

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

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FOUR MAIN STREAMS

Genesis 2: 8-14

John 21: 24-25

Ephesians 3: 14-21

AML I suggest we might enquire about the creation of God and especially the emphasis in this first verse read on the “four main streams”. Eden refers to pleasure, and the favourable conditions in which God set man. He “planted a garden in Eden eastward”, (that is, towards the sunrising, which would suggest the resurrection of Christ) “and there put man whom he had formed”, v 8. God set man in the most favourable and positive circumstances ever; and we know how the history relates the failure and the breakdown of man, sin coming in, through disobedience, through eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Eve being tempted by the serpent. But it says that out of that Eden a river went out to water the garden, and the river parted and from thence became four main streams. I have been thinking how the idea of four streams would be enlarged as we go on in faith. We know the characteristics mentioned here; and the gold is referred to first. It is striking that silver, speaking of redemption, is not mentioned at all; that comes in later in connection with Abram. But God's original thought is that the gold comes in first, “And the gold of that land is good”. If you think of what God has set out in Christ, I wonder if the four rivers would have a reference really to the four gospels, leading on to the four dimensions mentioned in Ephesians 3: 20. These literal numbers in the Old Testament have a moral application seen in the New Testament. We need the Spirit to contemplate the vastness of it.

I just read one scripture in John 21, that would really cover all that John refers to. “And there are also many other things which Jesus did” - that could easily encompass the vastness of the four gospels. We think of how two apostles wrote a gospel, and then Luke, one that never saw Jesus, is able to relate accurately the things that he had known and heard. And he writes another book, that is the Acts of the Apostles - we may say the continuation of Christ, after His resurrection, what was formed on the earth through the apostles. When you think of the vastness, or the greatness of the gospel, the number of the twelve had to be maintained, they had to choose another one that had been accustomed to the pathway of the Lord Jesus, while He had been going in and out amongst them. And so one is added to the twelve; showing how things are formed. But I just thought of the greatness of things

here. There were also many other things which Jesus did - that would embrace the thought of the four rivers. They all four have a prophetic bearing, and I think the Euphrates especially. But when it starts it comes to the gold, and I wonder if the gold would be shining in Ephesians, "being rooted and founded in love, in order that ye may be fully able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height". All these glorious attributes that Paul refers to are really indicated in the beginning of creation. God planted Eden, and a river going out that divided into four main streams. It is really what is maintaining the testimony and the universe in all its glory. It is all what God has provided. Man has ruined it, but initially God has it all in hand. I thought if we could inquire about these simple, deep thoughts.

DMW Yes, they are simple and deep, and we appreciate them too. God never really gives up His original thoughts. His original thoughts go back before creation, but they are worked out in creation. We see something in that, do we not? Would the assembly come to mind when Eden is spoken of?

AML I think so, because it refers to pleasure. God's great delight is really seen in Christ and the assembly, that vessel. And I wonder if the gold would embrace the thought of the assembly. It is all worked out, the planting, the four main streams, and all these rivers, each having a certain characteristic and bearing. I came across a simple touch in ministry, 'Just remember, we have got four gospels'. The Spirit would help us to take in the character of each gospel. Matthew's gospel ends in a wonderful way; Jesus never leaves them, "behold, I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age", chap 28: 20. He never left those on the earth. And we can go on in the faith and the strength that the Lord Jesus is with us. John refers to things in such a wonderful way, as if to say that he is not able to cover them all. It is like what we have in Hebrews; Paul says time would fail to speak of the men of faith, Heb 11: 32. He mentions six names, but I am sure he could have gone on and on and on for a long time, and you get the same impression with John here. "And there are also many other things ... if they were written one by one"; it has been said that nothing of them has been lost. The heavenly city, and the wall there, would be covered by what Jesus has done. And I wonder if that really would be an outcome of the four rivers.

SWS That is a very encouraging impression. I was wondering if the four rivers would link on, and further support your thought as to the boundless, infinite nature of what God has provided, the infinite nature

of His divine grace in view of fulfilling His purpose. These rivers show He is a source of divine grace, all in view of supporting what God has purposed in His own heart for Himself. I think that is important, and you can help us on this. We often think this garden in Eden was planted for man, but it was really for God. Another portion in the Scriptures emphasises that the garden of Eden was *God's* garden; it was His garden, Ezek 28: 13. It was what was for Himself. It was what was for His own heart. Man got the benefit, man got the gain of it, but it was ultimately for Himself.

AML Yes, I am glad you refer to that. He “made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; and the tree of life, in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”, v 9. What God planted there was really for His own purpose. I think that is why Mr Darby has a note, 'Pleasure' (see footnote 'a' Gen 2: 8). It was something that was delightful for heaven; Jehovah planted a garden in Eden eastward, suggesting that it is all furnished and accomplished by the death and resurrection of Christ, eastward. The sunrising speaks of His resurrection. What has been accomplished by the death of Christ is to God's glory.

KRO You can help me about your thought of the four rivers and the four gospels. There is the scripture in Acts 10 about the sheet that was filled with the different creatures. It speaks there of the four corners. I was wondering if that would speak of what was secured out of the four gospels; it is the nations brought in there, is it?

AML Yes, I am sure. You think of Peter being given that mission. He almost got into trouble for it, but he dealt with it by asking, “who indeed was / to be able to forbid God?” (Acts 11: 17); it was a wonderful thing, the sheet came down from heaven, and did it not come down thrice, v10? And he was not immediately able to apprehend the thought of it, but it was the divine mind. It is really the feature of Eden, what is pleasurable. “What God has cleansed, do not *thou* make common”, v 9. It was something that had gone through cleansing. It was in the divine mind that we, through divine grace, sovereign grace, should be brought into blessing.

KRO It came to mind as you were outlining your thought. Acts 10 refers to all kinds of creatures. They are subjects of creation, and what you spoke of in the garden is the subject of creation too, but the four corners refers to the aspect of the encompassing nature of the glad tidings, does it not?

AML Yes, that is what we have there in Acts 10: 15-16, “What God has cleansed, do not *thou* make common. And this took place thrice, and the vessel was straightway taken up into heaven”. “And lo, immediately three men were at the house”, chap 11: 11. You think of it coming down three times out of heaven.

DMW “And last of all”, Paul says, “he appeared to *me* also”, 1 Cor 15: 8.

AML Would that be divine grace? That would really be the gold that comes out. It is remarkable that the gold is mentioned first as to these rivers.

DMW Would that gold therefore indicate the sovereign rights of God, and that what He has created on the earth is going to carry through? That it all goes back to *His* sovereign rights, the gold, the rights of God?

AML Yes, and do you think the gold would be a metal that would go through the fire? Everything that God can use for His glory and benefit must have a touch of the death of Christ.

