is in view is pursuing together.

PAG And let us not overlook the sadness and the exercise that may be involved. The loss of brethren who are valuable is serious, and we should be exercised to do what we can, under the Lord's hand and in righteousness, to recover what is lost, but what you say about pursuing is important: we need to go on. If we allow ourselves to be continually occupied with what is not right, or with what has happened, we are not going on. Paul speaks of "forgetting the things behind ... I pursue", Phil 3: 13. What was he pursuing? - "the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus", v 14. He had been taken possession of by Christ.

AJM The first side of the seal says, "The Lord knows those that are his". Paul is very skilful in presenting that first; that covers us all, but then there is our responsibility as to withdrawing. But he does not labour the point; he moves quickly on to this line of pursuing. Do you think there is a danger that we might labour this and be occupied with it, whereas it is a matter that we quickly deal with iniquity to clear the ground to pursue?

PAG I am very thankful for that, "The Lord knows those that are his"; we can be restful in relation to that because He does know, and He will not forget.

DCB I wondered if you could say something about "serviceable to the Master" especially in the light of what you are bringing before us as to the Lord.

PAG Do you think that would really be our desire to be available for Him? What we are speaking about here is not simply something technical, but it is in view of having felt the effect of His affections on us so that we should be available to Him in the scene of His absence, and serviceable to the Master. We have been speaking of Jesus as Lord. I suppose the Master would be somewhat equivalent to that, do you think?

DCB The footnote (footnote e, '*Despotes*') would really suggest there is something intensified, as far as that right that the Master has over us, and we would have to move forward in the light of that, He has such a strong claim upon us.

PAG Therefore we are subject to Him in all that we do. The Master would involve that direction is given but a result is in view.

JW Do you think there is a great preservative to us if we are content to go on with “those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart”, and we are not looking elsewhere? Mephibosheth has been referred to; he was not looking for anything. And the woman in 2 Kings 4, who had served the prophet, when he says, “what is to be done for thee?”, answers, “I dwell among mine own people”, v 13.

PAG My first responsibility is to my local brethren, and to go on with them and to be satisfied with that; there are all the brethren, and we are very thankful for that. In the garden when the enemy spoke to Eve, he occupied her with the one thing she could not have, and if we are constantly occupied with something in the distance, something we cannot have, that leads us astray. There is what we can have, which is far, far more extensive than some small thing that we cannot have. I think being “serviceable to the Master” means recognising the sovereignty and the place where we have been set; it involves much more than this of course, being faithful to our local brethren first of all, and then to the saints generally, and as you say being satisfied. Paul had learned in whatever circumstances he was in to be content, Phil 4: 11. I am not saying that is not testing but that is the guide for us.

GMC Would being “serviceable to the Master” involve worship as well?

PAG I am sure it would. That thought, and the thought of pursuing, might take us on to Jude because what is in view here is “glory, majesty, might, and authority, from before the whole age, and now, and to all the ages”; there is glory to God in view. We might ask how we can pursue, since conditions are difficult; “to him that is able to keep you without stumbling, and to set you with exultation blameless before his glory”, we can pursue because God is for us.

TJH There is a scripture in Isaiah that speaks of “a nail in a sure place” (chap 22: 23); this may be a reference to the present position of the Lord Jesus in glory. There are vessels to hang upon that “nail in a sure place”, and I wonder if that would be an idea of vessels to honour, that I am hanging upon that nail that is in a sure place.

PAG It is good to have stability in Christ, to have an anchor for the soul. The anchor keeps us steady even when the storm comes: an anchor for the soul. There is no surer place than Christ in glory. He has “set himself down on the right hand of the greatness on high” (Heb 1: 3), and it speaks of Him as being “sat down in perpetuity” (Heb 10: 12); it is

a sure place, it is a place that will never fail.

TRC We have spoken of the fellowship in relation to our responsibility to it but the fellowship is an immense blessing and a privilege and a favour to be in the enjoyment of.

PAG I am glad you say that; that is why I thought to bring in this scripture in Jude. You might ask what connection it has with the fellowship. Perhaps we should have read what it says earlier, “But ye, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God”, v 20. Is that how we regard the fellowship, keeping ourselves in the love of God? And then do we regard it as a basis on which the service of God can proceed, “glory, majesty, might, and authority”; is that how we view it? That elevates it in our affections, a place that Christ has established in order that His heart might be satisfied.

