

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 208

July 2024

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THE LORD JESUS AS LIVING HEAD

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JSS We have been considering how the present activities of the Lord Jesus result in life for God, and I wondered if in this reading we might consider how the Lord Jesus as living Head acts in relation to His body that there may be life in the body. I read in Colossians; it begins negatively, but we can look at it in the positive aspect as to the need for “holding fast the head, from whom all the body, ministered to”. It seems to be an active thought, that there is a ministering to the body from the Head. We might consider how the Lord Jesus would do that.

In Acts we see an example, I think, of the Lord as Head in heaven and His body here. It has often been remarked that the Lord says in verse 4, “why dost thou persecute me?”. He did not say, ‘Why are you persecuting Christians?’ or ‘Why are you persecuting my people?’; it is “me”. It is presented as if it is Himself, and that is because it *was* Himself. Saul was persecuting those “who were of the way”. There must have been something that identified these persons as being “of the way”. There must have been something about them that Saul could have identified that showed they were “of the way”, to persecute them. The Lord in His wonderful power and grace comes in and changes this man, converts him. Saul becomes a believer; Saul becomes a member of Christ's body. Ananias was one of those members before him, and you see the wonderful grace in which Ananias acted through communication from the Lord. You might say that Ananias was “holding fast the head”. He was being obedient to what the Lord would have him to do even though he had reservations about it, understandably, but we see how it leads to Saul being received as a brother into this body and the positive result that comes from that: “straightway in the synagogues he preached Jesus that *he* is the Son of God”.

In Ephesians we see further thoughts as to how the Lord Jesus would be acting, the thought of “supply” and “self-building up” in chapter 4 and the thought of “nourishes and cherishes” in chapter 5. That was the main thought that I had in mind. The Lord Jesus, speaking reverently, would be actively nourishing and cherishing His assembly, which is seen in His body here on earth at the present time. I suppose we could look at the passage in Acts as an act of the Lord cherishing His

body. He was protective of it because it was so precious to Him.

Perhaps we could get help with these things together.

RHB What is involved in “holding fast the head”?

JSS Well, I would like your help. It does not mean that a member of Christ's body can ever become separated from the Head, does it? Once you are a member of Christ's body, and I suppose it might just be plain to say that, that every believer in the Lord Jesus who has the Holy Spirit is of His body, a member of His body, and can never cease to be a member of His body, but one explanation that appeals to me is that I may cease to *consider* Him as Head or be subject to Him as Head. I can start to think my own thoughts. I can start to allow my own will to be exercised and in that way I am “not holding fast the head”, because I am deciding to do something independently of the Head.

RHB It comes at the end of a list of things that they were going on with and it seems to be summed up by that, that they were “not holding fast the head”. It struck me that that is quite a challenging thing for us as we sit even in a meeting like this, whether we function in it as under His direction; giving out a hymn, praying, whatever takes place, has to take place under His direction as the Head. Is that how you understand it?

JSS That is very helpful; so we would be under His authority, subject to His direction, His influence, what He would cause to happen. As to these things that you mentioned beforehand, this list, the thought of humility comes in and on the face of it that might seem quite commendable, but it is “doing his own will in humility”, v 18. That is the problem, is it not? I think it has been likened to someone that might be in a nunnery or a monastery or something like that. You might say what they are doing is all very good and humble, but if it is *in their own will* it is “not holding fast the head”.

JL Is there not the thought as well that, if I am “not holding fast the head”, I not only deprive myself of the benefit of the flow from the living Head, but I may in turn partially deprive others because of the need for communication between all the members in the body? Other scriptures bear that out.

JSS That is helpful; so we have here “the joints and bands”. These are means of communication within the body. Would that be fair to say? If someone is drawing something from somewhere else other than the Head, that is harmful, is it not?

DCB Earlier in the chapter there is a reference, “and ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and authority” (v 10), but I wondered if the whole thought of “holding fast the head” is really in accepting “ye are complete in him”; so there is no other source of operation in the assembly.

JSS I think it is helpful to bring that out. There is no need to look anywhere else because there is full sufficiency in the Head. That is good. Why would we need to go elsewhere? We have everything we need in Him.

PAG You need both hands to hold fast. You cannot hold fast to two things at once.

JSS That is helpful. “No one can serve two masters”, Matt 6: 24.

PAG We may worry about the word 'exclusive', and it has been wrongly used, but the fact is membership of this body is exclusive; it excludes membership of anything else. As you say, you cannot “serve two masters”. You cannot be associated with Christ as Head and associated with something else as well. Why would you want to be? There is no better association than association with Christ. We are associated with Him as brethren but, as being linked with Him as Head, there is no better link to have than being linked to Christ as Head. There is no superior link, nor is there any superior authority over us.

JSS That is helpful and just a practical word. Many of the so-called bodies of men assume to confer a degree of respectability on their members. Some of them have been formed by royal charter. We are already a member of the greatest body that there is with Christ as Head. How could you be part of anything inferior? I would also like help as to “the increase of God”, what that means: “increases with the increase of God”.

RB-n Is the Spirit's service vital for what you are saying? I am thinking of 1 Corinthians 2. It is the Spirit that searches the deep things of God, v 10. That chapter finishes, “But we have the mind of Christ”, v 16.

JSS I think so. The Holy Spirit is absolutely essential. Speaking simply, we could not be connected to our Head in heaven other than by the Spirit; so this increase has to be “the increase of God” because only what is produced by the Spirit could cause the increase. Nothing of nature could add to this body. There could be no increase apart from the Spirit's work; it is essential.

DCB “The joints and bands” are like the skeleton and ligaments. There is what is joining together for mutual benefit. The scripture in Ephesians speaks of “every joint of supply” which is slightly different, but here it is the matter of everything held together, and, do we mutually help in “holding fast the head”?

JSS I think that is true. I am glad of what you say as to “the joints and bands”. We were speaking about evidences of life in one of the earlier readings, and I suppose movement would be an evidence of life. Normal, healthy movement in a body shows that it is living, and I think what you say as to helping one another is good. Perhaps you see someone who was once showing evidence of “holding fast the head” a little more than they currently are. Am I able through my relationship with the Head in any way to help them? It can only be if I am “holding fast” the Head that I will be able to help anybody. It is a test.

TJH Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all! (Hymn 272)

I wonder if that fits into what is in mind. We cannot just hang on with one hand.

JSS It is wholehearted committal, is it not? I think that is good. We are of His body; let us hold that as precious and let us hold fast the Head!

NCMcK I was thinking of one of the scriptures mentioned earlier, “ye are complete in him”. “For in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”, v 9. Does that bear on “increases with the increase of God”? Everything of the Godhead is available to the saints in Christ.

JSS That is very good. I would like if you would say some more as to “all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”. What do you understand by that? How does it apply to us?