LMH I wanted to link on with what has been brought out as to Eden being the source of these rivers. It was interesting to me that the river also waters the garden, does it not? Before it branches out into the four, it sustains and provides sustenance for the garden. I thought we had a touch in the morning meeting about the Father's delight in Christ, and I thought maybe there was a link to that in how the river provides this sustenance to the garden before it even branches out into the four streams.

AML I am glad you referred to that because I thought that JND's notes as to both 'pleasure' but also as to the rivers - the 'heads' (note 'b', Gen. 2: 10) - would bring us to the source, the Father. Maybe the water watering the garden of Eden would be a reference to the Spirit, how God is maintaining everything, because the touch we had of the realm of the Father this morning was in the power of the Spirit. And without the Spirit, we would not have that enjoyment.

SWS It is remarkable what has been said, and it is something that is quite affecting to consider, the way that we have been brought into our blessing. The source of our blessing is what God has secured for His own heart. There can be no greater source of blessing than that, that we actually have part in it, that we are brought into it; and we come into the gain and the reality and the enjoyment of it. What God has secured

for His heart is quite remarkable.

AML So, Peter was referred to, and then there is what we have in John, and then what Paul refers to in Ephesians: it was their own personal experience and enjoyment, and they do not want anything less for the saints, that we should take it on. When we just contemplate the gospel in all its variety and in all its depth and details, how that brings us back to what these four rivers represent, what God provides.

CIO Would the garden in Genesis relate to what is mentioned in Revelation 22: 1-2, “And he shewed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, going out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of its street, and of the river, on this side and on that side, the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, in each month yielding its fruit; and the leaves of the tree for healing of the nations”. How would that relate? I was thinking as to what our brother said as to the river watering the garden as the water of life. Would that have any relation?

AML I think it has a strong relation. It reminds us very much that what God has set on in the very beginning, He will never divert from; He will reach His end in view through the death of Christ, and in the saints who have received the Holy Spirit. “And he shewed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, going out of the throne of God and of the Lamb”. When you come to the throne, you think of the One that sits on it, our Lord Jesus, the One that we remembered this morning. He is the One that is going to sit on that throne, and now through faith we can apprehend it, and rest in it, and enjoy it, in its greatness. Then you think of the tree of life yielding its fruit, and it refers to it yielding its fruit every month.

DMW There is the tree of life as well in the verses you read, and in what our brother has read from the end of Revelation. God begins with a Man, as you say, the rivers, the four gospels. That is the depth of the scriptures, but the whole of scripture is found in the four gospels because they bring us to the Man - the Tree of life; life is found in that Man alone. Would that be the thought? And the river of the water of life would relate to the Spirit who glorifies that Man in our affections for the pleasure of God.

AML Yes, and do you think that is why John really starts with that? “The true light was that which, coming into the world, lightens every man”, John 1: 9. We reach the Man through the gospels, and what we have in the Acts and the epistles brings us back to the foundation, the

vastness, the greatness of what comes out in the gospels; the Man of the gospels, what He has accomplished.

DMW What you are bringing out is quite remarkable, because the Song of Songs speaks of the beloved coming into his garden, chap 5: 1. So it is the personal position of the Lord Jesus in the assembly, that His lovers take character from Him; and the Spirit of life gives us to enjoy all that God has found in Christ, and we respond accordingly.

AML Do you think that is why we have the reference, “Come”, in Song of Songs? There is movement all in view of coming into the garden of Jehovah, where you have the fragrances and the sweet odour, and we are able to rest under the apple-tree in reverence. All these physical references have a moral bearing.

DMW In the Song of Songs we have, “Let my beloved come into his garden”, Song of Songs 4: 16. Would that be an exercise? Before we leave the house for the Supper, we have in mind what the Lord possesses. The four rivers means that it is on the earth where He possesses it. But letting Him come into His garden, would that put us in the Spirit on the Lord's day to anticipate that, and what the emblems are in taking them? It opens up what is for God, as found in the assembly.

AML I am sure. And do you think it would be a similar touch in the Songs of degrees? “I rejoiced when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of Jehovah”, Ps 122: 1. There might need to be preparation before He comes into His garden to see what is there?

DMW Say something about that, because the garden might have in view eternal life. So eternal life provides the conditions in the scene of death for what is to proceed in the way of response. You might say something about the Songs of degrees.

AML I do not think I am able to, but it is remarkable that the touch of eternal life comes into one of the last of these psalms.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

Like the precious oil upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, upon Aaron's beard, that ran down to the hem of his garments;

As the dew of Hermon that descendeth on the mountains of Zion; for there hath Jehovah commanded the blessing, life for

evermore, Ps 133: 1-3.

That is really what the Songs of degrees lead to, but it is to be enjoyed now.

DMW Yes, so that the song that ends the Songs of degrees, Psalm 134, has the sanctuary in mind, does it not? “Lift up your hands in the sanctuary”, v 2. We need that sanctuary while we are in mixed conditions, so that we can bless God. And what underlies that blessing or that ascending thought, is abstracting ourselves from where we are, literally, to where we desire to respond, in a heavenly way, in another sphere, to bless God, do you think?

AML Yes, the sanctuary means we are to be set apart, in holiness, all in view of worshipping and addressing Him.

LEO The scriptures that you have brought before us are encouraging. I am thinking that these scriptures bring before us all blessing coming from the Person of the Lord Jesus. I was thinking particularly of the verses in Ephesians that you highlighted, and the four dimensions that you pointed to, the breadth, length, depth and height; they come in as a result of Christ dwelling and being rooted and founded in love in our hearts. I have been trying to relate that to the scripture you read in Genesis: there is the one river that comes out of the garden and it results in the four. I wondered if that would be an image of Christ in that way. It is encouraging to think of all blessing being a result of Him, the Person of the Lord Jesus. The dimensions would be for us to enjoy now, through faith; they may connect with what we can get in the four gospels, but all is a result of the Person of the Lord Jesus, is it not? It is a wonderful thought that all is covered, and so there is not an area that has not been opened up in that way. God has fully opened up the truth for us to enjoy, has He not? And it is available, but Christ has to dwell in our hearts, does He not?

AML Yes, I am sure that is right. And it is so affecting that it is in order that we may be fully able to apprehend *with all the saints*. That brings in the scope of what God has accomplished, what He has recovered through time, and it will bring in the whole thought of the assembly. We will have an impression too of the Old Testament saints, everything that God has secured for His own glory in every dispensation. The Spirit would help us, and faith would help us to apprehend what the loaf refers to, at the Supper. It is such a great thought and it brings in these four dimensions, breadth, length, depth, and height. He has been received

up in glory, and He was the One that has ascended and “also descended into the lower parts of the earth”, Eph 4: 9. And we think of all these glories that shine in the gospels.

