

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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“THE LEADER AND COMPLETER OF FAITH”

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AM We all have to do with the Lord Jesus, and we know Him in many ways. Thinking of this occasion, the expression came to mind, “the leader and completer of faith”. The footnote in verse 2 helps us to see that He is the One who sets it on, note e. He is the One who sets on the whole matter of faith and He fulfils it completely. It may seem that faith applies to us, and of course it does; nevertheless it is true that the Lord Jesus, as a Man here, lived by faith. We see several references to that.

Psalm 16 contains prophetically the words of One who lived by faith, showing His utter dependence upon God (and faith would be connected with dependence), and the way in which He was found here as a Man in relation to God. The psalms bring in expressions of faith that relate to the Lord Jesus from His very incoming and the scriptures also speak of faith seen in Him in relation to what He endured. The Lord Jesus is no longer in circumstances to which faith applies; He is in glory; He “is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”. But we are in circumstances to which faith applies, and we are here in this day of faith, this day which was set on by the Lord Jesus and continues until He comes “God's dispensation, which is in faith”, 1 Tim 1: 4. Faith is a feature that is to mark the present day, the day of faith. We are to be found here as pursuing the path of faith and we have a glorious Object.

Faith is closely allied with believing. The Lord Jesus said to His own, “ye believe on God” - that would be the case of every pious, God-fearing soul; and then He added, “believe also on me”. That would have come as fresh light to the disciples, that a Man could be an object of faith. The Lord Jesus said that towards the end of that wonderful pathway of faith.

I touched on Ephesians because we have been “created in Christ Jesus for good works”. The “good works” are what were manifested in the life of Jesus and we have been created for them, and God has acted in such a way that we should be fully endowed with all the resources that we need. I read from verse 4 onwards because it seems that the good works, being what were seen in the Lord Jesus,

are not achieved by effort, but they are achieved by those who know their place where Jesus is. The statements, “raised us up together”, and “sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus”, are apprehended by faith, and by faith we know that He will “display in the coming ages the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus”. Faith is crucial to all these things - the Holy Spirit too - but faith in us is a crucial factor and it is from that standpoint, as having that glorious light in our souls, that we can go out through the sphere of testimony having been created for good works.

CHS Scripture says, “without faith it is impossible to please him”, Heb 11: 6. The Lord says, “I do always the things that are pleasing to him” (John 8: 29), and in Hebrews we get reference to, “All these died in faith”, Heb 11: 13. That is perhaps drawing attention to how they walked, but the other side is that, “he who has begun in you a good work will complete it”, Phil 1: 6. Does this show God's faithfulness?

AM So in every soul in whom there is faith, there is a work which will be completed. But if we want to see faith in operation without any possibility of failure whatever, we have to look to the One who is “the leader and the completer” of it. It is a precious thing to think that the Lord Jesus set it on. Faith was found in the Old Testament saints, but it was really prefiguring what the Lord Jesus set on.

RMB Would it be right to say that in chapter 11, in the list of men of faith, we see in those various individuals how they set forth one particular feature of it, whether it be the patience of faith, the obedience of faith, or the reckoning of faith; but would this reference to “the leader and completer of faith” mean that every feature of it was set forth in all its blessedness in Him?

AM Faith is that by which we are able to please God. Could there be anything that is pleasing to God that is not seen in the Lord Jesus? “The leader and completer”; He has filled out the whole matter of faith. Really this was the culmination of all God's ways right through the Old Testament. We know that the Lord Jesus was the Creator and He created the world, but what was in mind, right from the outset, was that there would be a demonstration of faith in a Man here upon earth. You could say that was one reason why the earth was created.

DMW It has been said in ministry (see remark in JT vol 73 p301) that we look at the Old Testament saints retrospectively, but we really learn faith by looking at the One who set it on and completed it.

AM So the Lord Jesus speaks of acting in the power of the Holy Spirit, but He also acted in faith in everything. Every day was a matter of faith, “morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed”, Isa 50: 4. There we see One who, in faith, was waiting upon the word of God.

DMW This “cloud of witnesses” are to be joined, in other words; they come all the way through to the present time, but we join “so great a cloud of witnesses” ourselves.

AM The cloud is growing. One definition of a cloud is 'a body without a boundary'. That is true, we have “a cloud of witnesses”; it does not have a boundary: it is growing.

DAB Is the idea of completion entirely future?

AM No, as to the Lord Jesus; He completed the whole course of faith.

DAB I was thinking of the passage, He “gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously”, 1 Pet 2: 23. But then it says He was heard on account of His piety, Heb 5: 7. That was completed in resurrection. I was thinking of Abraham: he looked for a city, which has yet to appear, but as to his faith in the promised seed and the resurrection, he had those as possessions. I wondered whether that would help us to see that there are things to realise now, and it would be a shame to put off the realisation of everything we have in Christ to some point in the future. We become established when we lay hold of things that we can have now.

AM One thing that we have in the passage in Ephesians is the word “together”; here we are together, we can experience something. In finality it will be immense, but here we can experience what we will know then.

DAB As to the verse in Ephesians, it does not say, 'sit down in heaven', and as I understand it is the character of the circumstances and the ground on which we gather together.

AM So “the heavenlies” is character. Heaven is a place, that is where Jesus is, but “the heavenlies” is the character of where we have been set.

PM Did the Lord Jesus, as going into death, see the fruit already of what that death would be? “When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see a seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure

of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand”, Isa 53: 10. He already saw what was going to be the fruit.

AM Yes, He did. In John 17 He speaks to His Father about it, “These things Jesus spoke, and lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour is come”. What depths are in those words, and then He adds, “glorify thy Son”, v 1. All that that hour was going to involve was going to be immediately followed with glory, “glorify thy Son”. His faith was there, the Father would do that.

AML Could you say something about “looking stedfastly”? Is that a real committal?

AM We have to know Him to look stedfastly on Him. It is a great feature of this epistle. Early in the epistle it says, “we see Jesus ... crowned with glory and honour”, Heb 2: 9. That is His personal distinctiveness. Here we are “looking stedfastly” - the footnote says, 'looking away from other things and fixing the eye exclusively on one', note *d*. As we look stedfastly, we appreciate, in our measure, His personal distinctiveness as “crowned with glory and honour”; but as we look stedfastly we also see Him at the right hand of power. How are we going to get through, how are we going to go through this scene? There is One, the object of our faith, at the right hand of power. He is worth committing ourselves to.

AML The chapter starts, “Let *us*”. We have a similar idea in Philippians too, “let this mind be in you”, chap 2: 5.

AM He does not say, 'you must', but “Let *us* therefore, having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, laying aside every weight, and sin which so easily entangles us, run with endurance the race that lies before us”. That is together.

HTF “Being full of the Holy Spirit, having fixed his eyes on heaven, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7: 55); is that an example of what we are speaking of?