NCMcK We often contrast it with what is said in the previous chapter, “for in him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell”, v 19. That was in His life here, but now as a Man what is of God is available to us in Christ. Everything for the believer is available to us in a Man because that is the way in which we can appropriate it and therefore we are behind in absolutely nothing because we have everything available to us in that Man. What a resource the believer has and, therefore we must be increased with that “with the increase of God”.

JSS I think that is very attractive. In having Christ we have

everything. It is all in a Person, is it not? If this relied on us learning theories or something like that, I would certainly fall short, but we know that in having Christ, we have everything, bodily there in Him. It is a complete thought, bodily in Him. I think that is good.

JTB The spouse in the Song of Songs “held him, and would not let him go”, chap 3: 4. Do you think it is love that underlay that? Is it love for the Head that draws us into contact with Him and really encourages us or motivates us not to let Him go?

JSS That is very attractive. The thought of love comes into Ephesians as well. She had found Him so precious. He nourishes and cherishes His body. I suppose in that way we would be encouraged to cherish the Head. He has become so precious to me that I do not want ever to let Him go. He has everything I need, everything for my blessing, everything that can cause an increase “with the increase of God”.

AMB I was wondering if you would link the thought of “holding fast the head” with abiding in Him? The Lord spoke to His own in chapter 15 of John and said, “Abide in me” (v 4), and the result is fruitfulness, is it not? Abiding follows the Lord's comment as to the branches and the vine. Life is communicated by which we can grow. Abiding in Him and “holding fast the head” would be very close thoughts, would they not?

JSS I think they are. I think that is very helpful. You get the thought of life and the evidence of life there too, do you not? Fruit is evidence of life. It is evidence that I am abiding in Christ, drawing from Him, the Source of supply. The fruit that is produced will take its character from Him if He is the Source. I think that is helpful.

HTF Under Joseph's administration “the land brought forth by handfuls”, Gen 41: 47. I wondered if that illustrated the result. “And Joseph laid up corn as sand of the sea exceeding much, until they left off numbering; for it was without number”, v 49. Do you think that illustrates this matter?

JSS That is very good. You get the thought of prosperity there, do you not, the abundance of supply? It is just reinforcing what the brethren are saying. There is no need to go anywhere else. Christ has everything in abundance.

GBG The body is the expression of Christ. The Lord Jesus is no longer here. It is the expression of Christ for God's pleasure. God had

one Man here for His pleasure, and now His body is here. That is quite a test, is it not? Am I as a member expressing Christ?

JSS Well, that is really the exercise, but what you say is very helpful. God's delight was in Christ when He was here, a real Man on earth, exhibiting every feature that pleased Him, but there are persons here now who, as we have been reminded earlier, have Christ in them, and if those features come to light, as being members of the body, God finds delight in that too.

GBG In both Colossians and Ephesians it says, "from whom". That is the way; the Spirit is involved in it to express features of Christ.

JSS There is no thought of any increase if there is any independence from the Head.

JL It is not only a fact that we must draw from the Head, but there is an added import in the word used, "ministered to". Does that not imply the Lord's delight to communicate things to His own? He has pleasure in causing that flow of life-giving supply to minister to the body. Can you say something about that?

JSS I am glad you draw attention to it because it seems like an active matter. If we can just speak carefully, it seems to me that the Head is initiating this. The Head is causing this ministering, and we have a responsibility to hold fast the Head, but His desire is to minister. He is actively engaged in ministering that we might benefit from it.

SCL Do you think one of the elements of headship is what our primary influence is? I was thinking in the world in which we live there are many things that would seek to have influence over us, how we would live our lives and the decisions we make, but if Christ is Head, He is the primary influence, do you think?

JSS I think that is absolutely right. In the physical body the head influences the members. The body only does what the head directs. I think that is very important. It shows the importance of "holding fast the head" because if I do not, I may find myself coming under another influence and, if it is not Christ, it will be wrong.

NJH What is meant by "the increase of God"?

JSS I would like to hear what you say. "The increase of God": it must be something that has its source in God. It must be of Him and is really coming from our Head in heaven, Christ. It must be something that is in

accord with what God is pleased with, but I would like help about it.

NJH My mind went to your reference in Ephesians to “the mystery of the glad tidings”, chap 6: 19. That is a great object of God from the glad tidings, to bring persons into the body.

JSS That is helpful as to “the increase of God”. The mystery as to Christ and the assembly is what Paul particularly brought out, was it not? Maybe that takes us on to Acts because I suppose this appears to be the first realisation by Saul that there is a Head in heaven and a body here. What a forceful way, you might say, for him to discover that. He had, of course, witnessed someone speaking to Christ in heaven. He had heard Stephen doing that, and now there is a Man speaking to *him* out of heaven. It is the same Man that Stephen had been speaking to. “Why dost thou persecute me?” It is very personal and feeling, and I just wondered if this was an act of the Lord cherishing His body.

DJW Does the Lord not as Head give the gifts to the assembly? Does He use the persons He has given the gifts to to arrive at the full-grown man? Is there some connection between that and “the increase of God”?

JSS I think that is helpful; there is no thought of increase that is haphazard or in any way disorderly. Any increase is “of God”. God is not a God of disorder. Everything must be according to Christ. He is God's Pattern, and any increase must be towards that.

JL The apostle Paul said in writing to the Corinthians, “I have planted; Apollos watered; but God has given the increase”, 1 Cor 3: 6.

JSS So it is “the increase of God”; only God can do that; only God can give it. We see persons from time to time in the Scriptures trying to add something or support something, even with apparently right intentions, adding something; but if it is human, it cannot cause increase in the body. Only what is of God can do that.

JTB Would there be a link with being “filled even to all the fulness of God”, Eph 3: 19? Would that involve the increase?

JSS Yes, I am sure it would. That is a very full thought, is it not? There is no thought of anything lacking with “the increase of God”. It is a full thought.

JTB It is set before us as a prospect, “that ye may be filled even to all the fulness of God”. That must involve increase.

JSS Well, I think increase would be going on at the present time with that as an end in view.

APG Paul often prays that the saints' love would increase, love for one another, "that your love may abound", Phil 1: 9. That would be "the increase of God", divine love, love for all the saints.

JSS I think that is right. Love builds up, does it not? It is said, "knowledge puffs up, but love edifies", 1 Cor 8: 1. We had about puffing up in the previous scripture, but you can see how that building up in love is a very positive matter and it is of God. God is love, so if the building up is in love, it is of Him.

RBr In chapter 1 of Colossians it speaks of walking "worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing by the true knowledge of God", v 10. Do you think that would be something of the "increase of God" proved in quite a simple way but quite a profound way?

JSS I think that is a very helpful reference, "growing by the true knowledge of God". Increase is not an increase in intellectual knowledge; it is not even an increase in numbers, I do not think. It might not be a rapid increase, but it is a steady, real increase that is pleasing to God. If it has its source in Christ as Head, that is the character it will take.

QAP Did you have any impression as to the Lord Jesus using His personal name to Saul, "I am Jesus"?

JSS It is very affecting, is it not? It shows, do you think, the reality of His manhood, that He is a real Man who is speaking here?

