

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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PERFECTLY UNITED

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DAB We started our enquiry in the first reading yesterday with a question about how far it is possible to touch the level of fellowship which the Lord Jesus intended us to experience; and how that might be arrived at and maintained. We have been speaking in the meantime of the way that any idea of perfection can be learned from what God has manifested in Jesus. We have referred to the law of Moses, and the stones were written on both their sides, Exod 32: 15. I connected that with the way some of the commandments relate to our relations with God, and others those we have with one another; and perhaps we could make an application of that idea and say we have looked at both those sides: the perfection of Jesus for God, and the perfection of His activity towards us. This perfection is not something that is being developed; it is something that belongs to His very nature and His manhood. I have hoped to carry all, young and old, with this enquiry; and I am wondering if we all have some idea about what we think perfection is: what do we understand by perfection? We will need to have an answer to that question to understand the scriptures we have read. Now, in a human sense, I suppose we might think of perfection as something we have managed to do without any possibility of improvement. It might be one way of thinking of perfection, that you have made something that you cannot improve, although such a result might not be very good. It is tempting perhaps to think of perfection as getting as close as possible to our own preconceptions, or that perfection requires that I have some place or part, or control. But what I hope we have learned by what we had so far is that what scripture means by perfection is something that entirely answers to God's mind. And the Lord Jesus entirely answers to God's mind.

What these passages show is that God has a mind about fellowship; so there must be something that entirely answers to His mind in fellowship. We have read three references in Corinthians to the idea of perfection as the objective in ministry, which is a test to anyone who ministers because they need to know what that objective is. Besides these three, there is one in Ephesians 4: 12, there is one in Hebrews 13: 21, and there is one in 1 Peter 5: 10. And not only was it the objective of Paul's ministry, but it was also the objective of his

prayers. You cannot minister unless you pray, and you need to pray for the same things you are seeking to arrive at in ministry. There are no examples of this state of things having been achieved in a local company of Christian believers; we do not have any account of one, and there certainly is not one now. Indeed, I am reminded of a remark my grandfather attributed to Mr C A Coates, that if you find a perfect company, you should not join because it will not be one then!

I do not think perfection means an absence of exercise, because hades' gates are set against the assembly. There will always be exercise, as was helpfully brought out in the address yesterday; besides moral exercise, we have exercises that are hardly matters of good and evil; they are things that come into our lives and into our fellowship and we have to work them out. You would expect in such a state that things would be rightly handled according to the Lord's word, but they would be there to be handled.

Now, before going on to these verses, I would like to divert from them for the interest of the young and others who are not aware of the detail to go over the way in which the revival in which we have part came to be established. I am not making any claims in speaking in that way; all I am saying is that, as a matter of history, we trace our practical fellowship together back to a time of revival. And there are five things we need to bear in mind. The occasion of these exercises arising was that Mr J N Darby had an accident while mounted on his horse; and he hurt his knee and was confined to bed for three months in his sister's home in Dublin. It was a time of great soul exercise to him, out of which these five things came.

The first was the authority of Scripture. He recounted afterwards that he passed through the deepest possible exercise as to the authority of the word: he asked himself whether if the word of God alone remained as an invisible thread over the abyss, his soul would trust in it, Collected Writings vol 1 p38. He said that much exercise of soul had the effect of causing the Scriptures to gain complete ascendancy over him, Letters vol 3 p297. He says as to the Scripture, 'I never found it fail me since. I have often failed; but I never found it failed me'. That is the first thing.

Having accorded Scripture that authority, the Lord drew his attention to a verse in John's gospel, where the Lord says, "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me and I in you", John 14: 20. And what he saw from that scripture, once he recognised its

authority, was that through the reception of the Holy Spirit he was united to Christ. Therefore, Christ's place before God was his. It was no longer a matter of striving or attainment. As he went on that thought matured in his mind, and he saw that in the previous verse the Lord says, "...because I live ye also shall live"; it was not simply that he had a relationship with a Man above, but that he lived in Him (Synopsis vol 4 p367 footnote). That is the second point.

He then asked himself, 'What is the true nature of the Church?'. And his answer to this was that it is a body comprising all those of whom the previous points are true. That is, that it is a body made up of all those who have the Spirit and are thereby each united to Christ. But it was not simply a question of a whole lot of individual threads joining a Man above to a collection of people here; that Man above had His own relationship with the body thus formed by the Spirit, and was its Head.

The fourth point was that that idea found no answer in the denominations around. And he understood that the Church must by its very nature - and indeed, God's nature too - be separated from the world to a rejected Christ in heaven.

The fifth point was that, if the Lord Jesus had no place here, our only prospect was His return. He wrote, 'If I was sitting in heavenly places in Him, what was I waiting for but that He should come and take me there?', *Collected Writings* vol 1 p36. And another brother, William Trotter, comments about those early years, 'They formed no system, they made no plan. Their hope was the speedy coming of Jesus', *Letter 15th July 1849, Recovery and Maintenance of the Truth*.

Those are the exercises of an individual servant, honoured of the Lord; but I would like to suggest that those five things are the true foundation of fellowship. And the essence of them is the place that is given by each individual, and in the company, to the Holy Spirit.

Now, I could have given a similar account of the landmarks of the Reformation. They are interesting, and sometimes we speak of them in a way which belittles how much was realised at the time of the Reformation, but I suggest from what I understand that a key thing missing was a due recognition in the general public profession of the place due to the Holy Spirit.

I make those points because they are central to what we are seeking to arrive at. If we are wanting to measure our progress towards the divine idea as to fellowship, we can ask ourselves how much place

we give to the Holy Spirit. It was a long time before brethren agreed that they could speak to the Holy Spirit, and indeed that He should have a place in their worship. I have to say, looking back on that, it is rather surprising that that should be so, given the importance that was attached to His activity, and also to the great idea of eternal life which is related to the Spirit. There was an idea that the Spirit can only be known subjectively. I need to explain such expressions and what is meant is that the presence of the Holy Spirit can only be known from its effects. So, you feel His power, for example, you know His grace; and those things indicate that the Spirit is present. But the Spirit is a Person, a Person of the Godhead, and He is not simply to be known from the effects of His presence; He is to be known as a Person who is with us as well as in us, John 14: 17. And He is also to be known from His voice, which is the way the Lord has chosen to guide His assembly, according to the letter in Revelation 2 and 3.

If I turn now to the passages we have read, I venture to say that a standard is set out in these scriptures which few of us attempt to attain; we so readily settle for less. We know that the result is unsatisfactory, but we lack the spiritual diligence to engage with the divine idea; and we get a lot of trouble as a result, which I will not go into. As we can see, these are things that Paul sets out at the beginning of his ministry to Corinth, and he sets them out at the end. They were the objects of his ministry and they were the objects of his prayers.

We should spend time on Galatians, because the word that is used that is drawn attention to in the footnote to 1 Corinthians 1: 10 is in that passage, as the footnote says, and it is translated 'restore'. I make a simple point first as to the body, that you do not achieve perfection by amputation; you achieve perfection by restoration. It is a challenge to us, and a special challenge to our spirituality. And it is not simply *nominal* restoration; the spiritual person is restoring to the full divine idea. The brother who has turned away - he is taken in a fault - is recovered to the full divine idea, and that includes his place in the company.