JL Jude was addressing particular persons here. “But to him that is able to keep you”; who were they? The link takes us back to fellowship; it goes back to verse 1; he is addressing those “called ones beloved in God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ”. That establishes the link back to your thought of fellowship; it is persons who have been called by God and are valued like vessels to honour.

PAG What an encouragement that is: “called ones beloved in God the Father”.

JL No wonder God is able to keep them; gold is always gold. The word of God is true to itself, is it not?

PAG It is, and that is something to bear in mind if someone has got out of the way a little, gold is always gold; God is not forsaking His work in a person.

JL Nor are we called upon to judge hearts. We may have to judge conduct but if there is gold the work of God is there, and God is able to keep and preserve it for His own glory.

PAG We spoke about the work of God being cumulative, and it is something to bear in mind that nothing of what He has secured is going to be lost. We may have to judge conduct, but God will carry through every iota that is of value to Him and the Lord will bring it out in display in a day to come.

GBG A rusty nail will always respond to a magnet! Christ is the magnet; whatever covers up the nail, it will respond to the magnet.

PAG That is good! Maybe there is somebody here that has got a bit rusty, but the Saviour is just the same. He is the same today, as the day He saved you.

AJM The work of God glorifies God. It says, “and to set you with exultation blameless before his glory”. It is a matter of divine triumph that the Lord is going to set us blameless before God for God's own pleasure and praise.

PAG And He does that in Christ “that we should be holy and blameless before him in love”, Eph 1: 4. We have redemption, the forgiveness of offences, what Christ has done; so God will have us as He wishes to have us; that is what is going to be accomplished.

RWMcC I was just thinking the result of this is a doxology, “But to him”!

PAG That really sums up my exercise. There are things to be carried, there are things to be gone on with, and there are things that cause sorrow, “But to him”! God will have His end, Christ will have His glory, the Spirit will pervade all and we can touch it now; it is available, and I trust we may do so.

22nd October 2022

At 3-day meetings in Glasgow

List of initials

A M Brown, Linlithgow; D A Brown, Bo'ness; D C Brown, Edinburgh;
J A Brown, Linlithgow; J T Brown, Edinburgh; R H Brown, Maidstone;
T R Campbell, Glasgow;
G M Chellberg, Wheaton; G B Grant, Dundee; P A Gray, Linlithgow;
T J Harvey, East Finchley; N J Henry, Glasgow; J B Ikin, Manchester;
J Laurie, Brechin; T W Lock, Edinburgh; B W Lovie, Aberdeen;
A J Mair, Cullen; E J Mair, Buckie; R W McClean, Grimsby;
G McKay, Manchester; N C McKay, Glasgow; W M Patterson,
Glasgow; R D Plant, Birmingham; Q A Poore, Swanage; C A Seeley,
Glasgow; P J Walkinshaw, Strood; J Webster, Fraserburgh

ADJUSTMENT

G John Richards

2 Corinthians 5: 1-10

Revelation 3: 18-19 (to 'love')

1 Corinthians 13: 12-13

When, from time to time, I have occasion to meet brethren I do not often see, I am accustomed to a friendly greeting and to being asked, 'How are you?' and, 'How are you getting on?'. I generally give an answer along these lines: '*My great desire is to be found agreeable to the Lord*'. I am sure you would all share with me, that to be agreeable to the Lord has, on our part, to be a desire above all others.

I think it would be fair to say (and I have gained this, in part, from others) that whenever the Lord Jesus is presented as having come into a situation - as He entered from time to time into someone's house - He is seen to adjust things. Sitting here before the meeting, my mind went to the assemblies whom the Lord addresses, and in particular, those two assemblies where there is no rebuke: Smyrna and Philadelphia. Smyrna is that suffering, persecuted, representation of the church which still exists today. Though I might not have much (if any) part in it, it exists today. The Lord Jesus has no rebuke for that assembly; neither does He have any rebuke to the saints in Philadelphia; and I thought I had stumbled on one or more exception to that rule - that the Lord Jesus always adjusts what He has to do with. But I now realise He does adjust in those assemblies too. Certainly in Smyrna He adjusts the saints. He says to them, "Fear nothing of what thou art about to suffer", Rev 2: 10. What a welcome adjustment that must have been! You see adjustment is not necessarily a rebuke. I think of adjustment as something refined: as a clockmaker might adjust a clock, so that it chimes on the hour. It is a gentle thing. I am sure the brethren would share with me in the awareness of the need for adjustment.