QAP I wondered about that word through the prophet, "I drew them with bands of a man, with cords of love", Hos 11: 4. Do you think this would lead to "holding fast the head", appreciation of the attractiveness of Jesus?

JSS I think so. We can see how effective a vessel Paul was, how fruitful a member he was of Christ's body, how he was able to help others. He would never have forgotten this experience. How could he have? It is amazing that "straightway ... he preached Jesus that *he* is the Son of God". He had learned quickly, not only that He was a real Man, but He was the glorious Son of God.

DCB You have mentioned that the Head is in heaven and the body is

here. Does “the increase of God” mean that there is an increase in what is heavenly among those who are members of His body?

JSS I think that must be so if we are drawing from our Head in heaven who is heavenly; He is the heavenly Man. Even when He was here He was “the Son of man who is in heaven”, John 3: 13. What a wonderful source and therefore anything that is formed of Him down here would have a heavenly character, I would think.

DS Does the assembly in a special way understand something of the sufferings of this One? I wondered if that helps in this formative work you are speaking of. “Why dost thou persecute me?” That is the body here as suffering in relation to the Lord's interests. Is there something we can learn from that?

JSS I think that is a helpful point. It shows that the body here is in the same place where Christ suffered, and those of the body are exposed to the same elements that caused that suffering. “Do not wonder, brethren, if the world hate you”, 1 John 3: 13. The world hated Him; so it follows that anything that is like Him, the world will hate. It is no surprise, but I think the Lord, coming back to the thought of what is priestly too, has tender sympathy. He knows what it meant to suffer down here. He is able to cherish and nourish His assembly, His body, accordingly. It would increase our valuation of Him. She knows that He has been here, and He has suffered here.

MBG I was thinking of the scripture referred to, “growing by the true knowledge of God”. It does not say ‘in the true knowledge of God’ although that would be a good and right thing to grow in, but it is as if the knowledge of God is what causes the growth. I was thinking of Saul here. Later he says that what he did he did with a good conscience, but he did not have “the true knowledge of God”, did he? I was thinking of his experience here. He came to know very quickly what God was really like through the grace of His Saviour, do you think? Is Saul a good example of one who rapidly increased as he grew “by the true knowledge of God”?

JSS It is very helpful to bring that in. Paul grew quickly. How powerfully the Lord had caused him to understand something of God, growing by the knowledge of that. Christ had revealed Himself to him. “Filled with the Holy Spirit”, it says, “He preached Jesus that *he* is the Son of God”.

AM Was the light of the body contained in the Lord's words from

heaven that Saul was to find his part experimentally in it as he went into the city? He was to prove what it was practically.

JSS I think that is very much the case. "It shall be told thee what thou must do"; Paul was not too used to being told what to do, but that was for his blessing. I think we could say Ananias was under the direction of the Head. He was a member of Christ's body here, and he shows wonderful grace, as has often been remarked, "laying his hands upon him he said, Saul, brother"; so Paul, as having been obedient to the authority of the Lord and subject to the Head, then received by Ananias, now becomes a living and effective member of Christ's body himself and quickly shows what he is able to accomplish for God! "The increase of God" was rapid with him: "he preached Jesus that *he* is the Son of God".

RMB Is it instructive in connection with verse 6 that the Lord did not tell Saul of Tarsus Himself what he was to do, but he would learn that as a result of going into the city?

JSS I think that is helpful because the Lord had confidence in one of the members of His body, Ananias, that he would be able to instruct Saul what he had to do when he was there. I think that is helpful; so it shows how the Lord operates in the body. There are gifts given and there are helps in the body so that we can help one another.

RMB Could we say, perhaps especially for the benefit of our dear younger brethren, that it is important to be exercised about what the Lord would have them to do? That is an important exercise that they can take up in their personal relations with Him. But does this suggest that whatever that might be in the case of one or another, the understanding of that will not be independent of His assembly here on the earth?

JSS I think it is a very important point that you make. There is something for everyone to do. Every member has something to do and, although the Lord will use one and another to help in different ways, it is never independent from the influence of the Head.

TWL The start of all of this in relation to Saul was with Stephen. Was Stephen "holding fast the head"?

JSS He was looking at the Head and he was speaking to Him. If we go back to chapter 7, "having fixed his eyes on heaven", that certainly seems to be a "holding fast", is it not? "He saw the glory of God, and

Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, Lo, I behold the heavens opened" (v 55, 56) and so on, and then he says, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge", v 60. He acknowledged Him as Head very much.

TWL I was thinking their clothes were laid "at the feet of a young man called Saul", v 58; and of what you have been saying in relation to the Lord using persons. Stephen held fast to the Head at the expense of his life. The influence of Jesus was such that he would not give it up, even at the expense of his life, consequent on that was Saul's conversion, following what he saw and heard there. Does that fit in?

JSS I think the experience there must have had an effect on Saul. You cannot imagine witnessing that and it not having an effect on you. I think that is helpful; so he sees "holding fast the head" exemplified in one of the members of His body, Stephen, and now he sees it again in another, Ananias.

GBG Was Stephen also the expression of the new man?

JSS Please could you explain what you mean by that?

GBG There were two things special to Paul in his ministry, the body and the new man. Saul saw the new man. It was features of the new man he was persecuting. "Why dost thou persecute me?" It was the body. You do not see the body; what you see are the features of the new man. It is Christ here in testimony, is it not?

JSS I think that is very helpful, these features actually seen in persons in reality. I think that is very good. We cannot see the body as one whole - we cannot do that at the present time - but we can see real features of it that prove persons are members of it, these features of the new man.

EJM One local assembly is commended that they had "a little power, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name", Rev 3: 8. These things are distinctive, "his name" and "his word". I suppose the power is little because it attaches to us. The Holy Spirit's power is great; the Lord's power is great; the Father's power is great; but the Lord says, "thou hast a little power".

JSS It is like "holding fast", keeping things. We keep what is precious to us; we hold fast the things that are precious to us, "a little power". Well, the Lord's power is sufficient for what we require at the present time.

NCMcK Mary in Luke 10 sat at his feet and “was listening to his word”, v 39. Is that representative of someone in the good of headship, a complete absorption with Christ, a definite position at His feet and receiving from Him. It says where you read in Colossians, “ministered to”. The body is “ministered to”; it does not minister. The gifts are set in the assembly. The body is “ministered to”. It is occupation with Christ and absorption with that blessed One and receiving therefore spiritually from Him. The sisters are every bit in the body as the brothers are. There is no difference between sisters and brothers in the body, is there?

JSS Of course not. I think that is absolutely right; it is a good example. It was a deliberate position that she had taken and it was a deliberate attitude of mind that she had relative to Jesus, sitting at His feet, “listening to his word”. It was an active thing, “listening to his word”. She was “holding fast the head” in figure, and she benefited from it. She drew from what He ministered.