The brethren will understand that some of what I have said is the result of some fairly pointed soul exercise on my part, and I share it with the brethren frankly in the hope that the Lord will help us.

JHH The thought is right here in the footnote to "perfectly united"; it speaks of mending.

DAB Yes, that is what I had in mind, that the word has two aspects. There is the inherent perfection that we have seen in the Lord Jesus; and we have been looking at that in Hebrews 10: 5 where the same word occurs as 'prepared'. There is no idea of repair, or mending, with the Lord Jesus. There is what we have in the first part of the footnote: 'all the members have each its own place, or make a whole'; that is something we have seen in the body of the Lord Jesus. But the word is also used for mending, or repairing, or restoring. It is translated with all those three meanings in scripture; and the point I make is that the restoration is not to nominal serviceability. The idea of restoration might involve that the restored person is closer to the divine objective than they were before. Now that requires spirituality to achieve in someone else; and I dare to make a negative remark, that any other approach to a brother taken in some fault is *unspiritual*.

SWD Would you have thought that there was *anybody* spiritual in Galatia? He starts off "my children", Gal 4: 19.

DAB We only get a kind of snapshot of these localities from the letters. The letters have their own purposes, and in some cases, they were written to meet serious difficulties, and in those instances therefore the letter concentrates on the difficulties. It is interesting to observe how much of the idea of privilege comes into the epistle to the Galatians, the teaching of sonship, for example, and the principles of liberty, and the mother above, and so on. Those are very exalted thoughts, and there must have been someone, we would like to think, who could understand them.

MJK This thought of the spiritual in Galatians is over against "the accuser of our brethren", Rev 12: 10.

DAB Yes, it is. And I think spirituality goes with this thought of meekness. Now that is another word I have given a lot of thought to: what does meekness mean, or what does scripture mean by meekness? If you look it up in a dictionary you will get the impression that it is the same as humility, but I do not think it is. It is certainly not the same as lowliness, because the Lord was "meek **and** lowly". What I have come to is this, that a meek person approaches a matter completely free of any self-interest. He will take up a matter like this one here not expecting to get anything out of it for himself. He does not want any thanks, he does not want any credit, he does not want to be thought better of, he does not want to be regarded as an expert, or to have a reputation. He simply takes it up for the sake of the divine

objective.

TRV Is that why the apostle addresses them as he does at the very beginning of this first epistle and shows they have been called into “the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord”? It is not as if we are in a fellowship such as men would make where they have a common bond over a common set of rules, or a common objective; but this is elevating, “his Son Jesus Christ”: the fellowship has the Lord in view.

DAB I am free to refer to one of the closing memories of my mother. After my father was taken, and she was less well-informed, she would ask me what was a matter that was being referred to or prayed about. If I had to give some explanation of disorder perhaps, she would say, 'Do they not remember that it is *the Lord's* fellowship?'. We are called into this by God, and it belongs to His Son. It is not mine, I have no rights there; I am there by grace in a fellowship that God has called me into that belongs to His Son.

WSC I was wondering if Philemon does not help. It says, “that thou mightest possess him fully for ever; not any longer as a bondman, but above a bondman, a beloved brother”, v 15, 16? Your thought of restoration is good in that respect.

DAB I think Paul says something very important to Philemon about Onesimus which goes to the heart of this matter. He says, “that thou mightest possess him fully for ever; not any longer as a bondman, but above a bondman, a beloved brother, specially to me, and how much rather to thee, **both in the flesh and in the Lord**”. Now fellowship *is* a spiritual matter but it is also a *practical* matter; we do not choose one another's company; Philemon did not choose to have this man back as a brother. We have exercises that we work out with one another: unity, and a common approach to questions, and a common commitment, and those kind of things, are not natural matters, but they are “in the flesh” in the sense that Paul mentions to Philemon. We are all in the flesh - I do not mean in a bad way, but we are all living human beings - and it is this combination of exercises that lies at the heart of the working out of fellowship - “in the flesh and in the Lord”.

MJK I was thinking about what you said about meekness. It speaks of Moses having that characteristic, and as he came down off the mountain he shattered the stones, Exod 32: 19. God offered that He would make something of Moses, but I thought it was good what you said, that Moses refused to have something made of himself. He stood

there instead in view of the intercessory work.

DAB He was not naturally like that. He had grown up in Pharaoh's house and he was an eminent man in Pharaoh's house, and belligerent and volatile as well, pugnacious. And that teaches us another thing about meekness: it is not a natural characteristic; it is the product of time with God. That is the only source of it, and Peter says it is "of great price", 1 Pet 3: 4.

DMW Would meekness involve the will of another than my own?

DAB Yes, the "the incorruptible ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price". What a thing it would be if it characterised fellowship.

DMW "For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus", Phil 2: 5. He would not be diverted from the path of obedience; and would you say He would not be turned aside from His jealous love for God and the display of it to man? Would jealousy be a characteristic of a meek person?

DAB Yes; as we can see in Moses, you might have to be decisive. Moses acted out of a judgment of what was right, and it was a bold thing to do to break God's work. The law was broken; he recognised that it could not be kept. It is not weakness. I do not say we need to encourage one another to be belligerent because it is a natural characteristic; but we need to reflect upon the way a meek person would be free of all his own ideas. His mind and his activities and his affections are open to divine objectives and how they might be arrived at, Ps 25: 9.

RG You said that meekness is not weakness. It says that "the man Moses was very meek, above all men that were upon the face of the earth", (Num 12: 3), but "he went out from Pharaoh in a glowing anger", Exod 11: 8. So meekness is not weakness.

DAB Well, it is not. That does not mean we can be overbearing with one another. There is a confidence and a steadfastness about a meek person; he knows where he stands - she knows where she stands. What we have in this passage in Galatians 6: 1 is not exactly the way a spiritual person is to deal with Pharaoh; it is the way a spiritual man is to deal with his brother. If I can transfer the thought, I do not think Moses had any idea of Pharaoh being in the assembly, but this brother who has been taken in some fault belongs to the assembly. And therefore a

particular aspect of meekness is needed; a spiritual person would know how to act in this way. His goal is not simply, as we have in Matthew 18: 15, to gain the brother, but to gain him for the divine objective.

SWD Meekness is part of the fruit of the Spirit, Gal 5: 22.

DAB Yes, it is; that is why it has a place in fellowship. It is one of the ingredients, one of the composites, of fellowship and the way things are done.

Bear with me, brethren; we have rather rushed into talking about Galatians, and I did not really want to concentrate on how we repair an abnormal situation. I think we need to establish what the divine objective is, and once we have that firmly in our minds, we can think about how we can recover somebody to it.

MTH Reference was made to Philippians 2, and I have been thinking of that scripture; and I wondered if you might say something about what we have here in 1 Corinthians 1: 10. It is sameness, but I wonder if you might say something about oneness in Philippians 2: 2, as marking this perfectly united fellowship?