Where we read as to Laodicea, He says, "I rebuke and discipline as many as I love". Who of us here does not know something of the Lord's discipline? I know something of His rebuke. And He says, "I rebuke and discipline as many as I love".

The apostle Paul is sharing with the Corinthians one of his great personal burdens and that is that he might be agreeable to the Lord. This section which leads into where we began, is very much the here and now. We have been occupied earlier today with the coming of the

Lord and the two aspects of it: the blessed prospect of being translated and being with Him, and then the prospect of Him coming again, everything being regulated by Him universally. But this passage is the 'here and now'. Conditions of weakness demonstrate our being in this earthly tabernacle house - and the brethren all know what this means; it is a view of the weakness of our condition here. Then he speaks about it being destroyed. This has recently become so for a number of brethren that we knew and loved; yet they, with us, have in prospect a "house which is from heaven"; they are awaiting it. While they wait, they are "present with the Lord". The apostle says, "we are absent from the Lord". We who remain are literally absent from the Lord; He is absent from this scene, and we are absent from Him.

But this is really what I wanted to share with my brethren: "Wherefore also we are zealous, whether present or absent, to be agreeable to him". I am persuaded there echoes in the hearts of all my brethren here today, the desire to be, in everything, agreeable to Him. Now I wanted to add a word, if I may, as to a very precious truth that we have not touched on in speaking in our readings of the Lamb's wife making herself ready, but which is included in our consideration; and that is what is described as "the judgment-seat of the Christ". There are other scriptures, such as Romans 14: 10 and 1 John 4: 17, which speak of a time of judgment which believers will have part in. But this is another one of them and I commend it to us: what a comforting scripture this is.

Allow me to speak freely of the 'loose ends' which exist in our experience: in our own lives, with our brethren, with our families. How many exist! There are those things we do not understand, things which we cannot control, things which are distressing. This scripture, beloved, is an assurance that none of that will be a hindrance when we are finally with the Lord. In Revelation 21, it says God "shall wipe away every tear from their eyes", v 4. Nothing will be carried over. From this scripture, it is evident that, after we have departed this life by death or the Lord having come for us, each one of us will have this experience. "For we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of the Christ, that each may receive the things done in the body". This thought of being 'manifested' means that there is nothing hidden, everything is open. I was very touched by a remark of Mr Stoney that 'every part of our history from babyhood' will be reviewed before the Lord. We will receive His assessment of it, and because we will be in glorified bodies, we will fully agree with that assessment, JBS vol 1 p194. We read, "that

each may receive the things done in the body, according to those he has done, whether it be good or evil". This is solemn. I am not sure whether it is the same experience to which the apostle refers when he writes to the Corinthians (though it may well be), "If the work of any one shall be consumed, he shall suffer loss, but *he* shall be saved, but so as through the fire", 1 Cor 3:12-15. It is a question of that in which we have laboured, what we have built up; is it going to stand in the presence of God? If it is not, it will be destroyed, but each of us shall be saved, "but so as through the fire". He goes on to say, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men". (Perhaps that is a reference to the "great white throne" where the lost will be arraigned.) This is a word for me, "we persuade men". But what I wanted primarily to bring out from this scripture is the blessed consideration of divine Persons that there should be this provision so that everything might finally be according to the divine mind in our own awareness.

The exercise I have continues on into Revelation, where the counsel of the Lord Jesus is that we should buy certain things. I wanted to emphasise the availability of the eye-salve, "that thou mayest see". I think as we go on in the Lord's ways with us, He adjusts our 'vision'; that is an aspect of our thinking; He certainly adjusts my thinking, and rightly so. I would like to commend this thought of the eye-salve that we might already now, see all things as He sees them. It may well involve adjustment: surely it would! This is what He has available to us, so that we might see everything as He sees it and thereby be agreeable to Him.