Turning to chapter 4 of Ephesians, previously in Colossians we thought about “the increase of God” and “holding fast the head”, but here it is “holding the truth in love, we may grow up to him in all things, who is the head, the Christ”. Perhaps we could get some help about it.

GJR Can I ask how else could the truth be held?

JSS For example, there might be persons who could probably recite lengthy texts of Scripture that are not believers in the Lord Jesus. We might say they have a tremendous intellectual knowledge of the same Scriptures that we hold in our hands but unless they have love for the Lord Jesus, unless it is held in love in relation to that Head, they would not be holding it at all. What would you say?

GJR Mr Coates says, “I have not only to be true to the light, but to wait on the exercises of the brethren, and carry them”, vol 6 p129.

JSS Very good. Well, it would mean that we are considerate of one another if we are holding it in love. I think that is very good. So “fitted together, and connected by every joint of supply”: there are good relationships between these members of the body such that things can flow freely. That is the test, is it not? If you hold the truth in love, I am sure that would work out as a result.

PAG “Growing by the true knowledge of God” has been referred to. “The true knowledge of God” would involve appreciation of His nature.

This scripture would remind us that you cannot detach the truth from the nature of God. They are not two separate things.

JSS You mean the nature of God being love, and the truth being everything that can be known of God, so they cannot be separated?.

PAG What you say is correct, and that is why this chapter goes on to say, “as the truth is in Jesus”, v 21. We have been referring to the name of Jesus. The truth is in a Person. It is there to be taken account of in Him. How could it be anything less than the full revelation of God “as the truth is in Jesus”? Then the Spirit is here and active to form us in relation to what is taken account of in Him.

JSS I think that is very helpful. What would you say as to growing “up to him in all things”?

PAG Well, there are important words in Ephesians: one is “up” and the other is “together”. We have thought of the character of the world in which we now live, and “up” is very important. What is characteristic of Christianity and characteristic of what is heavenly involves “up”. It is interesting that Christ is described in Romans 6 as being “raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father”, v 4. You might say “raised” was enough. No! He is “raised up”, and now it is growing “up”. The world is a great place for individualism, but Christianity is a place where things are enjoyed *together*: so growing up and being together. Do you think that is what we can experience in a meeting like this?

JSS I think that is a very helpful way to put it.

JL Does it also bear the sense of growing up towards the light and source as a plant does?

JSS That is helpful; I had wondered that. We “grow up to him”. You might say we are growing up towards the Source, away from the earth, as having Christ as its Object. Anything that has an increase is really going back up towards its source.

TWL Is this the acquiring of glory? Eventually at the end of all of this there is going to be a vessel that has the glory of God, and that is being formed now. Growing up to Him is the acquisition of the glory of Jesus in persons. You reminded us yesterday of what we are as Christ *in us*. Growing up to Him is the acquisition of the glories of that Man who lives in us. Would that be right?

JSS That is helpful.

JJB Does accepting the reproach of the Christ help us in maintaining the truth as well as in the Spirit's power?

JSS The reproach of the Christ is mentioned in Peter's first epistle: "If ye are reproached in the name of Christ, blessed are ye; for the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you", chap 4: 14.

JJB We "go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach", Heb 13: 13. It is the Person, is it not? Does that help us in "holding the truth in love"?

JSS Naturally we would shy away from reproach and suffering, but it would be a proof of our love for the Head if we are willing to accept it. "The Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you". There is glory there.

DCB You made reference to the fact it is, "the head, the Christ". What would you say as to the fact it is emphasised "the Christ"?

JSS Christ, it would be right to say speaks of God's anointed Man, and there is dignity attached to that, is there not? I was thinking a little about Psalm 133. You have the thought there of the anointing oil flowing down from the head, giving character to those that are down here. Is the thought of dignity associated with this, God's anointed? What would you say?

DCB In Corinthians the whole vessel is "the Christ" (1 Cor 12: 12), but this is distinguishing the Person, the Man in heaven. There is the earlier reference as to the knowledge of the Son of God, "until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ", chap 4: 13. Everything is according to the standard of God's anointed Man.

JSS Exactly. He is God's anointed Man. He is the One in whom God has His delight, and any growth or increase must always be in accordance with that Pattern.

AGM It is growing up to him "in all things". Does that involve that there is going to be complete correspondence with His body with regard to the Head? When you take that into the assembly, she is formed to be consort. The assembly is His fulness. This is the time of formation.

JSS That is a helpful word to draw attention to, "in all things". It is comprehensive. The other thing you get here is "the whole body". That

is another comprehensive thought. There is nothing partial about it. And in Colossians where we first read it says, “all the body”. It is a complete thought; we cannot think of a partial body. It is one Head and one body and there is the thought of completeness about it.

DAB What does it actually mean in this scripture as to “its self-building up in love”? That is not the body functioning independently of the Head. What do you understand by that?

JSS I would like others to say what they understand by it. It clearly does *not* mean that it is independent of the Head, “works for itself the increase of the body to its self-building up in love”. I would really like someone else to say something about it.

GBG Love is infectious.

JSS Very good; it has that effect of promoting and provoking what is positive by itself.

DAB I was just thinking of what Ananias said to Saul, “Saul, brother”. That was the love, we might say, the “joint of supply”, operating through that, reaching out to Saul, was it not? “Saul, brother”. I am thinking of what has been said. “Self-building up” is the Spirit operating, we might say, horizontally, but the Spirit is always fixing our eyes and our affections on Christ; so it is a very wonderful thing, really the vertical and the horizontal working in sympathy and in tandem with each other as we are today. Headship is operating in this reading.

JSS That is the exercise; that would be the desire. I think what is being said as to what operates in that infectious way of love is helpful.

ASP Do you see an example of it in the epistle to Philemon? Paul reminds Onesimus and Philemon as to the proper place they had, “not any longer as a bondman, but above a bondman, a beloved brother”, Philem v 16. That was building up in love, was it not?

JSS That is very good. It shows how love goes above merely what is required; there is an excess about it. I think that is good and it would confirm the thought of dignity. The thought of the Christ is a dignified thought. The brother is a dignified thought. I think that is a helpful reference. It shows an example of one member of Christ's body encouraging another member to act in that way.

TJH Can we have some more help about the “joint of supply”, and what it is? It seems to come between the reference to growing up and

building up. There is a long footnote, but I wondered if the “joint of supply” might connect with the living Head, the subject of this reading, and the “joint of supply” is from that living Head, and where it is not so, neither the growing up nor the building up will take place at all.

JSS I think that is a good enquiry. “Every joint of supply” suggests what can flow through such a “joint of supply” freely. In the Old Testament we have “the two sons of oil”, Zech 4: 14. There is the thought of what flows freely without obstruction. Often our relationships together help with that so that if I have an impression of Christ and I have good relations in love with my brother, it will be a natural thing in that sense to share the impression with him and to be increased together.

TJH One or another may be asked to serve in an address or preaching; the word will come through a “joint of supply” and from heaven?