I just had the impression that John refers to “many other things which Jesus did”, John 21: 25. He says, “one by one”, his heart was full of what Christ had done. That never left Him. And yet you think of John being left on the isle of Patmos, where he may have finished his life in the salt mines as a prisoner for the testimony. And yet he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, Rev 1: 10. He was in the gain of what he had enjoyed. You think of “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21: 20) - he referred to himself as that. He does not say his own name; he does not need to do that. But there are so many glories, and I just wondered if they linked with the variety of the four rivers. The river also would refer to the freshness of the current flow of the water. It was enough to water that garden, which God had planted.

KRO I was wondering if you might help us, is there something distinctive about the Euphrates? I am thinking there is a directionality, for want of a better word. We have Pison, and Gihon and Hiddekel, but there is an unbounded character in the Euphrates; it just declares the name of the fourth river. It is the mighty river, is it not?

AML It is interesting you say that; it has a significance, I am sure. The Euphrates has come to be the boundary of the present western world, which will be significant in a day to come.

DMW The scripture for that is in Revelation 9. “And the sixth angel sounded his trumpet: and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel that had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound at the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, who are prepared for the hour and day and month and year, that they might slay the third part of men; and the number of the hosts of horse was twice ten thousand times ten thousand. I heard their number”, Rev 9: 13-16. And the thought is that it will make way for China and the Eastern nations.

AML Well, it is remarkable that we have the four angels here. It is a universal thought that runs through from creation in Genesis right through to Revelation, and how confirmative that is.

DMW I am not sure how to speak of it. There is a representative number perhaps, but it goes to show the scope of it, whatever the result is.

AML Was there more thought as to Ephesians?

LEO I was just going to make a further comment. If we put the rivers alongside the four dimensions in Ephesians, each of those rivers would have been unique in some sense and would be life-giving to the area that they flowed through. I wondered if the dimensions here each have their own uniqueness. I am thinking of the variety of ways that we can, for example, speak of a divine Person. We can think of the glory associated with each Person and we can think of grace and divine love and mercy. I just wondered if maybe there is a uniqueness to the dimensions that maybe links with the rivers that each have their own place. But they all come from the same river that flows east out of Eden. I just would liken that to the Lord Jesus, that all these glories, which may be different and unique, are all associated with the same Person. Would that be right?

AML I am glad you refer to that. They are all combined and linked to the same Person, to the one river that comes out. The origin is God. I think it has been suggested that the thought of height could well be John's gospel, and depth could be Matthew's gospel, and length could be Luke's. They all have their own characteristics. These four dimensions all have their own glory, but they all stem back to the one river, to the Lord Jesus, to the Person of Christ.

DMW That is most helpful. The Father is going to see to it in the assembly that the Lord Jesus is pre-eminent. It is the Father's Spirit here. So what has been said is very helpful because what that scripture speaks of in my mind is the one river. We cannot say too much without being in error, and the birth of Christ is an inscrutable matter, but Luke's gospel presents Him as was born of the Spirit, which is really in view of all the gospels, would you say? So that being able to apprehend refers, I believe, to the Person of Christ, the breadth and length and depth and height. And that will take in, of course, His work in down-stooping, in redemption. But this is a collective thought here, is it not? Ephesians 3 pertains to the assembly in view of the service of God, where our hearts are filled with Christ, and the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge. It holds us in that sphere, where there is praise in the assembly which He leads.

AML So it is "to him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus". Eph 3: 21. The source and the object is the Person of Christ in every aspect. I wondered if that is why you have the emphasis on the gold first. The gold has often been referred to as the deity of Christ, but also the love

of Christ. They are seen in the gold - and how much gold is referred to when you go on in the Old Testament, as to the offerings and to the building of the house and the wealth of Solomon. The gold has a pre-eminence. I remember an old brother telling me as to the gold and the silver, that the silver might be mentioned *first* just as many times as gold. I had never thought about that. But sometimes silver is mentioned first, and sometimes gold is mentioned first. In creation, gold comes in first. I think it is in Genesis 13: 2 that we have silver coming in. But these are materials that go through the fire and they all speak of Christ. Even Malachi refers to them, the refiner and the fuller, how the true silver is coming out through fire, chap 3: 3. That would be redemption.

DMW So the thought you are getting at is that it all starts with Christ. Now while we and all persons redeemed maintain their identity, we come out like Christ. There is no other thought before God, but Christ. So it is really about Christ; not so much about us, but about Christ. About what we apprehend and can respond accordingly for God's pleasure.

AML It says, "such as the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones", 1 Cor 15: 48. That is really both the silver and the gold coming out in the saints. It is a heavenly order.

WJO I do not want to repeat what has already been mentioned about the four dimensions. But I was wondering as to all being built on the inner man, in view of what might be enjoyed in the eternal ages, for what can be enjoyed in the assembly in Christ Jesus and to all the generations of ages of ages. That is what would be in view of something of eternal enjoyment in these matters, that in Christ there might be something enjoyed for us, but more importantly enjoyed by divine Persons as well. Would you link on to that?

AML Yes, I am sure that is right. So really our eternal portion is that we would be able to join in a spiritual song. Worship to God eternally would be mostly in singing under the One that is leading the praises to the Father. He is the Chief Musician of Israel and He is able to lead the singing. And it is "to him be glory"; we have that "to him" twice. "But to him that is able to do far exceedingly above all which we ask or think, according to the power which works in us, to him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages. Amen.", Eph 3: 20-21. You think of how it said in Genesis that the gold in that land was good; the gold is shining here in this chapter.

DMW Would “to him” be the headship of God? What our brother said is very important because this is not something we wait to do; this is something we engage in now. So we often say we touch eternity. Well, here is a scripture that we can refer to in our own exercises and consciousness, because it is now the assembly's praise occurs, and it goes to God. Would that be the headship of God?

AML I am sure that is right. To adore is really a touch of eternity, and by the Spirit and faith we touch upon it already. And we can enjoy it and rest in it already because it has been accomplished. And yet it will be an actual thing in a day to come. But through faith, in the midst of adversity as we are, we are able to touch upon it.

WJO It all begins with the inner man being strengthened by the power of the Spirit, do you think, in leading up to what we have, to what our brother was saying about what we have in our current portion?

AML Yes, I am sure that is right. You have it also in Romans 8: 26, “the Spirit joins also its help to our weakness”. He is able to strengthen our inward man, all in view of apprehending the greatness of the One that is leading everything, the One that is leading the praises, and the One that is the source of it all. We have a reference in one of the hymns-

Man of the Father's choice

(Hymn 33)

It is a reference to Christ's Father. I think the Spirit of God will help us to get a touch of it, and that is why I just referred to John. He says, “there are also many other things”. That was his spiritual sensitiveness, referring to all the greatness of what he had seen in the Lord Jesus.

DMW John refers to all these other things: if they were written, the world could not contain the books. Is that coming through the praises of the saints now in their responses Godward?