AM There was a man who died in faith. He was superior to the circumstances, he went out in absolute confidence and faith in the One whom he had seen he “fixed his eye on heaven”. He was not looking at those opposers: He had a better object, another object, an object that exceeded everything on earth. There is a Man in heaven, the object of his faith and the object of his affections too.

DKS Could you open up what you suggested, that it is almost as if the

cloud is growing? One of the wonderful things about what we have in the Lord Jesus and in Christianity is that even in death what a person has been in faith is never forgotten. You go to a locality and you speak to persons about brothers and sisters who are now with the Lord, and it is almost as though that faith is still there in that room; it never goes. Is that the very attractive sense of the drawing power of Jesus, He never stops drawing that faith out?

AM What you find is that it is not the person's physical mannerisms, or anything like that, but it is what someone gained in their soul from a brother or a sister, something gained that leads you to Christ. That is the important thing; the effect of faith is to lead you to Christ.

PM Is His personal name important? It is the attractiveness of Jesus, His personal name, not only His office, but what He is Himself that draws our heart.

AM It was not His office that led Him to pursue the course of faith; it was what He was morally; that is greater. What is moral is greater than what is official, and what the Lord Jesus was morally is seen in that blessed pathway of faith, and that is the One whose moral greatness we are exhorted to look on.

TJH I was wondering whether we see the “leader ... of faith” in the commencement of His life as well as at the end of His life looking on to the glory. I was looking at Psalm 22: “thou art he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me trust, upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God from my mother's belly”, v 9,10. There is the Leader of faith at the commencement of His life, totally relying on something outside of Himself.

AM I thought about that verse, “I was cast upon thee from the womb”; it is a very holy matter. I feel very limited in what I can about it, but what you can say is that every moment of the life of Jesus was pleasing to the Father and He lived by faith. There is a certain mystery to that verse.

RWMcC I was noticing recently, “But the just shall live by faith” (Heb 10: 38) - the note there to “just” is, 'Or possibly this may read 'my just man', i.e. God's just one, the one he owns as such', note *d*. It is really seen pre-eminently in Christ.

AM That is good. We know well that the passage from Habakkuk 2: 4 is quoted three times in the New Testament. It shows that it is a principle on which it is right to live. 'My just man' “shall live by faith”; God

could say that with full assurance, a matter of divine purpose that He should be here, honouring God in a pathway of faith.

DMW With reference to faith in the Old Testament, it is rendered “the just shall live by his faith”. It is the one time that the word faith appears; you would think that it would appear more often, with Abraham, the father of faith. It actually looked forward to this day, the time of faith.

AM You get the line of those who lived by faith, starting with Abel, individuals, until you reach Abraham, and then there is a head of a family. It is a family of faith. That was pre-figured in Abraham and is now taken up in the assembly. The assembly is a family of faith.

MIW It has sometimes been described as a principle for our life here and that would enter into the details. I wondered whether as it is expressed in this passage in relation to the Lord, it has in view that which is beyond what is here: “in view of the joy lying before him”. I wondered whether true faith, the exercise of it, has an object beyond that which is immediate.

AM It must have. The Lord had that joy. You can hardly define what that joy was. There is the fulfilling of the will of God (John 4: 34), many sons brought to glory (Heb 2: 10), the securing of the assembly, Matt 16: 18. All this was “the joy lying before him”. It was everything that was going to be brought about, the great end. Someone might think that the joy was to have the assembly for Himself, and He has that, but the Lord's joy was not a selfish joy; the Lord's feelings were always for the Father. He lived by what the Father said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which goes out through God's mouth”, Matt 4: 4. That is the language of faith.

RJF In the temptations we get a distinctive expression of the Lord's faith, from what you quote, but then, “Thou shalt do homage to the Lord thy God, and him alone shalt thou serve” (Matt 4: 10), is proceeding in faith; and then, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (v 7), that is seeking to be in relation to God in faith.

AM You can see that Satan was powerless against that. Satan has three weapons, “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”, 1 John 2: 16. He has filled the world with those things. None of that was found in the Lord Jesus; He was absolutely sin apart; He was immaculate. Think of the perfection of that blessed One and what was there; what motivated Him in everything was His link with the Father and the faith that was expressed in that.

RMB Is that an important feature of faith? Even when the Lord Jesus had the suffering and the shame of the cross immediately before Him, He Himself was looking beyond it to what was on the other side.

AM What was beyond it did not in any way deaden the awfulness of what was before Him. On Lord's day morning when we met together for the great occasion, we started with a hymn which contained the words:

The awful power of death didst meet! (Hymn 339)

We get earlier in Hebrews the One, "Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up both supplications and entreaties to him who was able to save him out of death, with strong crying and tears", Heb 5: 7. That was faith. He felt far more than any creature would feel in what He was going to endure, but His faith remained steadfast in the One who was going to save Him out of death. That is in resurrection.

RMB I wondered whether, "set down at the right hand of the throne of God" might link to the reference to Him being the "completer of faith"? We have the advantage in a sense in being able to take account of Him now, because in Himself where He is now He sets out where the path of faith ends.

AM Indeed, that is what was in my mind in the other scriptures; it is a question of our destination: "run with endurance the race that lies before us". We know that is the race from earthly things to heavenly things, things which do not belong on the earth. That is the great goal that is set before us, and there is One who has gone before and completed that pathway in faith.

GJR Could I suggest that Satan has a fourth weapon and it is that which the Lord met in Gethsemane?

AM Yes he does, the fear of death.

JR Despair also, it is a weapon of the enemy.

AM I have sometimes thought about Luke's account of the strong man, which is slightly different from the others, it says, "when the stronger than he coming upon him overcomes him, he takes away his panoply in which he trusted" (Luke 11: 22), and I have wondered whether that is an additional thought. We know in binding the strong man, Satan was unable to find an advantage over the Lord Jesus in any way, but I have wondered whether "takes away his panoply in which he trusted" is a veiled allusion to the fact that Satan held men for the whole of their lives in bondage through fear of death.

GJR That is very suggestive. In relation to Peter the Lord said, “/ have besought for thee that thy faith fail not” (Luke 22: 32), and it did not.

AM So Peter was one who may well have despaired; he may well have said, 'the Lord has no more need of me I have failed Him so badly', but the Lord had prayed for him. He loved the Lord, the Lord knew that, and his faith went through. At that time there was another man in whom there was no faith, no work of God at all, and he despaired, and there was no help for him.

ADS In Hebrews, before we have as to running the race, it first speaks of the things we should lay aside. I was thinking of the two on the way to Emmaüs; their faith was affected because of what they were occupied with. The Lord encouraged their hearts by occupying them with Himself, opening up all the things concerning Himself. Is that important? It speaks of “looking stedfastly”, our occupation, and then “the joy lying before him”; would that be the living hope we have of Him coming again?

AM That is our hope. In some of the epistles the apostle writes, “We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ continually ... on account of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens”, Col 1: 3-5. We have that hope. Hope is the assurance of something in the future, but faith makes what you cannot see real to you because it is receiving what is from God.