JSS We certainly desire that any ministry would have its source in Christ in heaven. It would not be effective otherwise.

JTB It is “every joint”. It would be an exercise for each of us to put ourselves about in that way, do you think?

JSS I think that is very good, “the whole body” and “every joint”. We might say every member is to be engaged in this for the building up.

TRC A little later in Acts 9 the disciples took Saul “by night and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket”, v 25. Is that the “joint of supply” in operation? It was something for Saul to be subject to the brethren in that sense, but he came into an area of love and affection, and that love was operative, and it was for his protection.

JSS I think that is a very good example of the members working together for the benefit of another member.

AGM It says, “according to the working in its measure of each one part”; so none are excluded. Each one of us has our measure, but we can increase that measure as linked with the Spirit; so it is all working out for the completeness of the body.

JSS I think that is very helpful. We had some ministry recently about measure. You might say the important thing is not necessarily the capacity of the measure but the fact that it is full. It might be a small measure, but is it full?

JL Did Aquila and Priscilla impart that as a “joint of supply”?

JSS I am sure they did, for example, when they helped Apollos. What would you say? It was a gentle action, was it not, but it was beneficial, unfolding “more exactly”, Acts 18: 26?

JL A “joint of supply” is not exactly a gift, is it?

JSS It does not appear so. I think what the brethren are saying about each member and “every joint” seems to leave it open to every one of us. That would be an exercise, would it not? I suppose if a member is “holding fast the head” they would be effective as a “joint of supply”.

We could touch on Ephesians 5. You get the thought of the husband and the wife here. We have been speaking about the Head and the body. In an earlier reading we spoke about the Shepherd and the sheep as well. They would perhaps be slightly different views of the same thing, but here it does speak about “his body” in verse 30: “we are members of his body”. “For no one has ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it”. That suggests to me that Christ is actively engaged in that, nourishing and cherishing, in relation to His assembly, His body.

KRC I would like help with the thought of nourishing and cherishing. We have a hymn that speaks of them both, Hymn 359. We sometimes use the first verse in the morning occasion but maybe not the second; so could you open that up for the younger ones to understand the thought better?

JSS I would like to understand it too so would be glad of what others would say.

DCB The cherishing is a matter of affection, is it not? He would supply what is needed, but cherishing is just how much He loves His assembly. The sense of being loved is very important to the assembly, is it not, being attached to Christ?

JSS I think that is helpful. I think it has been said nourishment provides everything that is needed, but cherishing brings in the thought of love. The type has been used as to Boaz. When Ruth first arrived to meet Boaz, he nourished her, gave her everything that she needed, but when she became his wife, he cherished her, CAC vol 31 p530.

PAG Is this the Lord demonstrating how you hold the truth in love?

We have spoken of nourishment, food, in other words, and we might think of that in relation to teaching or ministry or whatever might be provided by the Lord to strengthen individually and collectively what is for Him, but everything He provides is provided in love. Even correction is done in love. Regarding holding our brethren, do you not think the Lord wants every member of His assembly? How many people are members of the assembly? I do not know: millions if you go back to Pentecost. Do you not think the Lord wants every single one of them? Well, then, I should too! Would that be all right?

JSS I think that is right so that thought of nourishing would be a careful consideration of what is needed in each situation, involving the thought of caring.

RB-n Is the Lord nourishing and cherishing His own in John 17 when He is speaking to the Father?

JSS That is very attractive; say some more about it. He is letting them into the secret of His affections with the Father.

RB-n He speaks about them being kept in the Father's name (v 12), but He goes on to speak about being occupied with His glory and the Father's love being in them. He is providing us with everything for the testimony, is He not?

JSS And He is doing it in love. There is no thought of what *has* to be done, but He is loving to do it, nourishing and cherishing it.

GBG It is a lovely thought to think of the Lord Jesus cherishing the assembly eternally.

JSS She is so precious to Him.

GBG I was thinking of the thought in Genesis 2. The assembly will respond to His cherishing.

JSS If you are conscious of being cherished, it must bring about a response to the one that is cherishing.

At 3-day meetings in Edinburgh

21st October 2023

List of initials:

R Bain, Fraserburgh; A M Brown, Linlithgow; D A Brown, Bo'ness;
D C Brown, Edinburgh; J T Brown, Edinburgh; R Brown, Linlithgow;
R H Brown, Maidstone; R M Brown, Strood; J J Buchan, Peterhead;
T R Campbell, Glasgow; K R Cumming, Edinburgh; H T Franklin,
Grimsby; A P Grant, Dundee; G B Grant, Dundee; M B Grant,
Grangemouth; P A Gray, Linlithgow; T J Harvey, East Finchley;
N J Henry, Glasgow; J Laurie, Brechin; T W Lock, Edinburgh; S C Lock,
Edinburgh; N C McKay, Glasgow; A G Mair, Cullen; E J Mair, Cullen;
A Martin, Buckhurst Hill; A S Pittman, Grangemouth; Q A Poore,
Swanage; G J Richards, Malvern; J S Speirs, Grangemouth; D Spinks,
Bo'ness; D J Willetts, Birmingham

THE MAN OF GOD'S CHOICE

Martin Brown

1 Samuel 16: 1, 6-13 to “midst of his brethren”

1 Timothy 2: 4-6

It is a wonderful victory as we look around in the world today that God has a Man of His choice. We were affected by that this morning in remembering Him, that there is such a One whom God can have complete rest in: the Man of His choice.

This world is darkening all around us. It is not getting any better nor can we expect it to. We can read in Ecclesiastes that “there is nothing new under the sun”, chap 1: 9. Sin is everywhere. You might look around you, at some great achiever in this world, or see someone you think is good, doing good works or whatever it may be, but the fact remains, the world is full of sin. Romans 3 tells us that there is not one righteous man: “There is not a righteous man, not even one”, v 10. And it says that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”, v 23. What a thing it is to contemplate that this world is full of sin, the world that God created. He created it for man to enjoy, and yet it has been spoiled by sin. How sad for God to look down and see the creature that He has created in bondage to sin, captured by it.

In the gospel, God is speaking to you as His creature, a creature that He loves, a creature that may be in bondage to sin, maybe disappointed with life, not having fulfilled ambitions or dreams, whatever it may be. You may be struggling with persons, with disappointments, and all that means, and yet God in His love in the gospel tonight would speak to *you*. As we see in 1 Samuel 16, there were many different men that passed before Samuel. And he said as he looked at one of them, 'Surely this is the one; surely this man is God's chosen one'. He looked at the stature and looks, he looked at the height, he looked at his achievements perhaps, and yet Jehovah said, 'No, not that one; that is not my man'.

You see, God in the gospel, through all of the sin that is in the world, through all of the sin that is in your life, in my heart and your heart, He is wanting to reach through, to break through and to speak to you of His Man, Jesus Christ. There is no other name under heaven, or given amongst men, by which we must be saved but the name of Jesus Christ. Many options are given in the world. I feel especially for the young people at school. They are given what is called 'religious' and

'moral education', and many different religions of man's imagination and philosophy are placed before them; they are told they have many paths to choose, and that none are right and none are wrong: they may choose any one of them. That is not the gospel! That is not the God that I know. God is presenting one Man, one Man for the salvation of sinners, and His name is Jesus Christ.