AML I think so, because it has been said about all these things, that nothing of it will be lost. When the Lord says to Paul, “why dost thou persecute me?” (Acts 9: 4), it was really the work of God in the saints that he was persecuting. And heaven knew and treasured everything that had been formed in the saints at that time. And all that will lead to response, I am sure. We can hardly apprehend or take in the vastness of what John referred to in that verse. It requires eternity.

DMW It does. So we need faith as suggested by our brother earlier. This is the pattern of what will occur eternally, and now we need faith;

and we need the Spirit for the enjoyment of it, and the spontaneity and a living response based upon the revelation. So that the scope, the waters going out, comes through in the saints in their response.

AML I am sure there will be a response from each one that has apprehended the greatness and the glory of Christ.

Denton TX

List of Initials:

L M Hibbert, Denton; A M Lidbeck, Aberdeen ID; C I Oliver, Denton; K R Oliver, Denton; L E Oliver, Denton; W J Oliver, Denton, S W Selman, Denton; D M Welch, Denton

“THE VOICE OF A MAN”

Anders M Lidbeck

Joshua 10: 12-15

Luke 23: 44-49

I have a simple thought, beloved brethren, and that was to speak from this verse in Joshua, where it says that “Jehovah hearkened to the voice of a man”. Joshua here is a type of Christ. There has been no other Man like Him and there will never ever be. This is a unique occasion in the history of Joshua. He fills a position after Moses the servant of God had been taken; the book of Joshua begins really with the death of Moses. There is a new situation being brought about by the Spirit of God in His ways with the people, with Israel. They had these enemies that they had to fight against and there are numbers of them - Amalek, and here the Amorites; and it says that God fought for Israel.

The blessing of the glad tidings, dear friends, is that God listens to the voice of a Man, and that is the Lord Jesus. That is why I refer to Luke's gospel. Luke is one of the gospel writers who never saw Jesus as far as we know, and yet he is able to bring out features of the speaking of the Lord Jesus that no one else does. He really writes two gospels - both Luke's gospel and Acts of the Apostles. Here there is the voice of a Man. Think of the glory that is brought about here: “And Jesus, having cried with a loud voice”. Dear friends, that loud voice is being announced today in the glad tidings; it is still there; the sun has not gone down. It says in Joshua it was “about a full day”. I would apply that to the whole dispensation of grace that is going on; the sun “hasted not to go down”, as if to say, God is appealing to mankind, to every situation, to every condition that man has brought himself into in the bondage of sin, to bring him out. “And there was no day like that before it or after it, that Jehovah hearkened to the voice of a man”. Think of that. It says the sun was “in the midst of heaven” - it is remarkable the sun stood still and the moon remained where it was, and it goes on to say, “And the sun remained standing in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a full day”.

Dear friend, the Sun is in the midst of heaven now. The speaking of the Lord Jesus is going on day by day, and the day is not finished yet. The dispensation of grace goes on, all because God has come into a condition to speak to man, and because everything has

been accomplished in the death of the Lord Jesus; God has listened to the voice of a Man. We may look from the beginning of Genesis, all these different generations - Abram, Isaac and Jacob, and then Moses and Aaron; and here you have Joshua. "Then spoke Joshua to Jehovah in the day when Jehovah gave up the Amorites". Think of the speaking of these pious men of the Old Testament, one by one. We referred to it in the reading where the writer says in Hebrews 11: 32, that "time would fail" to speak about all these men of faith that had conquered and gone on in victory. It struck me when I looked at it: just six names are mentioned in that verse in Hebrews, but I am sure the writer would have been able to go on and on and mention others one by one. Not even Elijah is mentioned, nor Isaiah; Isaiah is one of the prophets who is most referred to in the gospels. I think the Lord Jesus had a delight to refer to Isaiah - even once in John's gospel, He says, "Esaias says again", John 12: 39 - because all these prophets were all making way for the incoming of Christ, all in view that God was listening to one Man.

Think of the position that the Lord Jesus will take when all the saints are with Him, when all that belong to Him shall be gathered to Him. He will be the Centre and He will be glorified in all those that have believed, all to the glory of the Father; death is shown to be conquered in the raising of Christ. I have often thought, and it has been said even in ministry, it was not said to be the *power* of the Father that raised Christ: it was the *glory* of the Father, Rom 6: 4. It is an expression of love and affection, and the vastness of the Father's heart, that shines in that glory that raised Christ from among the dead. Think of the victory that God has secured, and here the battle is going on. It says, "And the sun stood still, and the moon remained where it was, until the nation had avenged themselves upon their enemies". God has secured a tremendous victory through our Lord Jesus. Everything had to give way. In Luke's gospel we read that there came darkness over the whole land, the sun was darkened, the veil of the temple rent in the midst; everything had to give way in creation for the Son of God, our Lord Jesus, going into death and accomplishing such a wondrous victory. Think of the glory of it - God listened to the voice of a Man.

It is amazing that this centurion got an impression. He says, "In very deed this man was just". Think of the One that came to His own and His own did not want Him. How Jesus felt that. He came here as Man and He came here to fulfill the will of God and accomplish

everything to God's glory; and at the end there is one that is able to say, 'Indeed this was a just man'. What a joy for heaven. No wonder Peter speaks in the Acts of One "whom heaven indeed must receive", Acts 3: 21. Why? Because He had accomplished everything to God's glory. God had hearkened to the voice of a Man. That victory was in an appealing word to mankind. It says, "And the sun remained standing in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a full day". The day this speaks to us of is soon going to be accomplished. One day the glad tidings will not be announced. I have often thought of that hymn we have,

Some guest will be the last, (Hymn 70).

The appeal in the glad tidings is going on till the end of the day, but here it says the sun "hasted not to go down". God, in His mercy and His grace, is waiting. He is not in a hurry; He knows the end from the beginning. He is able to appeal to mankind as such as being away from Him, but one day that day will finish. It says, "about a full day" - it is a most remarkable reference to the dispensation of grace coming out in the Old Testament. That is the love of God really, because there is a man here, we may say, with reverence, Joshua - who speaks of Christ - who would be a mediator between God and man. Joshua takes up a tremendous place but it is after the death of Moses which is another suggestion of the death of Christ. Joshua has very often been linked with the power of the Spirit because he does not come to prominence until the death of Moses.

We need to see the vastness, the greatness, of the Lord Jesus going into death. Think of this cry, "And Jesus, having cried with a loud voice". That voice was heard in heaven and it is a question, dear friends, if have we heard that cry. He is calling to each one of us. He is not leaving anyone out. I was struck with a reference in Revelation 22: 17 where we have the word, "Come": "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come". There are three 'comes' in these verses, and heaven is calling to mankind, not to forget anyone or to leave anyone out that belongs to God. The different families, the assembly, what will be secured in the remnant of Israel later on, and every family that at the present time has never ever heard the gospel, each will get the chance to hear that voice; God is really saying, 'Come' to everyone. None will be left out. What glory! Think of the victory that the Lord Jesus has secured once and for all. The precious blood of Jesus covers everyone - every family of the

redeemed, all these millions at the present time in the Far East that may have never heard the gospel, they will have a chance, they will hear the voice of a Man. Think of that - what a voice it will be. What a cry from Jesus in Luke's gospel.