DMW Is faith hopeful? It occurred to me, when we had 1 Corinthians 13 at the marriage meeting earlier this week, faith, hope and love. It seems that love is faithful and love is hopeful. I was wondering whether faith was hopeful because it says, “Christ Jesus our hope”, 1 Tim 1: 1. He is our object of faith.

AM “Faith ... is the conviction of things not seen” (Heb 11: 1), and hope does not imply doubt; hope is conviction as to the future.

RHB It says in Matthew, in referring to Gethsemane, “he began to be sorrowful and deeply depressed”, Matt 26: 37. Help us as to that in relation to Him being “the leader and completer of faith”.

AM It is perfectly right for a believer to be sorrowful about specific things, it is perfectly right that we should feel things, and the Lord Himself, in taking up the place perfectly as Man here, felt things. He felt things in relation to God, the sorrow of departure from God, the way He wept over Jerusalem, but think of what was before Him. He knew the

awfulness of what was before Him and it was a matter of grief to Him. We see that in Gethsemane, “if it be possible” (Matt 26: 39), but it was not. His faith did not fail, He went forward, and He met it because it was the will of God for Him.

RHB The Lord interceded for Peter that his faith would not fail. There was no question that it would not fail with the Lord. You do hear that it is said of persons that they have lost their faith, in other words their faith has failed under pressure: how can we prevent that in relation to our own souls?

AM Faith is connected with the work of God in the soul. That will never be lost. I may lose the enjoyment of being occupied with the One who is “the leader and completer of faith”. The Lord never gave up; He could never give up.

RHB What you are saying would exercise us as to being real. Paul speaks of, “the end of what is enjoined is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and unfeigned faith”, 1 Tim 1: 5. You can travel a long way with outward appearances and with the crowd and the flow, but the tests and sorrows that arise are used of God to bring out the reality, if it is there, of what exists, or the unreality to be exposed. God is entitled to bring in tests that reveal whether I am real or not.

AM The psalmist says, “Jehovah is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup”. Now, every believer would say our inheritance is with God, it is with the Lord; He is the portion of our inheritance, “and of my cup” is the immediate portion for now, today. How am I enjoying that? “Jehovah is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup”. The cup is what has an immediate effect.

TJH The Lord Jesus is known as the “man of sorrows” (Isa 53: 3); that does not detract from Him being “the leader and completer of faith”.

AM That is what His people saw in Him, but there was something inward that they could not see, and that was the great work of faith.

DAB The Lord had asked for something for Peter that Peter should have asked for himself. Unfortunately, his self-confidence led him to neglect his faith. I remember Mr Brian Surtees saying that we cannot say his faith failed, but the courage to exercise his faith failed, and yet he was a witness of what Jesus faced. He could not have said that what he faced was unfelt by Jesus; he witnessed in Jesus more profound feelings than his testing had inflicted on Peter. It is very touching that the Lord takes charge of Peter's case even before he needs to be

recovered.

AM What wonderful grace that is! He warns Peter, “Where I go thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me after”, John 13: 36. He was going to do a work that none other could do; none could follow Him where He was going. It is grace all along with Peter in the face of that self-confidence.

DAB He learned also that love for Christ had more power than self-confidence could ever find. I wondered whether that puts it within the reach of us all; it would urge us to act out of our love for Christ.

AM Love is the greatest power in the universe.

RHB Paul speaks in Romans of having, “mutual comfort among you, each by the faith which is in the other”, Rom 1: 12. I wondered whether that underlies the importance of being available to the Lord to draw near to persons that may be under test or sorrow because of a few words of faith will strengthen theirs. Is that how it works?

AM I have received that. Maybe a quiet word from someone who did not realise that it meant anything to me, and yet it just gives one that encouragement and strengthening.

CHS It has been said that faith without the Spirit will wane, C A Coates vol 24 (Readings on the Lord's Supper) p10. I was thinking of what is says of Stephen, “being full of the Holy Spirit”, Acts 7: 55. We need to fix our eyes on the Lord Jesus and to walk here in faith; we have to depend on another power.

AM The Holy Spirit's mission is primarily to keep the Lord Jesus before us, “he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you”, John 16: 14. His mission is to bring something of Christ glorified to the saints constantly.

TRC In relation to Stephen in Acts 6, the word was, “Look out therefore, brethren, from among yourselves seven men, well reported of, full of the Holy Spirit”, v 3. It goes on to say, “they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit”, v 5. I wondered whether that would confirm what has been brought in. Faith has a reward; it is a living matter. Stephen got the reward of faith and it is available for us.

AM The two go together, the Holy Spirit and faith. The Holy Spirit is a divine Person so in a sense He is sovereign and acts from His own side. Faith is something which is given to us; both are gifts by God for us to exercise. We have that responsibility.

DMW Is it not said that the Holy Spirit links on with faith and supports faith?

AM In Psalm 16 the saints are brought in, "To the saints that are on the earth, and to the excellent thou hast said, In them is all my delight". Think of the Lord Jesus being here as an object of unqualified delight to the Father, but the saints are too, an object of delight to the Father, and as we are conscious of that it encourages us to keep the Lord before us, keep looking stedfastly on Jesus.

AAC Is that essential for the maintenance of faith? David says here, "I have set Jehovah continually before me". If we look elsewhere our faith fails - we know that - but it is something that David did and it would help using this.

AM Faith has an object and that object is a blessed Man. If I am not looking at Him, what am I looking at? Can I have faith in anything else? You cannot. Even in nature - the most blessed relationships in nature - you cannot have unqualified faith like you can have with the Lord Jesus.

AAC So this is a mystery to the world. What Stephen saw and was maintained through, those around could not understand and the world around us cannot understand either, "we see Jesus" (Heb 2: 9) and that maintains us.

AM Do you think that Stephen falling asleep in that way, and what he said, may be an example of the influence of faith upon another? There was one of those bystanders who referred to "thy martyr Stephen" (Acts 22: 20, KJV), his testimony. There was one who was affected by a soul who died in faith.

DJK I was thinking of what has been said in relation to the Lord being deeply depressed. I was reflecting on Psalm 22, "for there is none to help". v 11. For the Lord Jesus, there was none to help Him, but that is not so for us. I appreciate what has come in as to the Lord Jesus as "the leader and completer of faith" but also the gift of the Spirit.

AM We have been so well furnished. We have One who has demonstrated the whole course of faith from beginning to end; He is now in glory. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit we are now united to Him, we have a living link with Him, and we have the precious gift of faith that keeps Him before us as a great example for all our time here. What a blessed matter! We are richly furnished.

DAB Is union with Christ in glory an aspect of the completing? When

the psalmist here refers to the saints, is the completion of the Lord's work seen in the host that will be with Him and like Him?

AM His main work is to secure the saints: "bringing many sons to glory"; that is the main work of the Lord Jesus.