Here in the Old Testament, we find Samuel in the house of Jesse. The people had previously called for a king. They had called for a leader. It is something that we find within ourselves; we want someone, something, to lead, something to hold on to and connect with. That is humanity, searching and wanting a leader. They want someone, you might say, to fulfil things for them, and king Saul was given. And what had happened to Saul? We read in chapter 13 that Samuel says to him, "But now thy kingdom shall not continue: Jehovah has sought him a man after his own heart", v 14. "A man after his own heart": what a man Jesus must be! If this world is full of sin, if my heart is full of sin, what a Man Jesus must be, that He is a Man after the heart of God.

And so Samuel is here looking at all these sons and he says, 'Are these all of them?'. And Jesse says to him, 'No, there is one more'. Dear friend, there is one more Man you may not have considered; have you found Him? Have you seen Jesus yet? In all the gospel preachings you have listened to, have you found Jesus or are you still struggling on? You know, dear young or old soul, if you have sat under many gospel preachings or been brought up in a believing household, it might be very easy just to drift along. You might in an outward way 'conform'; perhaps in an outward way you say, 'Yes', and nod. But, in faith, have you found Jesus? Has He made a difference in your life? Have you known what it is to be saved from your sins?

In the Scriptures, it tells us that our life is but a vapour, Jas 4: 14. It has been many years since Jesus was here, and it will not be long till He returns. But in the meantime, while the gospel is being preached, in this relatively short time of your life span, what will it be for *you*? Will you accept Jesus? Will you find Him and trust Him for yourself as your Saviour? Or will you spend eternity in a place which God has not designed for man, but which exists; that is the lake of fire. I was contemplating this week how it must be a terror to be standing before the great white throne without a righteous Substitute, to stand before a holy sin-hating God without my faith and trust in One who has

righteously borne my sins; what a terror. And therefore we persuade souls. We appeal to souls in the gospel preaching that you might accept Jesus as Saviour.

Samuel says, "Are these all the young men?". Jesse says, "There is yet the youngest remaining, and behold, he is feeding the sheep. And Samuel said to Jesse, Send and fetch him; for we will not sit at table till he come hither". What a wonderful picture this is. Samuel was willing to wait on this youngest son to come and make his presence known, to wait on Jehovah to find out if this was Jehovah's chosen one. "And he sent and brought him in. And he was ruddy, and besides of a lovely countenance and beautiful appearance". This, of course, was in the sight of Samuel - one who was close to God - one who could see the beauty in such a man. We heard in the reading today that there was "no beauty that we should desire him", Isa 53: 2. That is, in self-will and independence from God, in our sins, there is nothing that we find attractive in Christ. But in the gospel, God makes Jesus attractive to you. He would seek to attract your heart, to affect your heart in such a way that Jesus as a beautiful, moral, perfect man should be made attractive to you, that you might see His beauty. "He was ruddy, and besides of a lovely countenance and beautiful appearance. And Jehovah said, Arise, anoint him; for this is he".

In one sense, it does not matter what the world says about Jesus, because Jesus is God's Man. "Arise, anoint him; for this is he". God has said, 'This is my Man'. He has expressed this by the exaltation and glorification of Jesus. He is seated at the Father's right hand. He has been made Lord and Christ. God has done that to Him, but in the long-suffering grace of God He is still appealing to the sin-weary world. He is still appealing to you. Have you trusted in Him?

In the New Testament we have the Man Himself. This passage says, "before our Saviour God". What a wonderful thing that we can speak of "our Saviour God". What a title that is; it could only have been possible through the sacrifice of Jesus that God could be called, "our Saviour God". It could only be possible since Jesus came into flesh and blood conditions and was here, marked out Son of God in power, loved of the Father, as walking before Him, every minute of every day according to His will and pleasure. It could only be according to that way, and the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, that God can be, "our Saviour God". You think of such a man as Jesus: He was perfect and without sin. We have spoken about the sin in the world, and the sin in

each of us, but you think of what it was for God to have a Man walking here before Him who was sinless. He was without sin, holy, harmless, and undefiled, not only walking in a world of sin but completely untainted by it morally. "The ruler of the world comes, and in me he has nothing" (John 14: 30), He could say. What a Man Jesus is, a Man whom the Father loved and loves. What it was then for the Father in Gethsemane, loving Christ, having seen Him in perfection, walking in a path of public service for three years, having walked perfectly for thirty three years, going about His Father's business every day; what must it have meant for the Father to give a cup to the Man of His choice.

What was in that cup? What was in that cup we shall never fully fathom, but it included all the wrath of God. The wrath of God due to me, due to you, in relation to our sins. But Jesus as the Man of God's choice, as the Man who did always the things that pleased the Father said, "not my will, but thine be done", Luke 22: 42. You think of the holy recoiling of His holy soul as He said, "My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; but not as *I* will, but as *thou* wilt", Matt 26: 39. There was the Man of His choice, faithful and tried.

Where would you have been, where would I have been, in the face of such horrendous horror, as facing that question of sin? Oh my friend, at the very least we would have turned and run. But not Jesus: He went onwards, the Man of the Father's choice. He went on to the cross, crucified by wicked men, yet completing the whole will of God. In those three hours of darkness there was a transaction between God and man, where Christ as Man, drank that cup, bore my sins in His body on the tree and exhausted the wrath of God. He died and shed His blood for the remission of sins, and took the man that offended God into the grave in being buried. I love that scripture in Romans, where it says, "reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God", chap 6: 11. Why? Because Jesus has removed the man that offended God entirely, and so I can live, alive to God, happy and free.

Where are you? Do you know Jesus? Have you found Him? Is He the Man of your choice? Of course, we do not present a choice in the gospel, in the sense that there is no choice for salvation, but Jesus. He is the Man of the Father's choice because of His moral glorious beauty. So it says, "our Saviour God, who desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. For God is one, and the mediator of God and men one, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all". We were affected by that this morning, not

only that He is the Man of the Father's choice, but that He gave His all. Jesus knew the price that was to be paid. He paid the ransom; He paid for your recovery. He paid, to buy you back for God. You think of that, One who did not deserve to die.

We often read and are told about the scene at the cross. There were three crosses and there were two malefactors on either side, and Jesus in the middle. Both were insulting Him, we are told (Matt 27: 44), and then in one gospel we are also told that one spoke and said, "this man has done nothing amiss", Luke 23: 41. He also said, "Remember me, Lord, when thou comest in thy kingdom", v 42. "We indeed justly, for we receive the just recompense of what we have done; but this man" - *this Man* - "has done nothing amiss". What a wonderful man is Jesus. He is available now as a Saviour having been in the grave and having been raised from amongst the dead. The glory of the gospel is, as it tells us in 1 Corinthians 15, that Christ has been raised from the dead. He has been raised for our justification, Rom 4: 25. What a glorious thing that is for the believer, to realise that we have to do with a risen, glorified Saviour.