I refer now to the other scripture in Corinthians because of this; it might be said that I may think that my relations with the Lord are so open (and I know something of this eye-salve), so I might not need the experience of the judgement seat of Christ. I once heard it suggested that it might be like going through Customs and having nothing to declare. I do not agree with that. The apostle Paul himself said, "I am conscious of nothing in myself; but I am not justified by this: but he that examines me is the Lord", 1 Cor 4: 4. But he who surely lived characteristically in such clarity in his relations with the Lord, and certainly knew what it was to judge himself, *he* himself says, "we see now through a dim window obscurely, but then face to face". I commend to the brethren from this that, no matter how clear our links are with the Lord, we shall need this experience. Why? Because our being now in flesh and blood is effectively a filter that obscures our vision. See how difficult the translation is: in the King James Version it

says, “through a glass darkly”; Mr Darby says, “through a dim window obscurely”, and we still have only a vague idea of what it means. It is a filter which means that, on account of how we are in our condition, we shall still need this profound experience of being placed before the judgment-seat of Christ, and we shall fully be in accordance with His mind. I greatly desire that for myself and for my brethren; and commend to them these scriptures for comfort: that nothing loose is going to be carried over, nothing dark, obscure, regrettable or questionable. Everything is going to be in the light. And the marvellous thing is that divine grace will hold us and we shall see like we have never seen before. I do not think I can add anything to that.

May the Lord encourage us and bless the word.

Grimsby

10th June 2023

PEACE

Mark R Buchan

Luke 2: 29, 30

Genesis 15: 6

I have been at the preaching with our sister on many occasions, and what struck me each time was that she had complete peace hearing the word of God, because it was not a mystery to her. The preacher was not saying anything that she was unaware of. She was at peace with what God had to say about His salvation in Christ. Why? It was because she had taken it on for herself. Such exhibit a peaceful spirit; a calm spirit. I always appreciate that: it is good to have a peaceful spirit.

An occasion like this is marked by sorrow. We are sorrowful that death has come in but peace comes in as we rely on the Lord in an occasion like this: “having cast all your care upon him, for he cares about you”, 1 Pet 5: 7. Think of that! It brings peace into your soul, as you think of a scripture like that. I think that is something our sister had laid hold of: “for he cares about you”; peace is not something you can just go to the shop and pick up and put in your basket because you feel you need a little more of it. Could we not all do with a little more peace in our souls? I think peace really is the product of belief and of behaviour. And so I wish to take from these two sentences, and the four or five thoughts they have as to that.

This man Simeon says, “Lord, now thou lettest thy bondman go”. If you are going to have peace with God it is only going to be on the line that you recognise you are the bondman and He is the Master. You are never going to find peace with God if you seek equality with God. That is what man did in the garden; he sought equality with God, sought to make his own decision. Our sister was one who knew God as Master, the One who had control over all. “Lord, now thou lettest thy bondman go”. What a thing it is to really set yourself in right relationships with God, not to take a greater place than you have been given, but to recognise the One who is over all, that He is the Master.

Simeon says, “for mine eyes have seen thy salvation”. What peace a soul can find in seeing God's answer in salvation! You will not find peace anywhere else. You will never be at peace unless you see God's answer in salvation. Well, this man here says, “for mine eyes have seen thy salvation”. What a thing Simeon had seen! He had seen

the Lord there as a Babe but he recognises that this was God's salvation before him. It was not man's thoughts as to how he might save himself or anything like that, it is "thy salvation". That is God's answer to the matter before Him. Our sister was among those who had known for herself what God's answers in salvation were. They know the Person of the Lord, and what peace that brings into your spirit, when you come to know the Lord for yourself. This man had Him before him. He recognised that God was the One who was over all, recognised He was One who had the answer in salvation.

I go on to Abraham, it says here, "he believed Jehovah", and, dear friend, if you are ever going to find peace in your soul, it is going to be on the line of believing God. We may strive to find peace for ourselves. People strive their whole lives to find peace. Here it is being presented on the line of belief. This is really, if not *the* brightest, certainly *a* bright moment on Abraham's path. I would say it is the brightest really. There is nothing else here but just the purity of believing God: "he believed Jehovah". I think our sister was another who believed God. God has an answer to your worries; God has an answer to the cares that are upon your heart. The answer is to believe God, to believe that He has the answer to these things, "having cast all your care upon him", 1 Pet 5: 7. Believe that God has an answer for you! Abraham was being asked to believe something impossible naturally. In fact, what God had to say to him here might have seemed rather hurtful in a way because Abraham knew that he was physically unable to have children, and yet God was telling him that he was going to have a son. Abraham had wanted that for a long time. What a difficult thing it must have been for Abraham to believe at this moment and how easy it would have been to say, 'That is impossible', but it says, "he believed Jehovah". The simplicity of faith brings peace in the soul, the simplicity of believing God, taking God at His word.