It is remarkable the way Luke is able to set it out; yet he had never seen the Lord Jesus or heard him, as far as we know. It has been said in the teaching, that like Paul, he would have asked the brethren, he would have asked the mother of Jesus, those that had impressions kept in their heart, all that Jesus had said. We touched in the reading that there were also many other things that Jesus did and said, they happened one by one, dear friend, and none of them would be lost. Every feature, everything that the Lord had touched and come through, and brought about, would have affected someone and would colour everyone that belongs to Him. What a speaking, and you can understand there has never been a time like it. "And there was no day like that before it or after it, that Jehovah hearkened to the voice of a man".

Through the Lord's help and the Spirit's guidance, may we attend to the voice of a Man, because God listens to Him. God has not forgotten one word that He has said. Everything that He has accomplished and said will colour the day of eternity. When we are forever with the Lord Jesus, we will be engaged with Him and we will listen to His Name and He will have the last word in everything. He is the Beginning but He is also the End. He is the Alpha and the Omega. He is just like the sun here, that is standing in the midst of heaven.

May we have a sense of the speaking of a Man that God listens to, for His Name's sake.

Denton

24th March 2024

FOLLOWING THE LAMB

Jim T Brown

Revelation 14: 1: 1, 4 from “these”

1 Peter 2: 21-25

The scripture in Revelation clearly looks forward to a day to come, and what travail and suffering will intervene in the interim period after the assembly has gone to be with the Lord Jesus. So here we have the Lamb standing upon Mount Zion and, with Him, this august, dignified company, having the name of the Lamb and the name of His Father written upon their foreheads. What an accolade for the persecution and anguish through which these saints will surely pass. How blessed the compensation for them to stand, in the enjoyment of such sovereign mercy, beside the Lamb of God. What thoughts will doubtless fill their hearts, as they follow the Lamb and learn from Him of what He endured in His pathway of sorrow here. He might tell them of His rejection and how the nation had treated Him with scorn, and shame, and spitting. He might speak to them of Gethsemane where, in unparalleled sorrow and intensity of grief, He committed Himself irrevocably to His God and Father's will. They would learn of Golgotha, where He was crucified and shed His precious blood. He would tell them that, as part of His awful sufferings in these three hours of the forsaking, He bore the special wrath due to Israel on account of a broken law. Israel could not uphold the law but the Lord Jesus, in His grace, vicariously bore the curse of that broken law. These persons are bought from the earth and from men as first-fruits to God and to the Lamb. The precious blood is the basis for it all. What a harvest there will be for God by and by. What there will be for the divine heart from the assembly in particular but then, too, from such as this company. The Lord Jesus is, of course, the great Sheaf of the First-fruits, the mighty Victor in resurrection, waved before Jehovah. How glorious He is!

But when we come to the scripture in Peter's epistle, we have a fresh view of the sufferings of Jesus, not only what He suffered but the manner in which He endured them. How affecting that He suffered “for you”, for each of us, and left us a Model that we should follow in His steps. Our brother has referred to John's gospel and the Baptist could say as he looked at Him, “Behold the Lamb of God”, John 1: 36. It was as if His every step brought forth the spontaneous admiration of John, his heart welling up in praise and adoration as he witnessed the walk of Jesus. We are, of course, to follow Him, as He Himself says, “Follow

thou me" (John 21: 22), but following in His steps would have us ponder the detail of that peerless pathway, devoted to His Father's will - these three and a half years of incomparable service, setting Himself for the blessing of mankind and for the alleviation of suffering humanity. Think of how many steps He would have taken in these three and a half years as He traversed the terrain of Palestine, each step suffused with love as He responded to the needs of men, His affections touched by their sorrows, grieved at the awful effects that sin had had on mankind, and bringing solace to the afflicted. Then contemplate His steps as He went out from Jerusalem, bearing His cross, each step drawing Him nearer to Golgotha, where He would endure in perfection and holy obedience the awfulness of the forsaking.

And then we have described these beautiful traits of a Man in perfection. He "did no sin"; "and in Him sin is not." 1 John 3: 5. Because of His sinless perfection and absolute holiness, He could be - and was - made sin for us; of no other man could that be said. So it goes on, "neither was guile found in his mouth". Whatever He did was with infinitely pure intent. The Lord Jesus sent out the twelve to be "guileless as the doves" Matt 10: 16. What a challenge for us all, that there should be no ulterior motive in our actions. The Lord saw that feature in Nathanael as he came towards Him, saying: "Behold, one truly an Israelite, in whom there is no guile", John 1: 47. Wonderful commendation! But then, these steps of true perfection continue: "who, when reviled, reviled not again; when suffering, threatened not". There was no retaliation with Jesus but He meekly He accepted the cruellest and most offensive things that men in their depravity could bring against Him. Sometimes, in instinctive retort to a jibe or taunt or in relation to something to which we take exception, we can make a kind of threat or implied threat. By contrast, the Lord Jesus in such circumstances, did not threaten, "but gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously". He had full confidence in God: "Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?", Gen 18: 25.

Then this ineffable statement, which will thrill the ransomed host throughout eternity: "who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree". There were the physical sufferings, which He endured at the hands of men, the base acts of callous men, as they covered up His face, buffeted Him and struck Him with the palms of their hands. But more awful still was what it meant for Him to bear our sins in His body on the tree. No mortal could measure the intensity and deep holy feelings which were His, when the Saviour bore the sins of the myriads of the

redeemed in that precious body, as Jehovah “laid upon him the iniquity of us all”, Isa 53: 6. The wonderful outcome is that our sins having been met, we can “live to righteousness”. That would mean cherishing and upholding God's rights, His rights in testimony, and the principles of the fellowship, which have come down to us at tremendous cost.

Then we have these affecting words, “by whose stripes ye have been healed”. What a contemplation! These were divine stripes, laid upon Jesus by God Himself. Jeremiah asks, “Is there no balm in Gilead ... Why then is there no dressing applied for the healing of the daughter of my people?”, chap 8: 22. Thank God there is a healing balm available from Jesus tonight: no balm in Gilead, but balm from Jesus to satisfy the most urgent need of every heart. How many sorrows there are, how many troubles and disappointments beset so many hearts in so many ways, but there is healing grace available in the Saviour's presence to soothe the most rugged, the most poignant difficulty. How one feels it, when all seems lost, all seems too difficult, troubles appear overwhelming: then the gentle touch of the precious Saviour is available to soothe us and to give us peace.