DAB I was thinking of Psalm 22, where in spirit David refers to the forsaking; he says, "in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises", Heb 2: 12. That is the completion of that great work. It goes, in a sense, beyond atonement, but goes on to the union of those who have the Spirit with Himself in glory.

AM That psalm ends with His seed, those whom He has secured. Those who form the assembly in the midst of which He sings the Father's praises.

TJH Does that look on to where it speaks in Ephesians of "through Christ Jesus" and by the power of the Holy Spirit in the assembly? Do we have all the saints there and what is mentioned in Psalm 16?

AM What is in mind in Ephesians 2, what we enter into in spirit, is the fulfilment of all divine work, "raised us up together" - "God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love wherewith he loved us, (we too being dead in offences,) has quickened us with the Christ". That is not faith: that is actual. Our hearts are actually stirred, made to live. "Has raised us up together"; we lay hold of that in faith because we are still in bodies that are subject to decay. "Has made us sit down together in the heavenlies", we enter into that by faith, "that he might display in the coming ages the surpassing riches of his grace". Faith is crucial and the effect of it will be seen in the great day of display.

DAB This reference to Christ Jesus shows what God has always had in His mind, but He had in His mind One who could bring it out gloriously to completion without an input from anybody else, and give to it the heavenly character which was in God's mind that it should have.

AM And He has used time for the working out of it, and it is time that is the setting in which faith is needed and operates.

DAB In time, each of us, like the Lord Himself, has been given a cup. It might speak of the things that enter into our lives - not everything in that cup is sweet, and it is very personal, but it comes from God and it has God's end in view.

AM That is the great thing about faith; whatever the circumstances you can trace things back to God, whatever I am passing through, the

joys as well as the sorrows.

TJH So the delight was for God. Without faith we cannot please God; I wondered whether there is a link there with faith and pleasure for God.

AM Faith is the means by which we can afford pleasure for God. It comes in in relation to Enoch. It does not say of Enoch that he did any great works, such as Abel who offered a sacrifice, or Noah who built an ark. It does not say anything like that with Enoch, but he “walked with God”, Gen 5: 24. Without faith it is impossible to please God. “For he that draws near to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who seek him out”, Heb 11: 6.

PM Faith gives us the light. Does the Spirit give us the present experience of it? It is wonderful to have the light but Mr Raven said, 'We get nothing by faith ..., but we do not get anything without faith ... faith is the way of everything, but you get everything by the Spirit', vol 3 p86. Faith gives us the light, but the Spirit gives us the present experience and joy of it.

AM Indeed. In the light we find that everything has been done.

I would recommend to everybody a little booklet called 'Safety, Certainty and Enjoyment', by George Cutting. You find safety in the Light, the light that has come, the Lord Jesus has died; the enjoyment is in the gift of the Holy Spirit.

RHB Those two things are brought together in Galatians, “For we, by the Spirit, on the principle of faith, await the hope of righteousness”, Gal 5: 5. The two are put together in relation to “the hope of righteousness”.

AM The “hope of righteousness”. Paul, in Philippians, was looking forward, that he would not have his righteousness, which would be on the principle of works, but a divinely given righteousness.

RHB God reckons us as righteous as we put our faith in Christ, and that has a hope. We look to where the Leader is now and we see where the path of faith ends and that brings joy. Hope brings joy into the soul. It enters into this psalm, even though He was a Man of sorrows, He says, “Therefore my heart rejoiceth, and my glory exulteth; my flesh moreover shall dwell in hope”.

AM In that psalm he accepted everything from God in faith. “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places” (Ps 16: 6); think of the life of Jesus here, His public service, how He was assailed on every hand, but

He could say, this is from the Father, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places". Then He has the hope. How much can we say that? What God has ordained for us becomes pleasant as we accept it from Him.

DAB David's hope is remarkable because he looks forward to the resurrection and glorification of Jesus; and his hope was that he, David, too would be raised and glorified. In a sense, we are in an easier position as we know that Jesus has been raised and glorified. So when we say we shall be like Him, that is our hope, it is easier to arrive at than it was before it happened.

AM It should be. We have the assurance. Things that have actually taken place should give us confidence and strength as to what will yet take place.

ADS Does faith involve bringing things to God? I was thinking of what David says in Psalm 62, "Confide in him at all times, ye people; pour out your heart before him" (v 8); in that psalm he says, "Upon God alone doth my soul rest peacefully", v 1. In Psalm 16 he says, "my flesh moreover shall dwell in hope" and the footnote to that is, 'shall rest in safety', note *k*.

AM That is a beautiful touch, 'rest in safety'. Faith gives us the confidence and assurance of things unseen. When you have the assurance you can rest in safety.

There is a lovely footnote in Psalm 4 referring to committing yourself to Jehovah: it says, 'Implying 'security without anxiety'', note *f*. That is a very testing footnote to me but one I enjoy very much: 'security without anxiety', and that is the portion of the believer.

"We are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works". That is the life of faith, all that was seen in the Lord Jesus Himself. It follows the assurance of a glorified Man and our portion together in heavenly places.

DMW Is this the life of new creation?

AM Yes, what was seen in Jesus is for us new creation. For us it is entirely new, what God has wrought.

DMW It is above this scene, it is not the wilderness, not exactly the presentation in Colossians, our death and resurrection with Christ by faith: this is not simply what is accepted by faith as the operation of God; this is actual possession. The workmanship of God is far beyond

standing.

AM The workmanship of God - can there be anything greater?

RHB That might involve what is adverse, according to Romans, “knowing that tribulation works endurance; and endurance, experience; and experience, hope”, Rom 5: 3,4. They have been described as God's workers and they are to bring about a great result, but it is God's workmanship, He knows what is needed and how much is needed.

AM And that chain of things ends with, “hope does not make ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us”, v 5.

CHS So we are reminded about “God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love wherewith he loved us”; we can have faith in God.

AM We can. He is operating on totally different lines from man - “but God”. The chapter begins, “and *you*, being dead in your offences and sins”, and then it says, “but God”. It is a totally different order of things altogether.

Chelmsford

31st May 2025

List of initials:

D A Burr, Sidcup; R H Brown, Maidstone; R M Brown, Strood;
T R Campbell, Glasgow; A A Croot, Sidcup; R J Flowerdew, Sunbury;
H T Franklin, Grimsby; T J Harvey, East Finchley; D J Klassen,
Aberdeen, ID; A M Lidbeck, Aberdeen, ID; R W McClean, Grimsby;
A Martin, Buckhurst Hill; P Martin, Colchester; G J Richards, Malvern;
A D Smith, Chelmsford; C H Smith, Chelmsford; D K Smith,
Chelmsford; M I Webster, Buckhurst Hill; D M Welch, Denton TX

THE LOVE OF GOD

D Andrew Burr

1 John 4: 15-19

I wonder if we might spend a few moments thinking about the subject of this section, the love of God. We have often done so in gospel preachings; no doubt those here who have preached have often made it their subject. I expect it has been spoken of every time the gospel has been preached, the love of God. We have read from John and we may notice as we go on that another writer, the apostle Paul, says that “God commends *his* love to us”, Rom 5: 8. That is worth thinking about: God would like us all to have some deeper understanding of what that love is and what it tells us about Him; and especially what it tells us about His attitude, His disposition towards us. I trust that nobody here has any wrong ideas about the love of God, but if there are any mistaken understandings about it, speaking of it simply might clear them up. It is one of those subjects that any believer who already knows about it would like to hear of again, and would like to know more about it than they already do.