And then it says, "and he reckoned it to him as righteousness". Dear friend, it is a wonderful thing to come to a measure of peace that is yours from salvation in belief in Christ that you are out from under the penalty that lies upon you, but go further: have a right relationship with God. It was counted here to Abraham as righteousness. We may think that righteousness is right behaviour, but it is not only that; it is right relationships with God. That is what righteousness is, and it was counted here, Abraham's belief in God was counted to him as righteousness. We have to be on that line if we really want to be at peace with God, to be in right relationships with God.

It was always my impression in preaching to our sister that she knew exactly what I was talking about. I was not saying something new, she understood what was being said from a relationship with that One; she knew who her Saviour was, and she knew who He had come out from; she knew what God had in mind for her. Right relations were there. And, dear friend, might I commend peace to you. Our sister now is at peace but, I think she was at peace already in her life here, in her walk here, because she was in a right relationship with God; she believed God and recognised that He was the One who was over all; she had received His answer in her soul in salvation. What a thought that God has secured for you peace for your soul, not just that you can say, 'Well, I will be at peace one day', but that you might be at peace now. Our sister exemplified that locally I think; she was at peace. The Lord has now taken her, but she was with the Lord in her pathway, and showed that amongst us. What a privilege to be in the company of one who is in right relations with God!

May we all take that to ourselves and be encouraged for His Name's sake!

Peterhead

23rd August 2023

“A MEEK AND QUIET SPIRIT”

John Laurie

1 Peter 3: 1-4

I judge it to be something of very great value to be able to find an incorruptible ornament. That stands as a description of “a meek and quiet spirit”. Our brother touched on that a little in what was said earlier with reference to our sister, something so precious. Even silver and gold are said in the Scriptures to be corruptible, “corruptible things, as silver or gold”, 1 Pet 1: 18. Think of finding something more precious than silver and gold, “a meek and quiet spirit ... in the sight of God”. How valuable! It is not only a reference to what may characterise sisters, although in a particular way it may be found in sisters and surely was in our sister, now with the Lord. It characterised her throughout the whole of her life, so far as I am aware. Think of it being observed by God: “which in the sight of God is of great price”, so valuable in the sight of God.

Men have their own estimation and valuation of things here and sadly, for the most part, are occupied with the corruptible and passing things, but in the sight of God how precious that there should be something marked by incorruptibility. How can that be? We are here in the presence of death and the body of our sister is shortly to be buried. How then can we associate the thought of what is incorruptible with one who is shortly to be buried? I think the answer is in the extreme value of the work of God in her soul and the features of that shining out. How beautiful the assembly will be in all her adornment and preciousness for the heart of the Lord Jesus and for the glory of God too! It is connected with what is incorruptible.

There will be nothing corruptible characterising the assembly that could ever be observed in the world to come nor in the eternal day. That wonderful vessel is said to be seen “coming down out of the heaven from God, having the glory of God”, Rev 21: 10. You cannot identify what is corruptible with the display of God's glory. I think what marked our sister - and one would seek that it might mark us all - was such a spirit in contrast to all the arrogance, pride and variety of evil features that so mark this world with its fashions and the self-will of man against God. But in the midst of it all, what a testimony that there should be something of incorruptible value found in the sight of God, and to be taken account of by us all. I would say it was displayed in a very

precious and remarkable way in the life of our sister! There has been a testimony rendered of something that was of great price in God's sight. Let us seek to follow it up in our own lives! I believe it greatly helps in the preservation of conditions among ourselves as well. We can easily see that an argumentative spirit or a proud spirit soon creates disruption in a local assembly, but "a meek and quiet spirit", and yet a faithful spirit, is of great price in God's sight!