Then it goes on to say: “For ye were going astray as sheep, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls”. We have all gone astray at some point but there is a certain joy in returning, as the prodigal of old, and how very wonderful that is. We return to the good Shepherd, who has laid down His life for the sheep, that is, for you and for me. John in his gospel says, “the sheep hear his voice, and they follow him”, chap 10: 3. This company in Revelation in their day “follow the Lamb wheresoever it goes”. What a Guide and Shepherd He is for us now. It is a time of suffering, as this scripture in Peter brings out, and indeed the assembly is a suffering vessel. Reference has been made to the brazen or copper altar; its utensils were of copper. Paul speaks about filling up “that which is behind of the tribulations of Christ in my flesh, for his body, which is the assembly”, Col 1: 24. That, of course, refers in a particular way to Paul himself, but that little reference to the utensils of copper, as related to the copper altar, might just suggest that there is a place for every lover of the Lord Jesus to take their place participatively in the testimonial sufferings, which belong to this current period,.

Well, what an example for us is provided by this company, standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion, great pinnacle of sovereign mercy, faithful in adversity, but what blessed reward for their sufferings.

May we be encouraged, in our own circumstances, by heaven's recompense for this suffering company.

Edinburgh

12th December 2023

THE FIDELITY OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST

James B Catterall

Luke 23: 7-23

John 13: 1-17; 20: 14-18; 21: 15-19

I desire at this time that the Lord may give us help together to speak of the fidelity of the love of Christ. I think we must feel that in regard of the love of Christ we touch a theme of peculiar blessedness and sweetness. At the same time, we cannot consider the subject without also feeling that we are drawing near to that which, with all its sweetness, must inevitably be very searching to our hearts. I shall take a human illustration in a simple way; I might say that in regard of human affection, where there is a pure tie between souls there will always be the desire that the expression of it should be heard and understood. One thing that marks the love of Christ, beloved, is its intensely plain speaking, and that touches us in many ways, but in whatever way it may touch our spirits, it always has the great end in view of its own satisfaction, and connected with that, the satisfaction of the Father's heart.

It was the plain speaking and inquiry of the love of Christ that tested the spirit of Peter so intensely. Even in the ways of the Lord with ourselves, and I touch on it with all affection, we may find the Lord speaking very plainly to us. We may be, for various reasons, inclined to interpret His speaking to us thus more on the line of His lordship than of His affection and care for us. Oftentimes the Lord may speak plainly to us, and it is of all moment to us that we should hear; but there is danger lest we might too readily interpret the Lord's plain speaking as only bearing on matters that would shew our contrariety to His mind, and the fact that they were out of line with His own pleasure and rights as Lord; but there are times when the Lord speaks with intense plainness, when, if we knew the truth, we should know it was not so much that He was drawing attention to existing wrongs, as to the fact that even on the line of rectitude there may be a lack of intensity and warmth of affection to Himself.

It is insufferable to the heart of Christ that there should be remoteness - distance - on our part. We may incline to it, but the longer we remain there, the more accustomed to it we become, and the more disinclined to leave it, but the love of Christ will not endure distance. The institution of the Supper, the service of feet-washing, the service

and care of the Lord immediately on His resurrection in regard of Mary Magdalene particularly, and the dealings of the Lord with Peter at the close of His pathway here, are the plain speaking of the love of Christ that will not endure remoteness. I know of nothing that one becomes so accustomed to with all one's knowledge of the truth, as the tendency to live in heart at a distance from the Lord. To know the things that are His pleasure and interest, to know the things that are changelessly dear to Himself, and yet, as to our personal links with Him, to be remote, could never satisfy His heart.

I should like to go over with you, as the Lord may help us, the movements of the love of Christ as indicated in the scriptures referred to. As the Lord drew near to the close of His pathway, with His own outlook before Him - death, and what death meant to Him - and to the great end that was to be the final and culminating testimony of His love to the Father, and His love to and interest in His own - one is deeply impressed with the way in which the Lord moved in regard of the passover and the Supper. I do not know that I should be justified in taking for granted that every soul here distinguishes between these, but I think it might suffice if I just say this in passing, that while we need the passover and the Supper, and each has its place, nevertheless, when we have distinguished between the two, we might lack the consideration of exercised affection for the Lord, that looks into the matter to see what bearing one has on the other, for assuredly, when we come together on the first day of the week to answer to the Lord's desire as the One who laid down His life for us, we would - if ordered aright, come together in moral conditions that have been produced by the keeping of the feast together. Are we taking it for granted that in our hearts there is a sufficient recognition of the fact, that when we come together to answer to the Lord in the Supper, we do not come together to create conditions, but to answer to the Lord in the power of conditions present with us? In whatever way we may order or regard the occasion, we may rest assured of this, that there is that in the Supper which touches our spirits in a peculiarly tender and searching way. In many ways we have been tested, when we have come to take the Supper, and have been made to feel more than in any other way how searching was the scrutiny of the love of Christ; but it was not instituted that we might be searched, or made to feel the remissness of our affection to the Lord, it was instituted that what is due to the Lord Himself in response to His great and precious love might be presented to Himself, the worthy Object of it all.

I draw your attention for a moment to the necessity in regard of the saints at Corinth, that the apostle should recall their attention particularly to the passover at the outset of his epistle. He says, "our passover, Christ, has been sacrificed". Was there ever such a passover? Paul does not bring it to bear upon them simply to make a distinction between it and the Supper, but in order that their hearts might be freshly exercised as to the bearing of the feast on themselves. He says, "so that let us celebrate the feast ... with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth", 1 Cor 5: 7, 8. Whether in respect of the Lord Himself or in respect of one another, as bound up together with the Lord and His interests, may we be exercised that in all our goings, in all our thoughts of the saints in secret, or when together, and in our prayers for those who are precious to the Lord, that all might be maintained with us in sincerity and truth, for there is nothing that so leads souls astray from the line that pleases the Lord as the lack of these. Individuals, even souls together, may make mistakes, may be diverted, but the Lord places great value on sincerity of heart.

Sincerity, in its simple meaning, is this, that if I say I am going a certain way, then I go that way; if I say I am seeking certain things (the Lord sees my heart), then I seek these things. The Lord knows I may slip and fail in my footsteps, but sincerity and truth imply that what the lips say, the heart really knows to be true. It is not a matter of saying we love the Lord more than we do, or the brethren more than we do; sincerity and truth lie in this, that we love them more than we can tell. May we keep the feast together! What will hold us together will be sincerity and truth.

I believe, that when we come together to the Supper to answer to the Lord, even though there may be a sense of the need of the Lord's present grace in regard of temporal things and needs, yet He, blessed be His name, gives the grace, not only to rise above that, but also that an answer may be moved in simple response to His precious love. One wishes to speak simply of the Supper as that which marks the great love of the heart of Christ. What a serious thing it would be for our hearts if ever there came a time with us when the Supper became common! Every heart can answer for itself whether there be any such tendency with us. It should ever have in our hearts the greatness of the place that the love of Christ has given it; not a place as an ecclesiastical centre, not a thing which is the centre of one ecclesiastical setting or another, but that which is the most precious and most searching of all things, for

it raises a constant question with us as to whether our hearts are right with the Lord as His heart is with ours. The question raised by the love of Christ is where our hearts are. You may remember the Old Testament incident to which I refer. "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?", 2 Kings 10: 15. This question was asked by one who was not omniscient, but who would fain know how he was regarded by another.