DAB I have wondered about the difference. There is no suggestion in this that unity is imposed, or that the body of the brethren agree as they might in a church to accept silently what others have arrived at. That is not what is in mind here; that is not the way the body works. But if you think of the body, it would never move in independent parts. The whole body moves as one and it moves in the same direction, and it moves with the same objective; any member that is needed to achieve that objective comes into activity. And that is what I think we have here: it is perfectly united - each has its own place, or makes a whole. Therefore, it acts in the same way because it is a corporate whole in the eye of God. If we look at a worldly corporation, it has to try and arrive at a corporate policy by other means. What I am seeking to test is how far we understand - how far we have experienced - that the presence and free activity of the Holy Spirit will spontaneously produce that co-ordination in everybody who gives Him His place.

MTH That is why Philippians 2: 1 refers to "fellowship of the Spirit"?

DAB Yes, exactly.

MTH I was hoping you would say some more about that.

DAB That is a very interesting thing. I like to think of the way the

Persons of the Godhead have had their part in the establishment of their thought of fellowship. As I said, it is a call by God - and Paul refers here to "the assembly of God", 1 Cor 1: 2. It belongs to Christ, and He has charged the Holy Spirit with its activity and its progress. We see that also in John 17, where the Lord Jesus speaks of His own as having been in His charge, and (leaving Judas aside, which He does) those very disparate people had walked steadily with Him in the same path under His headship and under His direction. And the Lord acknowledges to the Father that these people had belonged to Him - "They were thine, and thou gavest them me", John 17: 6. He had kept them while He was here, and now they were parting: they would remain here and He was going above, and He asks the Father to do something to ensure that "they may be as one as we", v 11. He did not tell the Father how to do that, but I think we could say that the answer to that prayer was in the coming of the Spirit. In that sense, by joint agreement, the Father and the Son have put the Spirit in charge. It is therefore, as Paul says, "fellowship of the Spirit". And the nature of its links, rightly understood, are in that Person.

DMW That verse in 1 Corinthians 1: 9 is universal, is it not? So, although the opening up of the truth in 1 Corinthians relates to the responsibility in the locality of the local assembly, the objective relates to the Spirit and His universal outlook.

DAB Yes, and if I can quote Mr Darby again, he has an article in which he asks, 'Is the 'one body' of Ephesians 4: 4 the divinely constituted ground of gathering? ...The reply is very simple. It is.', Collected Writings vol 33 p31. That does not mean to say that I can *walk* with everybody, sadly; but it is the basis on which I walk with those who are available. Questions about separation from evil *necessarily arise*, and they limit my access to the divine ideal because some are not ready for what that involves practically. Is that a fair way to put it?

DMW I think it is helpful to distinguish, that there is this difference between the body which is inviolate, and yet the objective of the local assembly in its universal outlook is to operate on that basis. Would that be right?

DAB Yes. Now, just holding a normal thought in my mind for the moment, it is very evident as you say - and we can see that progress in the Acts - that the numbers who were added to the assembly almost immediately exceeded the practical opportunity for them all to meet together. I do not know how many breakings of bread they had in

Jerusalem but one might think it was scarcely possible to have less than one hundred. That is not a division; that is simply an organisation for the working out of these principles, which was replicated as the gospel spread to other places. One of the truths that lies behind that is that you do not *need* every member to be present and available to arrive at the divine idea. They are in the divine mind, but you do not have to wait until everybody is available to experience it. Quite apart from any ecclesiastical aspects of that question, that is practical; and of course it applies also to those with whom we do break bread, even if they are in another place.

DMW So therefore, with Onesimus and his restoration, it was a priestly action, but it brought in what is mutual, so that he would be available. In his case, he is not presented as one who opposed the truth at this point, not one that displayed anything other than a desire to link on with Paul. And Galatians 6: 1 - "ye that are spiritual restore such a one" - has in mind someone taken in a fault. The case there is not someone opposing the truth of fellowship?

DAB But the remedy would be the same, 2 Tim 2: 25. Whatever difficulty becomes a barrier to the expression of fellowship in breaking bread together, fellowship cannot be rightly and fully enjoyed until the obstacle is removed. Issues of fellowship cannot be accommodated if we are to retain the divine idea. We do not want to find ourselves in what has become a human idea, or walking on some other basis than walking in the truth. The divine idea does therefore require that divine principles are understood and form the basis on which we gather. The normal divine idea is that, in the assembly, in Christian fellowship, the Spirit would prevail, and the truth which He maintains would be universally the foundation on which things were enjoyed together, and enjoyed together livingly.

Now we live in a day of brokenness, but I have experienced fellowship in the absence of many I miss. The Spirit helps us to overcome those difficulties. We need to keep normality before us. Paul starts off this letter, as we well know, with these nine verses about normality. And what is very sad is that the first thing he mentions which intrudes in that picture is opinion. I appreciate that Paul expresses his opinion (1 Cor 7: 25) but there is no place in the assembly for us to have opinions; it is the first thing he mentions which spoils the picture of normality that he is presenting. What is very fine about these letters, in which so much *abnormality* has to be mentioned, is that they are 'book-

ended' by this idea of perfection. On the last page of the second letter, he goes over all the things he had said to them, and he had been more or less successful in some of things he had said: some had not listened, some things had grown up again that he thought he had dealt with; but he was still praying for them that this objective might be arrived at in Corinth. And he wanted to use his gift to *build that up*.

HJK Can you say something about Galatians 6: 1 where it says, "if even a man be taken in some fault"; it does not say a brother or a sister?

DAB Well, it may be in your mind that he has in some way become unworthy of the place he ought to fill in fellowship. And another thing you might also say is that he would be responsible for that; a man is responsible. One might think he can be left to his responsibility, and left to take the consequences of his responsibility. A spiritual man would think how he must act like Christ in the matter; he would see that he had to retain the divine idea. Now, it may be *really hard work* to restore a brother who is turning aside: the Proverbs say "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city", Prov 18: 19. It can be dispiriting work, but it seems to me that it is an obligation that we should do *all we can* to maintain the divine objective. And let me say here that 'all we can' is not accommodating something else; that is a completely different proposition.

TRV Would you say that the apostle was motivated by love? And it is love for the person - 'saints by divine calling' - and it is also love for God's Son Jesus Christ our Lord. So the love is divine love, is it not?

DAB Yes; he says that to Corinth: "even in abundantly loving you", 2 Cor 12: 15. He really was quite fond of these brethren; they treated him badly, they trashed his reputation, but "even in abundantly loving you". And that drove his prayers; that is why he prayed for them in this way.

D-IJK In this verse, it says, "ye that are spiritual". How do you know if you are spiritual enough to restore one?

DAB Well, the answer may be to try! We often say that a spiritual person in the New Testament corresponds to a priest in the Old Testament. But there is this distinction: what priest in the Old Testament was able to restore? You take the law of leprosy, for example: the priest had to certify that *God* had restored the man, and it never happened; the Old Testament never records a man going to the priest. But the mark of a spiritual person is not simply that he can assess and appraise what someone else has done in a brother, but he

is able to accomplish it with God's grace himself. There is a power there in his links with the Spirit to establish restoration.