I leave that word among us. It has touched my heart that it was something that marked our sister and my own desire would be that it should characterise myself. May it be found increasingly amongst us all as the world runs its course but while God is proceeding with His own work of such precious value in the hearts of His people here. That is something which will go through into eternity. What is corruptible will not, but in the new creation realm there will be what is incorruptible; and that is what marked the spirit of our sister and will shine then in its increased radiance although it was also found in testimony here. It is something of value for us to observe and to seek to emulate. May it be so for God's glory!

Peterhead

23rd August 2023

THREE SIDES IN THE HOUR OF DEATH

Bill W Lovie

1 Thessalonians 4: 14 (from “so also”)

John 11: 33-35

Song of Songs 6: 2

I would seek help, beloved, to say a little as to the three sides in the hour of death: our sister's part, the part the family and the brethren, and the Lord's part. The Lord, of course, is involved in all three. Our sister's part is to be “asleep through Jesus”. She has “fallen asleep through Jesus”. It is a wonderful care and consideration of the Lord Jesus for His own, one that has loved Him, one that He has loved. It is His own act. He comes Himself to put to sleep a lover of Himself. How wonderful that is! So our sister's part, as we know from another scripture, is “very much better”, Phil 1: 23. The exercises and concerns of life are over:

“Asleep through Jesus” - blessed state! (Hymn 375)

What a blessed state it is! “Asleep through Jesus” involves perfect peace. That is tremendous encouragement for every one that is a lover of the Lord Jesus. Paul could say what was lying before him was being raised in a “body of glory”, Phil 3: 21. “The Lord Himself” comes. That shows that He has the authority over death; He has the authority in power; in that day our sister will shine. He will gather every lover of Himself to be forever with Him. Our sister awaits that; that is what lies before her; nothing else is lying before her except that. Responsibility is over, “asleep through Jesus”. How wonderful!

When we come to chapter 11 of John we have the family's part - it is a well-known section of scripture - it is Jesus Himself who loved them. He loved them individually. He loves every one who knows Him as Saviour. The Lord Jesus in the presence of death “was deeply moved in spirit”. The Lord felt it like no-one else could; the family feel it when those that we know and love die. The Lord says that of Lazarus: “Lazarus has died”. We feel that, the links that are broken. Our sister has been a sister, a wife, a mother and a grandmother. These links are broken, and the Lord felt that, felt it like no other. He was the sinless One, but He was going to deal with the whole matter of sin. Sin and death had intruded upon the natural family. He felt it like no other could in divine perfection. He “was deeply moved in spirit, and was troubled”. “Jesus wept”. Think of these feelings! The Lord is able to sympathise with those that are left. What a comfort that is too that the Lord Himself

wept with this family here. He was going to deal with the whole matter. There is that wonderful hymn we began with:

Thy death and resurrection, Lord,
(How faith rejoices in the word!) (Hymn 398)

What word is that? Resurrection! The Lord Jesus has gone into the grave, has broken its power. What a wonderful resurrection, but the Lord in this chapter says, "I am the resurrection and the life", v 25. It is in Him. We were reminded last week that burial is in view of resurrection. The Lord Jesus is out of death, and every one that believes on Him who dies is going to live. This occasion is not for our sister; it is for those that are left. The Lord would bring in His own word of comfort in this occasion. What a comfort we find as we have to do with the Lord Jesus!

We can apply the Song of Songs to the Lord's part. The Lord "is gone down into his garden". Think of the Lord in His movements; He has rights in His assembly. It is His garden. "My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices". There is that which is fragrant, that which is pleasing to His heart, that which He is working out throughout all the exercises of life, that which is for His own joy. He goes down "To feed" and "to gather lilies". The Lord has gathered our sister. Beloved, that is His own precious work; lilies speak of purity. We have had a touch as to that. Think of the purity of that which goes through, His own work, and it is a little picture of what He is going to have when He comes to take His assembly to be forever with Himself, what joy for His heart, but at the present time one by one the Lord is gathering, gathering His own, gathering His lilies. It is His own act. It is what Jesus does, gathers those to be with Himself, those that He has pleasure and delight in. He takes them one by one, soon to be seen in display in a day to come, but at the present time the Lord is taking one by one to be with Himself because they are His own.

May we be encouraged by these things for His Name's sake!

Peterhead

23rd August 2023

Words at the burial meeting for Mrs Muriel Gray