The scripture here tells us that “God is love”, it is His nature, it colours everything He does, and everything He says. There is an interesting expression in this first section which the writer has used more than once: he says that “God has so loved us”. There is another place where he uses that expression that God has “so loved”, John 3: 16. Therefore, this writer is trying to give an impression of the greatness and the depth of the love of God, what it is that has moved God, how it has moved Him and what it has led Him to do. This passage that I have read speaks of “perfect love”. That is a very interesting idea and we might wonder what that means. How can love be thought of in that way, “perfect love”? I think it is that there is no greater way in which love can be described. There is a fulness about it; there is nothing missing. There is nothing that I might wish to find with the love of God that we will not find. In His love and what His love has done, the mighty God Himself has made His very nature known to us. He has not simply given us a glimpse of it. He has shown it in a way that is capable of filling the hearts of everyone who opens their heart to it and to Him.

I might say something to begin about the way that God has made us. The account given in the beginning of the Bible presents

mankind as a creature of God. It presents God as the Creator, and then man as His creature. I know that is not a widely-received idea in society now. There are other ideas about how the human race in its present form came to be. I am not going into the science of them; all I would say about those ideas now is that if they were true then I cannot see where God fits into the picture at all. I certainly cannot see how the revelation of God fits into that picture, or how the knowledge of His love can really be acquired if the evolutionary process by which man is said to have come into being were true.

What we actually read in the Scriptures (which are God's account of what happened) is that mankind is a creature of God, and a very special creature. We know that the account describes how the rest of the creation was brought into being by a word, but how, when it came to the human race, the Bible tells us that man was formed in the hand of God (Gen 2: 7), and made into what I might call a vessel into which things could be put. How God did that; how long it took, we are not told. We would not understand how God could make us as He has if we were told. We may look at ourselves and look at each other and see what remarkable creations we are. It is not simply that we have a physical capacity. We can walk and run and all such things. We can also think in a way that sets us apart from everything else in the creation. Our minds work in much more sophisticated ways. We also have deep affections and other emotions that we all know about, that stir within us. God did not simply create us in that way to go off and make our own history. The final thing that is said about the creation of man is that God breathed into him and, having breathed into him, man became by that means "a living soul". Again, that sets us apart from animals who do not live on that principle.

What did God have in mind in doing that? To impart His breath to man in that way meant that the human race was formed in a special way, and set upon the earth with an already established relationship with God, which God Himself had made. God Himself had done that. He had not left man to go off and do his own thing. Man, as he moved out into his life here, had that connection with God Himself. When I speak about a connection I do not simply mean that that is where it originated, but it was a means of communication so that man could have and develop over time the knowledge of God. God could speak to him; and He could show him that He loved him. That is something worth thinking about that God has used means of His own creation to

provide the way, the channel, by which He could tell us all that He loves us. He can do this through the spirit that He has given to us. That is a very blessed thing and it shows what the heart of God is like, that He wanted to express Himself; and He found a way entirely of His own design by which that expression of Himself could be done successfully.

We know the next chapter in the history of man, that man and woman began to sin, and in sinning, they interfered with that relationship that they had with God. I am not going now to try and prove that that was so because everyone knows it has happened. The reason why everyone knows it has happened is that they are very aware of its consequences. One of the saddest consequences is that the intended knowledge of God's love was lost. In its place we have what we have in this section I have read: we have fear. That is a tragedy, that a God full of love and ready to make that love known to us and to fill our hearts with it and to look for an answer to that love in us, takes account of man wandering away from Him in self-will and sin; and he has gone so far that when someone speaks to him about God, he is afraid. Adam and Eve found that even in the garden of Eden, but we find it today if you speak to someone about their conduct, about things scripture calls sin, if you ask them where they stand with God and whether they are ready to meet Him. God never intended that questions like that should make people afraid. He never intended that but that is what happens even for people who have been brought up in a Christian environment, who may have come to this very hall all their lives; we all know that none of us is perfect.

I remember a long time ago coming to the gospel preaching when I was a child. I would not have said I knew the preachers very well, and I cannot say that I understood what they said very much, but I can remember often thinking that the preacher seemed to know about me better than I believed he could. If I had been naughty during the week, when the preacher spoke about sin and what God required, that awakened my conscience. The awakening of a conscience makes people afraid. God has given us that capacity and sometimes it is for our protection, obviously. But to be afraid of *God* is not what God intended. It says here that "fear has torment". It brings torment and trouble. God intends that people should be at peace. Paul speaks of that in Romans 5, "peace towards God", v 1. It is a wonderful thing to prove that, but the soul who has wandered from God is afraid. He or she makes that clear by seeking not to have God in his or her knowledge. Paul speaks about that: "they did not think good to have

God in their knowledge”, Rom 1: 28. Why did they think that? I suppose man thought he was self-sufficient. It seemed to be a solution to the fear, to shut God out altogether, even to come up with some alternative explanation for mankind's presence here on earth which does not need a God at all. That is a very sad situation.

Another thing I want to speak about is that in those early days God created a relationship between man and his wife, and then other relationships have flowed out of that. He has underpinned those relationships with what Scripture calls “natural affection”, Rom 1: 31. It is distinguished from the love that God has shown to us, not because it is quite different, but it operates at a different level. It is a horizontal thing that serves as the foundation of a relationship one with another. It is crucial to the harmonious and happy development of society and especially the family. God's idea is that society should have its foundation in the family. Relationships in the family should be governed by natural affection. That is a very wonderful thing. You will find that love in a family, parental love for example for the children, is or should be unconditional. That is, if I may say to the young people here, your parents love you because you are their children. It is not that they love you because you are good or because you are developing in certain ways that suit their ideas for you or their ambitions for you. They do not love you because of what you know and the way you can discuss and that kind of thing. They love you for what you are. That is of God, and it is a very wonderful thing. It is a strong bond in society. We might also think of new relationships that are formed - maybe they form in a slightly different way if you are attracted to someone else. That is not unconditional because we are attracted to things we like about somebody else. That is natural affection as well. It works in a very interesting way. Where it is working there is a longing to possess the object of my affections and a readiness to trust myself and give myself to that person. It breaks down barriers in a way that otherwise you might say are unwise, and safeguard my own personal security. The way that love works is not very easy to explain, but it establishes a new basis for confidence and trust, very deep trust, very deep personal trust, and becomes the foundation of a new relationship. That also is of God. One of the consequences of sin which we read of in Romans is that we have Godless people “without natural affection”. That is a terrible thing, “without natural affection”.