D-IJK It just came to me that we were speaking about sympathy in the last meeting; and you said that the Lord can be sympathetic because he has been tempted in all points. It just struck me that one that can be sympathetic as having judged a thing in themselves, and thus would have spiritual ability to restore such a one because they can come in meekness.

DAB His use of people like us for such matters is a remarkable testimony to the way in which God works, because He *is* able to work directly - Paul knew that; the Lord had intervened directly in his life. He did not leave that to a servant, although a servant helped afterwards, but the Lord intervened from heaven. We have spoken about the Lord's sympathy, and the Lord's sympathy is perfect; although we do need to understand that the Lord does not sympathise with us because He has entered into our sinful behaviour; we could not say that. But He uses men and women of like passions for the work of restoration, and that is a very interesting matter. Every one who preaches the gospel is a sinner, and we should preach with sympathy for sinners because we are sinners ourselves.

You remind me of another simple story which some may know of Mr Darby: a brother came to him to say he had discovered that another brother had erred, and he asked if Mr Darby would come with him to see him. Mr Darby agreed and, as they were walking along, Mr Darby asked what the brother had done. The brother said, 'Well, I cannot understand why he did it!'; Mr Darby said, 'You had better not come'. That was a spiritual answer, and it was not because Mr Darby was weak; he would not say, as I have heard, 'I could have done that and therefore I have to let this brother off'. That was not the answer. Mr Darby understood what the work of recovery meant, because he had been recovered himself.

AML Would you say that the way Paul addresses the saints - "brethren" would be appealing to the body of the saints, the affections and the meekness that were among the saints in that locality?

DAB I think that was a very important element of his work in Corinth, what he could count on among the brethren. At the beginning, he refers to certain households, and not because they were a class; but it is also in these letters that he refers to "the mass of the brethren" (2 Cor 9: 2);

that is the body of the company. Now, we know the problem in Corinth among those who were seeking prominence, who wanted to stand apart from “the mass of the brethren”. But perhaps “the mass of the brethren” were closer to the divine idea than maybe we credit. The Lord said, “I have much people in this city”, Acts 18: 10. They were not all active, prominent people who were getting the company into trouble; they were not all misbehaving; but there was something there that Paul could pray about and seek to promote in Corinth.

JD We often think, and rightly so, of the Samaritan in Luke 10 as a type of the Lord, but is he also a type of a spiritual person, a spiritual person that can restore such a one?

DAB Yes; the Lord says, “Go, and do *thou* likewise”, Luke 10: 37. And if I can just make a specific point, the focus was on the Samaritan's return. He says, “on my coming back”. I have had this idea that the man who had been carried into the inn would keep saying to the innkeeper, 'When is he coming back?'. That is something that we ought to ask each other all the time. I am sure it was Mr Darby who, when asked about people wanting to know about the Lord's return who look at public affairs, said that, if you were in a community where there was a big manor house or something, and the lord of the manor was away and you wanted to know when he was returning, you would not listen to gossip in the village but find out if the household was getting ready. I believe that preparing for the Lord's return is a very good way of getting us closer to the divine objective.

JHH In Luke 12: 43 the bondman is “doing thus”: he is active, is he not, for the coming of his Lord?

DAB I love that comment of Mr William Trotter's, 'They formed no system, they made no plan'. They drew up no constitution or made any institutional arrangements of any kind, they had few meeting rooms of their own, they had no list of meetings. 'Their hope was the speedy coming of Jesus'.

DTH I was just thinking of an incident when a few local brothers went to see a brother going out of fellowship; and one of the visitors, an older brother, said, 'There is a place for you amongst us, and only you can fill it'. Within a week, that man was back.

DAB You cannot say that to somebody unless you have an idea of the whole. If your idea was limited to those who were coming out, you would take that brother's chair out of the circle and carry on as before.

But the fact that there was a chair empty would try you if you were a spiritual person.

RG Is it significant that, in the Galatian epistle, it refers to a recovered brother, to Barnabas? I think that is quite significant. Paul had recovered him, although he had been very straight with him.

DAB He very well illustrates the point just made. There was warm feeling between Paul and Barnabas, Acts 15: 39. I think the way the scripture is written does not leave Paul completely free of blame; and Paul would have been affected by that, that perhaps some lowering of the level might have led to that parting of the ways with them. But they had the grace, with the Spirit's help, to join in the work again. How fine that is. Paul was able again to go on with this man; he was full of the Spirit, and he had made sacrifices too for his place among the brethren, and he was needed.

MJK I was wondering if you would say some more about the thought of fellowship. I was thinking especially of what it says, "the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord"; that is, it is not your fellowship or my fellowship, is it? And then what you read in 2 Corinthians, he comes to the point, "the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all". I was wondering if you could tie those things together a little.

DAB The company - let us call it the church - in which fellowship exists is the company of people who have received the Spirit: "There is one body and one Spirit", Eph 4: 4. So that is the common bond they have. They have common bonds in the truth; I am not denying that of course; but the power that holds that company together is the Spirit. And the Lord Jesus is Head of that company, and by virtue of that the company is His. If that relationship did not exist, there would be no company, because the purpose of the Spirit is not simply to hold the company together, but to hold them together with Christ. That is the organic arrangement that Paul is speaking about here.

MJK I was thinking that the basis goes back to what you mentioned, the perfection that is in Christ, and that is the basis of fellowship. If I am going to have fellowship with Christ, it has to be on that basis of having by the Spirit of God that which we can operate in perfection in relation to the Person of Christ. That brings in moral order, does it not?

DAB Exactly. I went over five points, and they are often boiled down and over-simplified into one - that there is a Head above and a body here. It might be more guarded, if we must over-simplify like this, to say

there is a Head above and the Spirit is here. And it is where there is subjection, both to the Lord Jesus as Head, and to the Spirit, that there is order. There is no artificial order; that is not possible; order is maintained by adhering to the *nature* of the arrangement, which is one in which the life and wisdom is supplied from Christ above and operated by the one and the same Spirit in the company. And, if I can quote again from Mr Darby, he says, 'Put a gold leaf between the Head and body, and all is gone - it is death', Collected Writings vol 34 p456. If that is true of a piece of gold leaf, it is certainly true of some of the rusty ideas that sometimes interfere with that relationship. Such things bring death into the body and that cannot be.

PH The Head does not send conflicting messages or instructions to the different parts of the body. It has the one direction, and I suppose that involves subjection with each one of us.

DAB It must do. I do not think we sufficiently understand that our natural bodies work on the principle of subjection. It is unthinkable that one part could go off; so, in a company which has been unified by the Spirit, such a thing could only happen if the Spirit is left behind by one or another. I come back to what I said at the beginning and I only say it to reproach myself, and not the brethren: given the crucial place that the Holy Spirit had in the things to which we have been recovered, can we really say He has the place which that light envisaged? Could He have it more, and what would be the effect if He did?

DMW So how do we get understanding?