The Lord knows our hearts omnisciently, nevertheless in the Supper there is a constant appeal to our affections, and the nature of the appeal is this, Is your heart right, as my heart is with yours? There will never be any change in the heart of Christ; His love is the same as when He laid down His life for us. Well-known ground as the subject is, I trust that no heart here has the impression that it has become at all common ground. It never will be that to the heart of Christ, and may He grant it may never become so to us. If it become common to us, the thing that the Lord most sought in the institution of it will be that which we lack - a clear, simple, true, and affectionate answer to the Lord Himself for His own sake. He instituted the Supper; it was His own movement.

The hour of the passover had drawn near, and there is an inquiry on the part of the disciples as to the keeping of it, but the institution of the Supper came in distinctly outside the inquiry of the disciples, it came from the Lord Himself. It was not their request or desire that initiated it. Who could have taken them off the ground of the passover, bound up with their affections as it was, but the Lord Himself? Sweetly the Lord served them in taking their hearts outside of Judaism and all connected with it. The truth as we know it will make us free. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed", John 8: 36. The Lord knew what those disciples needed in regard of Judaism, and He took their hearts with Himself on to new ground in the institution of the Supper. I connect the two morally. What the Lord used for the institution of the Supper was provided for the commemoration of the passover - the bread and the wine. The bread and the cup speak to us of the body and blood of Christ. The cup speaks of the love of God. But I am speaking on this occasion of the Supper not only as the Lord's provision, but of the conditions which the Lord would have on our side in fidelity to Him.

If we have affection, what is the character of it? Is it that which stands in the power of its knowledge? For a moment I would attempt to

make this distinction, that the Lord's appeal is not best answered to by those who know most, but by those who love most. Then, you say at once, that must mean of course by those who have been a long time on the way. No, it does not mean that; but it is really given by hearts to whom the Lord in His own Person is more than anything else, any one else, time, place, or circumstance. It is hearts that love the Lord for His own sake, and respond to Him out of the sense of His own love, that please the Lord best in the Supper.

You may say any one might presume out of their knowledge. There is nothing like love for keeping people quiet. I do not know if you have tried it. I may be thinking of restless people, but there is nothing like love for keeping people quiet, for there is nothing like love so simple and easy to understand. In the presence of the love of Christ, when it lays hold of your soul and impresses your spirit, how much do you want to say? If you were speaking to *my* soul, which might be a little empty, I could understand your feeling much and saying it too, but in the presence of the love of Christ there oftentimes comes to us a sense that the most we can say may be said in the fewest words. We have nothing to tell the Lord about the Supper; infinite has been the patience of the Lord in what He has told us about it, and in the ministry of the Holy Spirit touching our hearts and bringing before us the great, precious, changeless love of Christ, and the love of God the Father.

The more the love of Christ settles upon our spirits individually or when together, the deeper is the sense our hearts have of the peace, the rest of the love of Christ. Then we do not say things to the Lord on the line of description, but our hearts move only on the line of response, and thus we respond with a deep sense of the way we are indebted to the love of Christ. He instituted the Supper from His own side; it was not the suggestion of the disciples; the Lord knew they could not be without it. As one goes on, one feels more and more thankful that the time between the occasions of breaking bread are just what they are and no more. I do not speak as if the Supper was a place of refuge, for the more we taste of the love of Christ as it is conveyed to us then, the more thankful our hearts become that the space between one occasion and another is no longer than it is.

I come now to the service of feet-washing as connected with the love of Christ; it was not done by the desire of His disciples. It stands on the same ground as the Supper in this respect, that it was the Lord's institution, and as much above the understanding of the disciples on

their side as above their desire. We know much about it. Were I to make a slip to-night and seem to confuse between the Lord's feet-washing service, and His advocacy, I can understand even a young soul saying, You are confusing these things. Though I saw the distinction many years ago, I did not learn till long after what the preciousness of the love of Christ was in this particular form of service. We want the things themselves. Here we see the love of Christ moving - the same love that instituted the Supper. I would not say we come to the Supper to get our feet washed, but I believe that often and often, when we have come there we have proved in a most blessed way the manner in which the Lord touched our spirits and washed our feet - removing from our souls not only defilement but the sense of encumbrances and weights, and thus enabling our souls to move freely to the Lord with a fresh touch of the love of Christ that did it. Many things might press upon us - the care of the household, physical conditions, weariness of body, the effect of surroundings; these things might be on the spirit in coming together. God in His great wisdom made man a creature of peculiar sensitiveness. Before he sinned, I believe his sensibilities were keen, but they became blunted by distance from God and sin, but may again become sensitive as a consequence of grace having reached us. Even when we are coming together to meet the Lord, we may pass by surroundings, and places, and conditions, that touch our spirits and fain would leave a shadow. You may say, Need I be so? Would it not be better if I did not feel them? No, it would not be better if you did not feel them, but it would be better if, feeling them, you knew the intensity of the grace and the love of Christ that would serve you in regard of them. Do not get away from the feeling; it might mean more insensibility than piety.

I wish now to say a word to the young that has been impressed on my spirit by reason of certain experiences of the last few days. Possibly you pass places you have been accustomed to enter that you could not enter now, because you love the Lord and belong to Him. But you pass the place and you look at it and say, I am glad I do not go there; I know better now. But is that safety? Is your preservation from the things you used to serve and follow wrapped up in your knowledge? No, it is not. Your safeguard is in the fidelity of the love of Christ. You are not safe unless these things touch your spirit with a sense of pain which turns you to the Lord, for you are depending then on the ministry of the Lord's grace to your spirit.

The Lord instituted the service of feet-washing knowing that His hour was come to depart out of the world, knowing too that He was come from God and went to God, and that the Father had given all things into His hand. The widest possible outlook as to the divine dispensation was before the Lord, and He knew it all. All the inward certainty, and peace, and steadfastness of the Lord's own spirit - if I may speak of it in that way - was in God the Father; and in the great desire and interest of His love He turns to His own circle, and institutes the service of feet-washing. What were His brethren to Him? A sort of second-best? just something given Him because He had lost Israel? No, that is not the love of Christ; His is a love that holds the assembly as the first, and sweetest, and best thing - the treasure that is meet for His own heart and the answer to His own affection, and the gift, too, of the Father. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me" (John 17: 6); and of all of them I have not lost even one. How He holds His own! He holds the best thing first; that which the Father would have for the Son, what the heart of the blessed God would give to Christ (I speak of it reverently) - the best thing first; He has given Him the assembly.