One of the saddest things in the world today are all the children who are, for all practical purposes, abandoned by those who brought

them into the world. Some of them are abandoned to the extent that they live in the care of the authorities or they may nominally live at home, but without security. There is no manifestation of affection. People are taken up with themselves in a selfish kind of way, the children feel unwanted. They get into gangs where they have some respect and all kinds of other mischief. That is not of God. What a terrible thing it must be for God that He has offered a heart of love, and put into the heart of His creature the capacity to love those for whom they are responsible, and He looks and finds that essential ingredient missing. I do not want to be negative about these things. I wanted to keep to what God had in His mind. One of the consequences of this fall - because that is how we would speak of it - is that it has produced a lost condition. When we speak about a lost condition, what we mean is that it is not possible for those who are lost to recover themselves. It is like falling into the sea or falling down a big hole: you cannot get out. Sometimes we feel like that. We get into a situation which gets rather complicated and difficult, or we may find someone has let us down or something like that. We get into a situation which makes us feel rather foolish or depressed, but we cannot think how we are to get out of the situation. The sinner's position is like that. The sinner is lost. God has not changed but people have turned away from God; they are His enemies. He has not treated us as enemies, but we have made God an enemy. The reason for that is that His will is different from ours. What have we lost in doing that? We have lost the great governing power of His love. Paul says in one of the epistles that we have become "alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works", Col 1: 21. That is that the wicked works have created hatred and enmity between ourselves and God. And above all things, fear.

God has not changed at all. I love the verse we sometimes sing -

There is rest in the Saviour's heart,
Who would never turn grief away;
But has found, in what sin once had made our part,
The domain of His love's display. (Hymn 85)

What a triumph God has sought! God has taken the very thing that had created distance, the very things that have chilled the heart of man and spoiled his relationship with God, that appear to represent a challenge to the great majesty of God Himself; He has used those things to make them the scene, the stage, on which *the fulness of His love is going to be displayed*. We sang about that in our hymn:

Love told out at Calvary (Hymn 212).

Love told out at the cross is a wonderful thing. That is what John says in this passage. "Herein as to us has been manifested the love of God, that God has sent his only begotten Son into the world", 1 John 4: 9. Why did He come? Did He come to do some kind of audit of humanity, to find out how far away we were? No, He came *to save the world*. That is what John says in his gospel: "God has not sent his Son into the world that he may judge the world, but that the world may be saved through him", John 3: 17. How is it going to be saved? It is going to be saved by God's love. That is what John says, just before that verse I quoted; "God so loved the world", it says, "that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal". John follows that through here, writing that God has so loved that we "might live through him". It is very striking; the great principles of the gospel are brought together. Jesus died that I might live. That is the way God has chosen to express Himself.

I spoke about natural affection, and there are many things natural affection will do. It is distinct from the love of God; so you cannot learn about the love of God by looking at natural affection but you might learn about God from it because the relationship is from God. If you want to learn about the love of God, you learn it from God Himself. You do not learn it from what is in your own heart; you do not learn it from what you experience from others or from what you observe in others: you learn it from God Himself. We know the love of God because God Himself has shown that love to us. You can know the love of God because God has shown that love to you. What a precious thing that is. It says here that "God has sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him". He says, "not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son a propitiation for our sins". That is a rather difficult word, propitiation. It is a word that John uses more than once, and a very simple meaning of it is that, if someone is propitiated, it means their favour has been won. God must abhor the very idea of sin and we can see that in just a moment when we come to the cross. God is holy and has an absolute abhorrence of sin and it must attract His judgment, His eternal judgment. Where the sinner might be exposed to that judgment, now God looks upon him with favour. It is not that we have done anything to earn that favour; no, Someone else has earned that favour on our account. How has He done that? By bearing the judgment that our sins deserved. He is the propitiation for our sins.

God has acted in perfect righteousness. A glorious Person, the Lord Jesus, has stepped forward to take the sinner's place and to make a provision that anyone could have who is led to believe. It was there upon that cross, that awful cross. He bore the wrath and judgment of God, wrath and judgment He knew, a judgment of sin He shared, wrath and judgment He exhausted,

When in darkness on the tree. (Hymn 212)

You think of those three hours, when God withheld His favour, withheld His communion, from His beloved Son. He did what no one else could do and He expressed His love in a way no one else could ever think of expressing it. You could not imagine that you could offer a member of your family, for example, as a way of demonstrating your love. You could not do that; it is not appropriate. God commends His love to us in that He took His only-begotten Son and gave Him for sinners. "God commends *his* love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us", Rom 5: 8. While some contexts of natural affection are unconditional, nothing compares with the love of God. It is commended to those who were still sinners. It is commended to us. We may have embraced the gospel, but we must remember that it was whilst we were yet sinners that God showed His love to us. It was not because there was lovability in us; it was not because there was anything that commended us to God. No. God has commended Himself to us. What a wonderful thing that is. How hard the heart of man must be that the commendation of such love should ever be refused, that someone could listen simply and maybe for a few minutes to someone speaking about love so great that has done so much for them, and turn away and say this is not for them or that they would rather go on without it; that they would rather face the God whose judgment must come when they could have embraced the sacrifice that He made in His love. We sometimes sing that -

Though His gracious call you have oft refused,
And He's sought your trust in vain,
Yet with love unchanged by cold neglect
He is seeking you again. (Hymn 439)

How wonderful it is to think of the persistence of God's love; how deep it must be. You, the sinner, are its object. The greatest Person in the universe, a supreme Being who presides over everything, in whose hand our breath is, pursues you in the gospel in love: the Father sent the Son for your blessing and your salvation.

It says here, "that we may have boldness in the day of judgment". The day of judgment is coming. There will be a day of judgment; there will be a reckoning. The believer does not have to worry about the day of reckoning. If I tell you what it is going to be like, you will see what I mean. At the day of judgment, according to the Scripture, the throne will be set, and the Person sitting on that throne is the Lord Jesus. When I appear there, I will be standing before the very One who died for my sins. I will stand in the presence of One whose love for me I know. I know He loves me so much that He has given Himself for me. I know this, that He is raised: His being there at all is the proof that the work He did was accepted by God. God was glorified in the work that He did. He has appointed a day "to judge the habitable earth in righteousness by the man whom he has appointed, giving the proof of it to all in having raised him from among the dead", Acts 17: 31. That is the proof of God's pleasure in this glorious Person. He did not remain in death, in which millions of people lie, including some who may have been given a much greater place in secular history than He has ever been afforded. God passed them all over, and He raised one Man from among the dead: that One is the Man who died on the cross for my sins. His being raised and set at God's right hand means that they no longer rest in any way upon Him. He took them and bore them, and God's judgment of them is exhausted; and He rises into the presence of God without a trace of them left. He will sit on God's judgment seat and I, the forgiven sinner, will appear before Him: a wonderful thing. "Therefore having been justified", Paul says, "we have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ", Rom 5: 1. How wonderful that is, to appear at the throne knowing that we have peace with God through the very Man who sits there - glorious triumph! It brings assurance, it brings peace, it brings security into the soul; and that is perfect love. It casts out fear.