DAB Well, I think it is what the Lord says to the assemblies in Revelation 2 and 3, and to the overcomer, "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies". I think that is a very precious thing and it is another contrast with the law. If we look at the law, according to Deuteronomy 5: 22, it says: "These words Jehovah spoke to all your congregation on the mountain from the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the obscurity, with a great voice, and he added no more". In other words, this ministry to Israel was on a single occasion. I am not setting aside the ministry of the prophets, but this speaking from God was in the law and no more. But "the Spirit **says** to the assemblies". And there is no famine of the word of God in the day in which we are, if we will listen to the Spirit. One thing I find very affecting, as we go on through the book of the Acts, we come to the point at which the activity of apostolic gift begins to be withdrawn. (In a sense, it has never been withdrawn because we have the letters.) And, at that point,

Paul says, “the Holy Spirit testifies ... in every city” (Acts 20: 23), and Paul himself might have been more sensitive to that - dare I say, so might I. But it is a fact, whether I hear Him or not.

DMW It is helpful to understand that “Love never fails” (1 Cor 13: 8), and the Spirit of grace, the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit Himself is in charge of everything. He will not fail to use vessels who are animated by faithful love, and I would say, holy love.

DAB Yes. We have a whole chapter about love in 1 Corinthians 13, and we often say it is a definition, but it is not. That chapter is a catalogue of all the aspects of true love which needed to be more in evidence in Corinth; it refers to the gaps they needed to fill. So, for example, “love ... does not seek what is its own”; that was something they needed to address in Corinth if the love you are speaking of was to function in its supporting role in the activity of the body that the divine idea envisaged.

DMW Therefore, what is explained in 1 Corinthians is body feeling. So love would not fail as those dear ones in Corinth were brought into alignment with His Son, and what had been revealed in Christ would be revealed in them.

DAB I think it is very propitious that the state of things in Corinth prompted Paul to write that chapter because love was deficient in Corinth, and was overlaid with a lot of self-interest and much impurity. “Love ... does not rejoice at iniquity”: Paul had to say that in Corinth because they did rejoice at iniquity. But he is using corrective ministry to build them up. That ministry, as he says in 2 Corinthians 13: 10, was not for overthrowing, but to motivate the development of normality in the Corinthian company, and especially in their relations together.

DTH We must believe that the Corinthians recognised that both epistles were the Spirit's voice to them; and the way His glories are brought out by Paul is quite remarkable. They were to distinguish the Spirit's voice, and are we to say today that this is the Spirit's voice?

DAB That is an interesting question. I think it is very touching. Paul in a sense describes his ministry in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 3: 12: he was building with gold and silver and precious stones. He never sank to their level; he apologised for having to deal with the points they had raised with him. He quickly reverts to talking about things like the Lord's supper; he talks about eternity and about the kingdom, and about other glories. I have wondered about the very question you are asking

because for sure I feel the need of the Lord's word and the Spirit's word among us, and I think that is a general feeling in what I call the body of the brethren. I do not think the Lord would give a brother what I might call administrative ministry, which would turn a reading into some kind of board meeting which verged on being a care meeting. I do not think that is the purpose of the temple. But what I have seen in what the Lord has given brothers to minister is the clearest possible evidence that He knows what the need among us is, and He knows how the brethren feel about matters; and what He gives would solve any problem there might be if it was taken up in the Spirit and worked through. I find that very comforting, and very many other brethren do. I think that is the way that the Lord speaks; He does not use a reading as if it was a care meeting, but He speaks to people who are carrying exercise. So in Laodicea, He knocks at the door, but it is His *voice* the overcomer hears. You might say there is a knock in the Lord's word, but behind that knock you can hear Him speaking. He says that in John 10: 27: "My sheep hear my voice", and they know His voice because they know Him.

DTH Do you think that the challenge if someone says something is whether I am quickened in my affections after Christ?. In that way, you can tell if it is the Spirit's voice. Are our affections stirred after Christ? The ministry we have had on His perfections should have that effect on us.

DAB Yes. If I can just make a practical point, we refer to an occasion like this as the temple, and the reason why we call it the temple is that God is here, and He is here in the Spirit. And that is why this meeting is conducted in a spirit of enquiry, not in the spirit of assertion or argument. One thing we need if we are going to work out fellowship properly is what I call temple manners. There is no place in the assembly, the temple, to air my knowledge, or to make assertions or that sort of thing. It is noticeable that, if a brother does not agree with something said in a reading, he will normally put his concern in the form of a question. I think that is a sign that the Spirit is regulating the occasion.

IMS Paul immediately after 1 Corinthians 13 speaks about prophecy, which is allowing the Lord to speak?

DAB Yes; and prophecy is not the same as forecasting; prophecy is the *present* mind of God. It may relate to the future, but its principal bearing is on the present.

IMS So in the temple, Paul says, "ye can all prophesy one by one", 1

Cor 14: 31. That is an occasion like this.

DAB There must be a spirit of subjection, as he makes clear there. I feel for small meetings - yours is one of them - where, in the absence of more than one brother, occasions like that are only possible if you are visiting or have a visitor. The temple is part of normal fellowship, and it supports normal fellowship, for the reasons our brother was giving; that it is a principal forum for the Spirit to be active in the company.

D-gJK I am interested in what John says in his epistle: "(and the life has been manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us;) that which we have seen and heard we report to you, that ye also may have fellowship with us"; but he does not stop there, he adds, "and our fellowship is indeed with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ", 1 John 1: 2, 3. Is that the full thought that we are to arrive at?

DAB If I can just seek to explain that verse, the twelve - that would include Matthias - had a special relationship with the Father, because, like the Father, they had contemplated the walk and heard the ministry of Jesus. And John calls that "fellowship ... with the Father"; and that became what I will call the bridge to carry what the Lord had ministered into the day of the Spirit. That was crucial, that there should be a connection between the ministry of Jesus on earth and the day of the Spirit. And it was created in people who had had fellowship with the Father in a contemplation and admiration of Christ. And that bridge having as it were been crossed, the apostle can say that we have fellowship with them; and the whole thing opens out into the day in which we are. That is the root of it. It has been said that John especially wrote to show that what Paul wrote had its foundation in the ministry of Jesus; it would cross that bridge. And my father used to refer to what he had been taught that, if Paul's ministry had been inconsistent with the ministry of Jesus, the apostles would have been bound to oppose it. That is its crucial importance, but the idea of fellowship is there and we come into that; showing that the whole thing is a spiritual matter.

TRV I was wondering if the verse referred to, "I became in ... Spirit on the Lord's day" (Rev 1: 10) would be characteristic of us today so that we hear the Spirit's speaking in an authoritative way.

DAB That comment he makes is interesting because we know John was in exile; so he could not get to the Supper on that day, but he

speaks about himself as “your brother”. And “your brother” was “in the Spirit”; that is a very precious thing showing how in the deprivation in which he was he held to the divine idea, and the Spirit supported him in that.

APD You spoke about the Spirit as a Person: would that help us in our gatherings, that we have the holy dignity of one of the Persons of the Godhead?

DAB I think that is a crucial matter, and that it is not simply a case of sensing His presence from its effects, but recognising that He is here as a Person. So He has feelings: not only does He speak, but He feels what He finds.