With that upon His heart, the Lord instituted the service of feet-washing; He inaugurated it above the desire, above the findings of the disciples' feelings; He presented it to them in its desirability and in its dignity; actually it was the service of the slave of the house, a menial service in man's ordering. What is its dignity? The dignity of it is that the Son of the Father, the Son of God, the lover of His own has instituted it; He did the service first. Will that ever become common to us, brethren? Shall we satisfy our hearts with the understanding of the doctrine, or do we value it in its own value as the thing Christ did first? He did it first, and as He did it must be its character to the end.

He laid aside His garments. It was His own act, done in His own dignity and in the peculiar greatness of His own Person. Then He took a linen towel and girded Himself. It speaks of the righteousness, lowliness, tenderness, and fidelity of His own affection. He took water, poured it into a basin, and began to wash the feet of His disciples. He *commenced* to do it - notice the word. That was its inauguration. We cannot go into details now, though the more we ponder them, the more precious they will become to our hearts. Look at the circle! I do not know how far round in the circle Peter was, but, in due course, the Lord came to him, and when He came to him, Peter spoke; he had had ample opportunity to consider the matter, but even when the Lord came to him

he had not got over his difficulty about it.

Those who do not know what feet-washing is seldom continue. You say, What do you mean? Well, the sweetest thing that comes to us amongst the saints is the outcome of the understanding of the love of divine Persons, and when you get the sense that a thing that has come to you from another is for the sake of Christ, it washes your feet. You neither misunderstand the motive of the person who may be the instrument of it, nor do you misunderstand it on any false line of your deserving it or otherwise, but if the impression conveyed to your spirit is the impression of the love of Christ, your feet are washed.

How the things that are temporal drop away in the presence of the love of Christ! Preference for persons, difference of circumstances, and many other things, how they all drop out in the presence of the activities of the love of Christ in the circle of His own. You get a touch from a brother. You may think at times, Well, I wonder if I should be much profited by knowing that brother; perhaps he does not look attractive externally. How often we are surprised by the fact that from a vessel that on its exterior does not promise much, there may have been much in it to wash our feet - it was there for *Christ's* sake. Our difficulty may have been rather this, that what was there was not for our sake. Brethren, what washes our feet is not for our sake, but first and most precious of all, for Christ's sake. It must be so, if He is above all others. Everything that makes much of Christ washes the saints' feet. Peace and comfort now from it.

May I say a word as to Peter in regard of continuance? What Peter trusted in was his own strength. In the things of God? Yes, he trusted himself. He said, Though all should be offended, yet will not I. He found himself out of touch with the Lord in feet-washing. If Peter had taken to heart the fact that the Lord had to expose to him that his own feeling was out of accord with Himself, if he had borne on his spirit that tender word of the Lord in regard of feet-washing, might he not have been spared the rest? If I be not minded to accept feet-washing, am I on a line that I can have the Lord's support?

This is the first touch in John's gospel that shews us that Peter was not in accord with the Lord's feelings, and a peculiarly serious one it is; as if the Lord said to him, Peter, the thing that matters most to Me is the thing you do not understand. If he had taken to heart the Lord's word, may we not legitimately suggest he might have been saved the rest? Howbeit, he reached by discipline what the Lord would have

brought him into by feet-washing; such is the fidelity of the love of Christ. I speak from experience which has taught me this. There are many things I may have reached by discipline that I might have reached by feet-washing, but it is the fidelity of the love of Christ that has brought me there in the end.

In regard of the Supper, our gatherings from time to time are so variable, in what I might call their spiritual quality, that we often raise a question as to conditions from the moral point of view, but may I suggest this? that if we washed one another's feet more, our answer to the Lord in the Supper might be more decided and sweet than it is; and I believe too that our power to worship would be greatly enlarged in us.

In regard of Mary, we see the unchangeableness and faithfulness of the love of Christ. I see the Lord, not only in the sense of His suffering and superior to it in the greatness of His love, but I see the Lord again, the living One out of death, alive for evermore, having the keys of death and hades - as He speaks in Revelation, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore", Rev 1: 18. Ah, you say, that is a great guarantee of the fact that He will unlock the situation at the rapture. It is a sweet guarantee of the fact, brethren, that He can unlock it now. He took the affections of Mary on to entirely new ground; rapture affections, in the principle of them, are affections that are engaged with the Lord in an entirely new place. He said to Mary, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God", John 20: 17. Before the affections of Mary were in touch with the brethren, in the power of the Lord's word they travelled to a new place. It was the power of the ministry of the Lord to Mary that took her affections from earthly hopes even in Himself, and anticipatively carried them to the place with which the declaration was connected: "my Father, and your Father ... my God, and your God".

Now He says, "go to my brethren". She went and told them. It was the fidelity of the love of Christ securing a heart in the power of affection, connected not only with the lordship of Christ but sweetly and divinely connected with the Lord Himself - the Object of the Father's pleasure, the Firstborn amongst many brethren, yea, I think we might say, as the Head of the assembly, His body, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all", Eph 1: 23. Her affections went to the new place, and they went there to stay there.

I do not wish to be mystical, but I think no one can give you so much practical help in your difficulties as a person who is connected with heaven. God solves time's difficulties for eternity. The person whose heart is where Christ is, is not necessarily an impracticable sort of person. You will find far more help in your difficulties from a man whose heart is in heaven, for the reason that he brings in the light of God's presence on them and not the accumulated knowledge of man.

I close with one word more. The Lord spoke thrice to Peter. It was in the presence of the brethren He spoke, and I would draw your attention to this, because it may touch our spirits without leaving any undue shadow on our minds, that the reason for His plain speaking these three times to Peter was to draw out in tender expression to Himself the character and the quality of the love of Peter. He did not ask Peter if he believed. Look at the tender movement of priestly care and shepherding that reached Peter! That must have been a tender proof to the heart of Peter of how much the Lord loved him. Nevertheless, three times He spoke, "Lovest thou me?" At last Peter was grieved because the Lord said to him the third time, "Lovest thou me?" and he said, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee", John 21: 15-17. Brethren, that is what the Lord is seeking. Then He says to Peter, "Feed my sheep".

The object of the Lord's plain speaking to our hearts at this time may be, that as we are helped to answer to Himself in simple and deep feeling, He may entrust to us in a deeper way than before the things that are most precious to His heart. May we covet these things.

King James and Darby Bibles used in quotations in this article.

The preceding address comes from a collection of 14 articles of James Catterall's ministry, published shortly after his death in 1927. An enlarged collection of 34 articles, entitled *Memorials of Ministry by James B Catterall*, is available from **www.lulu.com**.

A new book, '*The Lord's Supper Meetings in Indianapolis 2023*', notes of meetings held last November, is also available to order from this website