I spoke about the place that fear has in the heart of man when he comes to think about God. It can be cast out. It does not just drain away gradually. It does not just come and go and come back again and again. No, it is cast out; it is gone because I have put my faith in the One whom God has raised from among the dead. No longer am I tormented by the guilt of my conscience. Maybe there are things that touch my conscience, yes, I trust there are; but I can be free of their guilt knowing they have been borne, and I bear them no more.

It says here, "he that fears has not been made perfect in love".

That means he has not got the point, to put it simply. God has manifested His love for you in a way that caters for your need altogether and His need altogether, so that a precious relationship which was founded in His love can now be fully enjoyed. It is not just restored, because there is something else: “the love of God”, it says, “is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us”, Rom 5: 5. Now I spoke about the spirit which God breathed into man and that is spelt with a small 's' - we are spirit, soul and body. The spirit we have is a gift from God. There is another gift that is spelt with a capital 'S'. God has given His Spirit to believers, and that giving of the Holy Spirit to us is a manifestation of His love. The imparting of the Holy Spirit is something even greater than the breathing into man that we read of in Genesis, because now we have been made to know the things of God. Now we may begin to understand the greatness of the love of God manifested to us, not just in our circumstances, but in the communication of His own spiritual purpose and grace for us, wonderful blessings which were always in God's mind. The ultimate end in the glad tidings would not simply be our relief - although He is anxious to secure that - but that we should receive His Holy Spirit so that we may know and enjoy a relationship with Him which was ever in His purpose for us.

I go over these things simply, beloved, because God presents His love to attract us. He looks for an answer; He looks for something that fits the way He has come out to us. It is not that He makes us feel inadequate or anything of that sort, but the implantation of the Spirit creates a longing to answer to Him. Paul says, “God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father”, Gal 4: 6. That is, it stirs your affections towards the One who has acted in such love towards you. My desire in preaching the gospel to all here is simply that there might be that response and that God might be glorified.

May He bless the word.

Buckhurst Hill

18th May 2025

WRITTEN MINISTRY

Gary M Chellberg

2 Timothy 4: 11-13

1 Chronicles 28: 11-20

I came across verse 19 of this chapter, “All this said David, in writing, by Jehovah's hand upon me, instructing as to all the works of the pattern”. I was struck with that. I believe, it may be some of the first written ministry that we know of.

Ministry can be divided into many different fields, if you will. There is the ministry of evangelism, the ministry of teaching, of separating, and so on. There are many different ways of looking at ministry. And the same applies to service; any service that you do Godward would be considered ministry. The priests of old served God. But I would like to bring in a brief word as to the written ministry and the value of it in relation to us growing as worshippers. The scripture I read at the end of Timothy is the last writing to Timothy. And Paul says to bring the writings, especially the parchments and the books. It may have been some of his letters. I do not know what it involved, but it was written ministry. It was not newspapers and magazines of the day, but they were things that Paul associated with value that would be an encouragement to him in his time in prison. He asked for his cloak to be brought to him; so we know it was not exactly pleasant circumstances in prison. But even there, he valued the written word. That is what I want to call attention to.

It strikes me that in 1 Chronicles 22, David prepares in his *affliction* all these things of gold and he counts it out, v 14. In this chapter, David gives the pattern. And then in the last chapter of 1 Chronicles, he again speaks of what he had gathered in his *affection* for Jehovah. Those are two different things, his affliction and his affection. David gathered this immeasurable wealth, almost uncountable wealth. I think the nearest estimate I read one time was billions of dollars, in our money, for this one building. But in any case, especially in those days when ordinary people would not earn much per year, the wealth used was basically without number. It was immense wealth. David prepared these things and he gathered them. God had told him it was not for him to build the house because he was a man of blood; he had been at war. But it was going to be for Solomon, who is a type of the Lord Jesus in the millennium, to do. But I was struck that when David

goes through all this, he says that he gave his son the pattern and details of the house to Solomon. And then it says in verse 19, "All this said David, in writing, by Jehovah's hand upon me, instructing as to all the works of the pattern". I think that is a great example of what ministry is to be. It is to be that which is of great value passed along from generation to generation. David had amassed all this gold and silver and iron and all these stones and everything was all prepared. They are piled up in these giant piles; at least the way I picture it. But it would be useless if you did not have a pattern. Perhaps we might think that David had gathered all that together; leaving it as Solomon's job to inquire of God to get the pattern. But God wanted to pass along this important lesson, and that is the importance of ministry.

The ministries that we know and value are ministries that have stood the test of time, and that is the most important qualification of any ministry, that it stands the test of time. Some things may sound right today, but be proven not right tomorrow. And there is a great danger in the day in which we live, when information is so incredibly available. I carry in my back pocket 350 different commentaries on Scripture, Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, and an unknown number of atlases. I can watch videos of the Holy Land: it is all available on a phone. And the danger of that is we take something and we assume it is ministry because it is sold under the name of Christianity, but I would encourage us to weigh what we read against the truth and the measure of time. Has it stood over time? I am not saying there is no need for fresh ministry because if that was the case, I would not stand up and speak - we do need fresh ministry, and we need application of ministry.

I think that is what David sets out; he gave the pattern. It is like the blueprint. He said, 'This is the way God told me to build His house. This is where the rooms are. This is how tall, this is how wide. Here is all of this, and all the materials are over here.' And that was proved when Solomon became king. He did not need to change the pattern or re-adapt it to his time, which is what we hear a lot of today. It stood the test of time.

What really triggered this whole impression was thinking about the gate of the old wall in Nehemiah's time. That suggests to me looking back through history and measuring where God had been, what God had done over the centuries - for us, all the way back to Acts 2. And then from there, you can look back all the way to Genesis 1. And from there, you can look all the way back to the gospel of John

chapter 1, as far back as we can see in the beginning: “the Word was with God and the Word was God”, v 1. You look back and, when you look back in a right way, you then are able to find where you are today. But it is useless to try that if you only use modern methods. You have to look back through time.

There is a value to what we have in the written ministry that we need to avail ourselves of. I know I am challenging myself right now to read more ministry because I lack in doing that, and perhaps we all do in some measure, but we need to do that in a right way, looking back through time to see how God has worked, right back from the beginning. And when you read right ministry there is no change. The truth is not altered every so many hundred years. The things of God have never changed. We might look at the New Testament, when they asked Jesus about the matter of divorce, for instance, and He said, there is what was written right back in the beginning, Matt 19: 8. Also, He quotes Scripture when Satan tempted Him. He had the right to say, 'No, you are wrong. I am not going to do this. I'm not going to bow down to you', but what He did was to quote the Scripture.