APD I think, having had to do with Him, we love Him.

DAB My father often used to quote that Psalm: “I will love thee, O Jehovah, my strength”, Ps 18: 1. He thought that was a basis for saying that you would love the Spirit.

APD In our thanksgivings to the Spirit, we seldom say that we love Him; personally, He is very lovable.

DAB Yes. I may detain the brethren on a practical exercise; when the question of speaking to the Spirit arose among the brethren, there was conversation about how we should speak to Him, and when, and what form hymns should take. The idea that He is known subjectively was rightly retained, and hymns were offered which celebrated His work and His activity, His humility and His grace. I do not want to be critical about the hymnbook, but we do not have all that many hymns to the Spirit, and they are not all worshipful. If I can give an example in No 89: when it was first included, it had another verse which includes a word of praise to the Spirit; that is missing in the revision we use now. I am not saying not to give a particular hymn out, but there needs to be a completeness about the response to the Spirit which covers what you are saying. It may not all be in the hymn.

DMW Would it be part of the problem in Galatia that they were not recognising the Spirit? We are exhorted to live by the Spirit and to walk by the Spirit (Gal 5: 25); and we also have in Galatians 5 the contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. It leads to disaster in a locality if we do not have that intimacy day in day out.

DAB I have nothing to say against the brethren in Calgary, but some of those works of the flesh mentioned in that chapter may be among us.

I just say that soberly; and they ought not to be. We need to judge these things. They may not be the cause of what we might call ecclesiastical problems, but there is among us what fits into that section. And unless there is a revival among spiritual persons, who show the works of the Spirit, we will never get out of it. We must engage with the Spirit and seek to produce His fruit in us if there is going to be any power to restore, and to set the brethren on the journey to the divine objective.

DMW If we seek to produce His fruit, what does that mean? It certainly does not mean to occupy myself with myself. Does it not liberate us to see the fulness of all that has been expressed?

DAB Yes; the fruit of the Spirit is the evidence of the divine nature. And if we can use meekness as an example, because it is in that list, you cannot cultivate meekness by self-occupation. You might get false modesty or other features of that kind: meekness is only the product of having to do with God. And it may be that that is true of the other things, if they are to be viewed, not as natural characteristics, but as the fruit of the Spirit.

DMW Laodicea, which represents the final phase of the assembly's public history here, was lacking in meekness. They are not said to be out of order, they may have been very respectable as if they washed the outside of the cup, but the inwardness - the recognition and communion of the Spirit - would seem to have been missing.

DAB The Lord offered them things that were better than the things they had. I think it is very fine too that He does not take His promise away from them: "to him will I give to sit with me in my throne". What grace! You might say that they had disqualified themselves, but their place in His throne was dependent on His work; and the challenge was whether they would let Him in while the time of testimony went on.

JHH To recognise our mistakes and attitudes would provide a humble and meek spirit. The "high and lofty One" only dwells "with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit", Isa 57: 15. That is the only way in which He will accept us, is it not?

DAB And that may just illustrate that God prepares His own dwelling place. He dwells in the hearts of His people; He dwells where He has prepared a dwelling place. And that is His purpose. There are two elements to the purpose of God: one is to glorify Himself in man; and the other is to find a dwelling place for His love. He has found both those things in Christ; and He finds them both in us through grace.

SWD A dear older brother, commenting on the references to love in the early verses of 1 Corinthians 13, said 'Put your name in there'. That is a very practical consideration which might fit in with what you are thinking.

DAB Well, that links with what we were just saying: could I speak of the fruit of the Spirit as something I bear?

LG I do not want to bring in a negative thought because I find what you are bringing in very challenging. James says, "Thus also the tongue is a little member, and boasts great things. See how little a fire, how large a wood it kindles! and the tongue is fire, the world of unrighteousness; the tongue is set in our members, the defiler of the whole body, and which sets fire to the course of nature"; but he goes on to say, "Who is wise and understanding among you; let him shew out of a good conversation his works in meekness of wisdom", Jas 3: 5-13. So meekness may relate to how we are given wisdom.

DAB And maybe especially in what we say. The tongue may be a little member but it boasts great things. The effect of "evil communications" will "corrupt good manners", 1 Cor 15: 33. There needs to be a positive antidote to those things, which is in that spirit that you refer to.

Reading at a three-day meeting in Calgary

1st July 2017

List of initials:-

D A Burr, London; W S Chellberg, Wheaton; A P Devenish, Edmonton; S W Drever, Calgary; J Drummond, Aberdeen, Scotland; L Gray, Calgary; R Gray, Calgary; J H Hibbert, Calgary; M T Holland, Calgary; D T Howie, Edmonton; P Howie, Edmonton; Daryl J Klassen, Aberdeen ID; Doug J Klassen, Aberdeen ID; H J Klassen, Aberdeen ID; M J Klassen, Aberdeen ID; A M Lidbeck, Aberdeen ID; I M Shearer, Adelaide; T R VanderHoek, Denton; D M Welch, Denton

SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Bill S Chellberg

Jeremiah 12: 5 (from “And ...”)

1 Samuel 30:1-7 to “ephod”

2 Timothy 1:12-15; 4:16-18

I would like to say a few words about how we grow spiritually in times of crisis. And I have read about these two great men; one of them was soon to be king, the other one was the great apostle Paul. We live in a day of increasing darkness. You might say that there is real advancement in technology; real advancement in social services, and I suppose in some sense there is. There is some kind of advancement in man's world, but darkness is increasing. We only need to look at the newspaper to read about terrorist attacks and other violent crimes - these things all tell us that this is a difficult and dark day. As believers are we exempt from it?

The first scripture I read asks, “...how wilt thou then do in the swelling of the Jordan?”. We are subject to the ills of humanity; there is no question about that. We get sick; we have accidents; we have difficulties. Then there are the things that we need to make decisions about. The young people especially are trying to decide on a career. Where should they work? Where should they live? And the great decision for the young may be who should be their companion for life; all of these things cause us to be in turmoil and stress. And again, that scripture says, “the swelling of the Jordan”; I think it is like Psalm 23, “the valley of the shadow of death”, v 4. The Jordan generally speaks about death, and that might be sudden and swift and over, you might say, but the swelling of the Jordan is that it is looming up before us - as the Israelites went into the land it was “over all its banks”, Josh 3: 15. But God moved in His own sovereign way at that time. So the question is, 'How will we make it through?'. That scripture in Jeremiah says we might run with horses and we may have run with man, but there is something even greater. We each have exercises, and some of them are serious, some of them are great and difficult exercises, such as death in the family or serious sickness.

There was a man in the books of Chronicles who, the Scripture tells us, “was born when calamity was in his house” (1 Chron 7: 23); all of his brothers were killed; his name was Beriah. So there are these things that we need to think about. What we need, in some sense, is

what men call risk management; we need to consider how we will do when faced with these things.