Have you seen Him raised from the dead? What does it speak to us of? It speaks to us of the satisfaction that God has in Christ, that He has been raised by the glory of the Father (Rom 6: 4), and now He is seated at God's right hand. God has completely forgiven your sins if you have trusted in Jesus: He has completely removed them from His sight. They will never be remembered any more. Indeed it tells us in Galatians therefore, "Christ has set us free in freedom", chap 5: 1. We could not be freer because of the work of Christ. If you have trusted in Him, if you have believed Him, if you are practising the principles of Christianity in having Him in your life, you could not be a freer person. You may be surrounded by this world of sin, yes, but having victory over it because of a link with a risen glorified Man, and having the blessed power and gift of the Holy Spirit.

I think that is suggested in coming "to the knowledge of the truth". Knowing and having relationships with divine Persons, and coming "to the knowledge of the truth" suggests the blessed gift of the Spirit. How wonderful is God that not only has He a Man of His choice but He has others like Him. Think of what is often said that on the mount of transfiguration Christ was morally fit to be taken up to glory. Of course, He was! He was a perfect Man, but He would have left every sinner here in our sins, and He did not do that. Christ laid down His life

for us, giving Himself a ransom for all. But more than that, He has given us the wherewithal to have a link with Himself, a Man in glory, through the giving of the Spirit. You think of the wonderful words of Christ - you wonder and marvel at them, "It is profitable for you that I go away", John 16: 7. You say, 'How is that possible, Jesus, a perfect Man here, saying to His disciples, "It is profitable for you that I go away"? Why? Because He was going to send you another Comforter, the One who will lead you into the truth, guide you in the truth, give you strength, help you to overcome, give you joy, give you refreshing'. You could write a huge list about the things that the Spirit does and is willing to do for the believer here. But most of all He wants to magnify Christ in your life. He wants to magnify Christ in your heart, the Man of the Father's choice. He wants to help you see Jesus. What a wonderful thing this is.

Well, ask for the Spirit. Dear soul, ask for the Spirit. Prove Him in your life, and do not grieve Him; He is very sensitive. In type He is a dove in the Old Testament, suggesting sensitivity, with the sensitive sole of its foot, Gen 8: 9. The Spirit can be easily grieved, and we know what that is if we allow our wills to be active, and yet the glory again of God's wonderful mercy and grace is that He is a forgiving God. How He loves to forgive. He loves to welcome back, dear friend, the sinner who answers to the gospel.

The gospel goes forth and the simple word is to repent towards God, and have faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, both for now and for all eternity.

May it be the portion of everyone for His Name's sake.

Edinburgh

27th August 2023

THE LOVE OF JESUS

Colin J Brien

John 15: 12

We read this verse in our household a few days ago when they were having a bit of trouble getting along with one another. I was particularly affected by the second part of the verse where Jesus says, “as I have loved you”, and I wonder what the experience is of each person here with the love of Jesus.

His love is so great that it has turned people in their earthly pathway completely around. His love is so great that it has arrested souls in their tracks, in their course away from God. We can even say the love of Jesus has reached people unprovoked. Maybe they were not even seeking Jesus at all, maybe they had no relationship with God at all, and the love of Jesus appeared to them. One person, whose name was Saul, was harming Christians, imprisoning them, maybe having them tortured. We know that he had permission to harm them, but then Jesus appeared to him, Acts 9. The love of Jesus affected a whole household: Lazarus and Mary and Martha, John 11. Jesus wrought miracles in that home. The love of Jesus affected John the writer of this book, who was on the island of Patmos and became in the Spirit on the Lord's day, Rev 1: 10. The Spirit of Jesus was in him and he, no doubt, had perfect peace. He was able to see things that are so great they are unspeakable. I am sure that, with the Spirit's help, he put the words as best as he could to describe the greatness and awesomeness of what he saw.

The love of Jesus changed the man named Peter, and his brother, and John, and his brother; they followed after Him. The love of Jesus healed persons. The love of Jesus helped a woman who had committed adultery and was about to be judged by the Jewish people; the love of Jesus reached out to her, John 8. The love of Jesus reached the woman who touched His garment. In faith she just reached out and touched it. She was so miserable with her condition and could do nothing for herself. In faith, she thought, even if I just touched His clothes something might happen. The result was that she was healed because of her faith, Matt 9: 20-22.

The love of Jesus has affected millions or billions of people. The love of Jesus is as great as that. I have been reading about the appearing of Jesus to many Muslims around the world,

particularly in the Middle East. Again, unprovoked persons who have hated the Jesus of the West, as they call Him. He manifests Himself to them in dreams. How do they know it is Him? How do they know it is not some false dream? They know because they feel loved like they had never experienced in their life before, followed by peace that they have never felt before.

The second half of this verse is testing, to consider, 'How much do I know about the love of Jesus? How has the love of Jesus affected my life?'. We know a little bit about love; we have dealings with people who love us and care for us, and chasten us because they love us. Fathers and mothers know what I am talking about; it is a very challenging thing to chasten our children and it is done in love because we care deeply for our children. The love of the Christ is far greater than that because He says, "No one has greater love than this, that one should lay down his life for his friends", John 15: 13. Love held Jesus to that cross. A brother was recently speaking about how they pounded those nails through His hands and through His feet into that cross as He hung there nailed. He could have come down; He is that powerful. He created all things! He stayed there for you and for me. You can put your name in the second half of that verse, 'as I have loved _____'; you can put your name there and consider how much the Lord Jesus loves you. Can you name another person who would be willing to die for you? The book of Romans says that maybe someone who likes us, someone who cares for us, might be willing to die for us. Jesus suffered on that cross because He loves you, dear friend - because He loves you; Jesus loves you. What do you think about that? Is it just going to sit there like an ornament for you to look at? Do you know what it is to be loved by Jesus? Imagine looking on Jesus hanging on that cross and never believing in Him. Imagine being at that scene and seeing Him die on that cross and then turning away without another thought.

There is nothing more serious than the moment the glad tidings are presented and put in front of every person who hears. He asks for us to believe on Him, to believe on His love. He cares so much for us that He was willing to stay on that cross. When we were speaking about the tomb of Jesus in the reading today, I was very impressed that Jesus could rise of His own accord, by His love for us. He was received into heaven because of the love of God. He was the perfect One. Dear hearer, this day Jesus desires you to be filled with that love; to have your sins forgiven. Do you know what that does to you? I can tell you: I have

never in my life been happier. It is not because of a job change; I can tell you that right now. Every job has difficult things. The love of Jesus has given me so much happiness, and so much peace and joy. And it is not anything to do with me. This is what the love of the Lord Jesus desires for you today. When we read this verse in our household; we realised, 'How can we love one another if we do not know what it is to be loved by Jesus?'.