I want to be very clear that this book we are all holding here is the word of God; the word of God singular. There is only one word of God, and that is the Holy Scriptures. Nothing can be added to it and nothing can be taken away from it. It is the word of God. Then you have the *words* of God plural, and that involves all the written ministries. It involves spoken ministry, what I am doing right now, if it is of the Holy Spirit, and I trust it is. If what I am saying right now is of the Holy Spirit, it is the words of God; it is ministry that we can benefit from. It is the truth that, when we hear words spoken that bring us closer to God, that is ministry; it does not matter who says it. It could be - and I speak carefully - that even an unbeliever could say something that would move you closer to God.

What I wanted to call attention to for our own gain is this idea of written ministry. And I thought it was so fascinating that it says, “all this said David, in writing”. It is because he did not want to leave anything to chance, because God had said things to him; and what he passed along is exactly what God said to him. The Holy Spirit, when He speaks, uses Scripture to speak. Although He is God, He does not speak from Himself, John 16: 13. Speaking reverently and carefully, He says what He is given. And He goes to the treasury and takes out things old and new.

I would encourage each one of us to consider the importance of right ministry, because I think as we use it and benefit from it, it will help us to grow as worshippers. That is really our goal. The purpose of ministry is not just knowledge. It is not just doctrine for the sake of doctrine, but it is ministry to bring you closer to God. And if you read ministry and it leaves you with unresolved questions, I would immediately question the entire ministry of whoever was speaking, because it may not be in the Holy Spirit's power. There is a lot of wrong and dangerous material out there. It is a very hard thing to navigate through. I think the secret is, as we have in Nehemiah, that you come to the old gate. We also have the sheep gate; that speaks of our salvation. We have the fish gate, which suggests evangelism going out. And then you come to the old gate, because we need to find out where we are at. We need to take stock of ourselves and find where we are today. Why are we here today? And the only way you can find that is not by a crystal ball looking into the future. It is by looking back at the way God has worked since the beginning of time. Nothing in the way that God has worked since the beginning of time has ever changed. That is a very comforting thing that is spoken of in the Old Testament as a nail in a sure place, Is 22: 23. You can pin your hopes on that, because God has never changed. He never will change. He says something, and He does it. And it is our portion and our privilege to take advantage of what He has saved up for us and prepared for us.

There is a lot to be gained in that. Later on, we come to what David had stored up in his *affection* for God. And when you come to that in the last chapter of 1 Chronicles, it is interesting, because right away you get this idea of the people willingly offering something. That is worship; that is true worship. You are not there because you have to be. You are not here because somebody told you to do it this way or that way. You are there because you want to be there, and you give something willingly to God. And that is how that whole event takes place at the end of this book. It is one of the most beautiful prayers ever recorded in Scripture. "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer willingly after this manner?", 1 Chron 29: 14. As David looks back at that massive pile of wealth, he thinks of it as nothing. It is just a little thing that he wanted to use to build God a house where God could come and dwell. Therefore, we want to use ministry to grow as worshippers.

I trust we would each one be encouraged in this, because it is

very important in our day to weigh what we read, to measure it against history, to look back over time at the old gate. We should not just read something and say, 'Oh, I like that'. It has got to be right. Weigh it against what has gone before, all the way back to the beginning of Genesis, because God has never changed.

For His Name's sake. Amen.

WHAT GOD DOES

Bill S Chellberg

Ecclesiastes 3: 14-15

1 Timothy 4: 1-3

I just want to emphasise what has already been said, and the scripture in Ecclesiastes came to me regarding God not changing. In our time, it is the Holy Spirit who is acting; and if the Spirit has said something, whether it is in the year 1540 or 1680 or 1790 or whenever it, is it will never be changed. That is what Ecclesiastes says: it will never be changed. Whether we like it or not, whether I like it or not, whether I think there is something better, there is nothing better. Nothing is better than the Spirit's word, and that is why I read in Timothy: "The Spirit speaks expressly", and He spoke expressly in the 1800s, He spoke expressly in the 1900s, and He speaks expressly in the 2000s. It was God that saw to it that the printing press was developed in the 1400s, when the whole idea of movable type was invented, and then books could be printed. We referred to the books, and it was not by accident that printing was invented. In the same way, He raised up the Roman Empire to organise the world politically, raising up the Greek Empire also to develop a language that was usable in its detail by people that were to spread the gospel. And the printing press was on the same principle. That all is of God.

Thankfully, we have had persons over the last two centuries who valued what had been said and what had been written. And it was

tested. It was read by spiritual persons all along the way, and it was agreed that this was according to Scripture. And that is one thing that I was interested in from what was read in Chronicles. I have never thought of that before, but there are things mentioned there that were never spoken of before as being in the tabernacle. It mentions the silver candlesticks, for example, 1 Chron 28: 15. Where did they come from? Was it of God? Was it God's thoughts that there should be silver tables, v 16? Where was that in the tabernacle? There has been a development in the truth - not as God gave it, but in our understanding. And that is exactly what has happened since Martin Luther was struck by that fact that a man should live by his faith. Ever since that Scripture came to him in Habakkuk 2: 4, "... but the just shall live by his faith", there has been a development in light as to the truth.

So, gradually, truth as to the Holy Spirit was brought forward. At the end of the 1700s, there was a big move regarding the Holy Spirit because of the deadness and corruption in the religious systems, the truth that the Holy Spirit was God, and was able to work in persons. Until that time, He had really been put out of the church by man's organisation. And then we have all the teaching about the assembly, the Head of the body in heaven, and the body here; those are all developments of the truth. They are in Scripture, but they had never been developed since scriptural times; hardly anybody had developed them. Thank the Lord, there were times in history where there were persons who were faithful to Scripture and may have understood some of these things. But gradually the truth has been developed. And how has it been developed? It was developed by the Spirit Himself and through spiritual persons, persons who are and were dedicated to the truth. If the Holy Spirit spoke long ago, or if He speaks now, both are His words, and therefore, if I decide not to read what was said I lose it all. A lot of people do not read it; a lot of people will not read it. They will just remain babes; babes in Christ. That is what happens. The Lord is cut out of that which He should have.

So I just say these things to encourage us about what has been said that is right and is based on Scripture; the things which were long ago, and that which is to be, has already been. These are things God had in mind, and that is why the Scriptures are printed and so available, as well as ministry concerning them.

Other scriptures were in mind, but whichever scriptures I would have read, things could have been said from those scriptures about the

truth. "Every scripture is divinely inspired", 2 Tim 3: 16. So this is not anything new. But what Paul wrote is the truth despite what happened afterwards. You might say there are people who say now it is an 'old hack', it is old stuff, it is demeaning to women, and so on. People say that sort of thing, but the truth is still there. And the Spirit has developed it and encouraged us in it.

I would encourage the brethren not only to live on what is given today, not only live on the meetings, but live on what you can gather from what has gone before. I am aware that we cannot all read all of it, but let us think of developing our service towards God. Amen.

Wheaton IL

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