So I have read about David. David was a man just like us. Oh yes, he became king: we are told in the next two chapters or so that he became king, but he was a man “of like passions to us”, James 5: 17. James was speaking there about Elijah, but David made mistakes just like we make mistakes. And he made a big mistake here: he went down to seek asylum among the Philistines. He was prepared - it is hard to believe - but he was prepared to fight along with the enemy of God's people and he, too, against them but God in His sovereign ways, I am sure, caused it not to happen, through the lords of the Philistines. The lords of the Philistines would not let him go into battle with them; they said he would just turn against them in the battle. What he proposed to do was a serious thing.

However, worse yet, he had left his most precious treasures unguarded; he and his men had left wives, sons and daughters, and all their wealth, cattle, and property. And when he returned the Amalekites had raided and carried them all off, and he was distraught. It is not a sin to be distraught; it is not a sin to weep; no, it is not a sin. He wept and his men wept until there was “no more power to weep”. What a situation David was in, and his men were going to stone him. This is a tremendous crisis in his life; like a crisis that we might have in our lives. This was his crisis. What would he do? He was about to be stoned, and his wives were gone, and the sons and daughters, cattle and flocks were gone - everything gone - what would he do?

We might find a clue in another man who was in a similar situation - Job. Everything was taken from him - all his family, all his flocks, all his herds - everything except his wife. Everything was taken from him, and what did he do? His wife said, “curse God and die”, Job 2: 9. You might feel like that. You might come to a point where you feel that God is not fair. I heard of a young woman that said she was mad at God and would not speak to him for a long time because she lost her hearing. We might say that, but God is gracious. He knows how we feel, but Job - what an example he was - he “fell on the ground, and worshipped”, chap 1: 20. What a wonderful result!

And here David is beset by this tremendous situation - what would he do? If you read through his history you see other things that he did that were wise, and some were downright sin, but at this point

what could he do? He “strengthened himself in Jehovah his God”. We might ask, how do we strengthen ourselves in our God?

Now I have thought much about this, and have had some experience of it too. I think one way, and it would be a good way for us, is to go over our history, and see where God was with us. Where has the Lord helped us in various situations? Why did David pick up those five stones, 1 Sam 17: 40? Why did he go into such an impossible situation against that giant? Why did he do that? He would be thinking of that, I am sure, as he strengthened himself in the God who helped him through. He would be thinking of the time that Saul threw a spear at him as he played the harp (1 Sam 18: 11), and he was able to avoid it. He would be thinking of that; how God had helped him with Jonathan, and at various other times in battles. Then I suppose he would think of the time in 1 Samuel 25 when he was just about to go down to Nabal's camp to destroy the whole thing - to destroy everybody - and how Abigail saved him from it. It is important to go over our history with God. I do not know the details of your life, nor do I know what your history with God is.

Then David enquired of *his* God. That is one good thing that David did when he enquired of Jehovah - now he is recovering himself with his God; he strengthened himself in God. He might have said, 'I remember now God that I know; I remember how He helped me here and He helped me there.' So he went to the priest and asked for the ephod, and he asked God for direction this time. I think that it is wonderful to do that in the midst of the most trying circumstances. Perhaps you lose your job and there is not much possibility for another. Where can you get another job? I would let the brethren fill in all of the various things that can and do happen in our lives. You come against a severe illness perhaps, like our sister who is laid aside this weekend with a severe illness, and what do you do? Do you speak against God? Do you take Job's wife's advice? “Curse God and die.” I do not think that anyone would want to do that, but in extreme situations we do things and say things that we might not have done or said when we were thinking rationally. Well, God is a gracious God.

The brethren will know the story here; how they bring to David an Egyptian, v 11. And the Egyptian leads him down to the Amalekites (v 16), and he recovers everything, v 18. Not only that, but he recovers more than all, because some of it is called David's spoil, v 20. And that is really what is in the mind of God in regard of our circumstances. In

regard of our exercises, our difficulties in life, whatever it may be - David's spoil - that is what God is looking for. He is not looking for wealth for us or any sort of physical advancement in the world; He is looking for spoil for Himself. What did God receive from David who strengthened himself in His God? The end of any test we have should be glory to God.

Now, I want to say a word about Paul. As we read the Scriptures - and we become so familiar with these various persons - we sometimes think of them as being above normal human beings. I was especially interested in this part where it says, "all who are in Asia ... have turned away from me", 2 Tim 1: 15. Now the Asian churches are principally the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, maybe more. Asia, I might note, is not Asia as in China and Vietnam; Asia mentioned here is the Roman province, a large part of what is now Turkey, but Paul says, "all who are in Asia... have turned away from me." But he takes account of a few persons of whom some that are still with him. Think of Paul here; he was an old man - I think he was a little over sixty years old, and that was old in those days. He had laboured among these churches; he had travelled among them; he had worked with them day and night. He tells us how he worked as a tent maker so that he would not be chargeable to them, 1 Thess 2: 9. Now he comes to this point - this is his last letter; these are his last words and he said, "All who are in Asia, ... have turned away from me." He even names certain persons whom he may have led to the Lord even they turned away from him. What feelings were in the apostle's heart as he lay in prison saying, 'They have turned away from me'; how depressing! So what would he do?

Now we know that John the baptist weakened. He was in prison and he sent and asked the Lord, "Art *thou* he that is coming, or are we to look for another?", Luke 7:20. He was weakening, and we may weaken, and the Lord knows that. What a Lord He is! How gracious He is!

He knows our weaknesses. Scripture says, "For himself knoweth our frame", Ps 103: 14. But when Paul was in Rome he says, "At my first defence no man stood with me". They probably could not - it might have been at the expense of their life. Onesiphorus earlier had sought him out (2 Tim 1: 17) and perhaps lost his life over it, but here Paul says, "But the Lord stood with me." He took account of that; "the Lord stood with me." And in a situation like this we know of Paul in the

prison in Philippi, he and Silas together “in praying, were praising God with singing”, Acts 16: 25. I think that is a wonderful thing to be able to do. I am not sure I could do it, but I could count on the Lord standing with me, as Paul says, “The Lord stood with me, and gave me power”. I think He can give us power to do that. What a wonderful Lord He is!

So as the apostle assesses the situation, and he is aware that shortly he will die, he will be martyred. He said that this time he was delivered out of the lion's mouth, but he was well aware what was coming and what does he do? He ends the letter in worship: “to whom be glory for the ages of ages. Amen.” I trust, dear brethren, we would be able to end like that.

For His Name's sake.

At three day meetings in Calgary, Alberta

30th June 2017

JESUS CHRIST OUR SAVIOUR

Bob Gray

Isaiah 53: 5

Luke 24: 13-15

Revelation 3: 19-22

I have a simple impression as to the Lord Jesus as our Saviour. It was asked in prayer that, where there was an impression of Christ, it might be brought forward, and I seek grace to do this.