Firstly, I appeal to everyone in the room: if you have not been filled with the love of Jesus, now is the time to ask the Lord Jesus to come into your heart. We speak about Him coming into our heart because that is easy for us to understand as children. Oh the love of Jesus! He desires to fill you with His love that you might be His forever. That you might be saved! We are not going to go into a lot of detail on what we are saved from because it is obvious. We are sinners; everyone is! Jesus stayed on that cross for us. We often speak about the blood of Jesus; the blood of Jesus is a wonderful thing. I never get tired of talking about it for this reason: a brother read many years ago, in the preaching, the verse in Isaiah that speaks about our sins being red as scarlet and being made as white as snow, chap 1: 18. I love to speak about the blood of Jesus because that blood is put over us, and God does not see us as sinners any longer. He sees the blood of Jesus, His own Son, and then He sees us as His own, children of God. How wonderful that is: it is nothing that you did, or I did, but all because of the love of Jesus. He desires that each one of us would be filled with the peace and love and joy because of Him.

I want to speak now about the first part of that verse. "This is my commandment, that ye love one another". I have been thinking a lot about this lately. I say in all humility, dear brethren and friends and loved ones, that I have struggled in my own history to love others with the love of Christ. I would seek to bring into the glad tidings this question: is there any bitterness that might be in your soul? Bitterness in the soul can only have one aim, to destroy. Bitterness can never result in joy or happiness. But what does it mean to love with the love of Christ? What does it mean to us when we think about the second half of the verse and how Jesus loved us? If I were to list out every bad thing I have done, the list would go on for a long time; I would be there for days and weeks and months. It is not going to get better because sin is in our nature. When I think about what He has done for me, how He has covered my sins with His blood regardless of everything I have done

against Him, my own wilfulness, my own thoughts, trying to take control of things. Control is a big one for me; maybe it is for others too, I do not know. I like to have a plan; make sure it all goes just right - and it never does. The love of Jesus, He has covered all of that selfishness, wilfulness and sin. He has satisfied all of that and I have had to relearn how to love people the way He has loved me. It is just wonderful. We have to experience the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, a love that is patient, a love that is kind and a love that sometimes chastises us.

Do you know what chastisement means? Often our parents have to chastise us. Our parents disciplining us is very important. If they did not love you, they would not chastise you. They would not care. They chastise you because they do care, and they have the very best interest in mind for you; and so does Jesus. He wants the very best for you. We turn away from it; we shun it; we disregard it. We do everything we can to get away from what He has presented to us. You know why? We think we are more important than Jesus. How has He dealt with that? - on the cross! On that blessed cross, hanging on that cross between two robbers. From what I understand, they would usually put a cross near a main road or city or somewhere for everyone to behold. You might think that is awful. But He was there for all to behold, the wondrous cross where everyone could behold Jesus there dying on the cross for them and for you. The cross is wonderful to behold because we each have to come to that cross and acknowledge and admit that we are sinners. The bitterness that is in our soul will only lead us further and further away from the love of the Lord Jesus. That is the only result it can accomplish. There is nothing in that bitterness of soul or hatred or despising others that is for God in any way. It will only lead us away. How do we correct that pathway? By turning to Jesus, by accepting His love, by accepting all that He has accomplished, by accepting the blood and being washed in it, as the scripture speaks about it. What a wonderful thing it is that the blood of Jesus has been shed.

If we are going to love one another, we have to have hope. Jesus did not stay on that cross, as we discussed in our reading today. He was put into the tomb. The stone was rolled right over; it was sealed. Guards were put by it. Every precaution was taken, every plan was made to make sure that Jesus did not come out of that grave. And yet, He rose. Does that thrill your heart in any way? Who can boast of such power? He rose because He loves you! Because He is living we shall live. That starts right now. When you ask the Lord Jesus into your

heart, and you ask and receive His love, then life begins.

There is a wonderful passage in 1 Peter 2: 1: "Laying aside therefore all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envyings and all evil speakings". Can anyone relate to this list, or have any here done any of these things? "As newborn babes desire earnestly the pure mental milk of the word, that by it ye may grow up to salvation, if indeed ye have tasted that the Lord is good", v 2. This came to my mind because of the scripture that we read in John's gospel, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you".

Have you ever considered reading that scripture as if it was the very first time, the very first time ever that you opened the Bible and read that scripture. Have you ever considered beginning with the New Testament and reading it as if you were a new child, and it was brand new, and it was written just for you that you might have life? How wonderful that is to think: 'Well, I do not know much about this, but the scripture says it, and I believe it, that Jesus loved me'. Therefore, I can love others in the same manner that He did because He did all of that for me. It is good to read the Word of God as if we are a newborn babe and it is our milk, our food and nourishment; to take the word of God as if it is brand new will help us to grow into something; to grow up into salvation because the Lord is good. What a wonderful prospect we have, dear hearers.

The love of Jesus is available today, but it will not always be available. There is a time coming when He will come for us, and I cannot wait; and I am sure there are others who cannot wait either. In our time of waiting, we can love one another. That love shows that we are disciples of His. I want to speak directly to you young ones for a moment, because when young we often tend to fight, to argue, to disobey. I think you can relate to what I am talking about. Jesus desires that we are to have life and have it abundantly. You have to lay hold of that, but we cannot learn to be good. We cannot learn to love without Him; so we have to follow Him. He has gone that path. He went to the cross, He has risen out of that grave and He has been received into heaven; and He is speaking this day and appealing to you in love to follow Him. In a coming time we will be caught up in the air, that wonderful day when the trumpet will sound. For me that will be a great sound! As a music teacher, I have heard a lot of trumpets sound in my life, but that trumpet will be the most distinctive and beautiful trumpet that I have ever heard. We will be received immediately. There will be

no waiting, but immediately. It will be wonderful to be with Him for ever! We can hardly take it in. What it will be to live in an area where there are no tears, there is no sadness, there is no anger, there is no evil, only rejoicing and joy! We can experience that now while we are waiting, but it requires the love of Jesus.

I commit these words to all in this room, and even to all those who are not able to be here that we might speak to them about it, that the love of Jesus is the answer to all our problems, the answer to everything. As I ponder it, I can hardly think of anything that the love of Jesus cannot cover. When we have that experience there is just complete and total joy. Does it make our life perfect? - No. We do have power, however. We have power to overcome, we have power to get through, by the Holy Spirit. How vital it is to ask for the Holy Spirit, and to receive the Holy Spirit. Some people we have watched, and seen how they have lived, and the circumstances they have gone through that are overwhelmingly heartbreaking and sorrowful. You can hardly take it in. We have all had an experience of meeting people who have very difficult circumstances. We have also seen persons go through difficulties where the love of Jesus has carried them through and their love for others has not decreased in any way. In fact, it has increased and they are more restful and they are sure that the love of Christ is the answer to everything.

May the Lord bless the word.

Aberdeen ID

31st December 2023

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