Supremely Isaiah speaks of the Saviour. This was Jesus; this was the Man who was coming. Isaiah, we know from Scripture, was not fully aware of what he was writing about, but he had some impression. He sought it out earnestly through the Spirit of Christ that was in him (1 Pet 1: 11), and he was speaking about this Man who was going to become our Saviour; and one of the things that struck me about this was that the Saviour made *our griefs His own*. You might say that, if ever a Man deserved to be upheld - to get through in the light of His links which He had with God, a Man who deserved prosperity and acclamation - this was that Man, but He did not get that. We read, "Surely *he* hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows", Isa 53: 4. *He* bore *our* burdens; He bore them all. We can preach the gospel at any time. I have come to it in my own soul that I need to understand the gospel better; not only the terms - thank God the terms are preached to us constantly - but the practice that is involved in working out the truth of the gospel. Perhaps you thought everything was given to us free and for nothing. Yes, in a sense that is true. We cannot lift a finger to save ourselves, but having been touched in our spirits sovereignly by God and brought to know the Lord Jesus as Christ the Saviour, we begin to understand that here was the One who took our sorrows. Is that not a wonderful thing? "Surely *he* hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows". There are many today carrying sorrows and griefs, many in the world: the Saviour is there for them; many amongst us: He is still our Saviour. What a Saviour He is!

"And we, we did regard him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed". It was that statement that came to me particularly, "with his stripes we are healed". I do not want to be sentimental or in any way play upon the feelings of the brethren, but "stripes" involve that marks are left: that is, He felt these and He carried

these. He bore them in His spirit. In one sense - I do not want to add to Scripture - "with his stripes we are healed", He anticipated them. The cross was unique, and as for these three hours of darkness, there was nothing like them, but in a sense He anticipated them. He felt what the race was suffering under, felt it in His own soul, this Man. It says, "Jesus wept", John 11: 35. What a Saviour! He understood the condition of things and wept in relation to it.

Then we have our part, "All we like sheep have gone astray", v 6. Well, have we not? Have I not turned aside, "gone astray"? "Gone astray" could be a little short excursion or it could be a big long journey. We know about the little excursions. Who of us has not turned aside? "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way". What is the answer? A severe rebuke? Well, a rebuke may be necessary, but the answer is, "Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all". I have been impressed recently with the fulness of the salvation which Jesus wrought so that we can stand before God, and *we will* stand before God, and *we do* stand before God, conscious that we are maintained there, in Christ, by the Holy Spirit. You know, God is pleased with us. Do you think of that, that God is pleased with you? Oh, but, you say, all these sins! No, He is not looking at these sins because this Man has atoned for them. The Saviour has borne them: "Jehovah hath laid upon him". That was a transaction between God and Christ. The debt was there; we could not pay it; our case was hopeless, and we learn that. God has said, 'I will come in'. He said that to Moses, "their cry have I heard ... And I am come down to deliver them", Exod 3: 7, 8. What a down-stooping that was!

Jesus is a glorious Saviour! (Hymn 46):

Many of us here sing that. I hope everybody here knows the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. I trust so; the door is open, now.

But Luke tells us about these two. They were not wicked sinners; they were persons who were disappointed, and they were depressed. It says they were "downcast", v 17. He says, "What discourses are these which pass between you as ye walk, and are downcast?". That is the Saviour we have, who sees us in the path, and He sees us when we are "downcast". He sees what is needed so that it is not a once-and-for-all matter that the Saviour should save us from our sins. In one sense, yes, it is a once-and-for-all matter because it does not have to be repeated, but He does not stop being our Saviour, and it says earlier, "Jesus himself drawing nigh". There is no other Saviour but this Man. He can send an angel to help, and I believe He

does. We prove angelic care, and the Father's hand too, but nobody comes to save us but this Man. He comes and He walks beside us. I repeat, I have no desire to be sentimental: I want just to speak the truth that it may affect us. "Jesus himself drawing nigh, went with them". It has often been said that these persons were on the wrong road; they were going wrong because of their disappointment, and things had not worked out as they hoped they would. In a sense they said, 'We have had enough; this is more than we can carry'. They were going home, thoroughly disappointed, but, "Jesus himself drawing nigh". He comes to where you are or where I was and am. He comes in the graciousness of His untiring love and He goes with you. That is an important thing. You get that in Laodicea. He went with them. What was He doing? He went with them, fully sympathetic; every step they took, He took one beside them. That is the kind of Saviour we have. If we are toiling or we are struggling, Jesus is our Saviour, and He will walk beside us with a view to our blessing and help.

They say later, "Was not our heart burning in us?" v 32. What a thing it is! In one sense (I do not want to be light or misunderstood), but there may even be something gained in having turning aside. I do not mean it is right to sin, I do not mean that; but the sense of being restored, and the warmth of the love that is there shining in the Saviour and shining in an unhindered way is most reviving. Can it be that God can look on us and not have a frown, not have a criticism? We are clothed in the worth of Christ because of what our Saviour has done.

In Revelation, the Lord spoke to these persons, and He spoke very strongly. He said at one point, "I am about to spue thee out of my mouth". That was a very, very strong kind of thing to say. What did He say to these people, these dreadful people, who did not know anything? "*Thou* art the wretched and the miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked", v 17. You know, He still served them; He said, "I counsel thee", v 18. I am indebted to another for saying that this involved the Lord's headship: "I counsel thee", JT vol 9 p462. In spite of the dreadful misbehaviour and failure: "I counsel thee". That is the Saviour we have. He wants to save us; He is a Saviour who is not only willing to save, but *desirous* of saving, *desirous* of having us in the path that He would have us in: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold purified by fire, that thou mayest be rich". That was not just any gold; it is "gold purified by fire". This is something that comes to us as we are subject to the Saviour and find the value, the distinct value, in "gold purified by fire". There is no better gold than that. That is our currency. "And eye-salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see. / rebuke and discipline as

many as I love". There is much suffering amongst the saints - I would be simple. The word is for all but there are some, just to use a simple expression, that are *hurting*, truly. I remember someone speaking in an address about the milch kine "lowing as they went", 1 Sam 6: 12. They felt it. Things were not as they should be; naturally they should have had their calves with them and they did not. They were lowing, but they went, and that is what the Lord would help us to do; He would help us to go on.

"I rebuke and discipline as many as I love; be zealous therefore and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and am knocking; if any one hear my voice and open the door". Well, there is a lot of knocking going on: brethren are suffering, in their health, in their families, in their spirits. The Lord is knocking, but He does not say, 'Could you hear me knocking?'; He does not say that. He says, "if any one hear my voice". Can we discern that He is there, He is behind it, He is doing it. Who is doing it? Our Saviour. He is doing it for our blessing and recovery. "I will come in unto him and sup with him". There it is again. Was it a waste of time to go and sup in their conditions, those who were going on so feebly and poorly? We need to hear His voice. His voice has only one thing in view and that is blessing. "I will come in unto him and sup with him". He will show us that He understands, and that is blessed. Then He goes on to say, "and he with me". He is drawing us close to Himself. There is no period of probation here. There is no purgatory, as some would have it, but "I will come in unto him and sup with him". And what is the next step? "And he with me". We are restored fully and blessedly by this Saviour.

"He that overcomes, to him will I give to sit with me in my throne; as I also have overcome, and have sat down with my Father in his throne". He will share with us. He has shared our sorrows; He does share them, our burdens too; He does share them. But what He is after, I say reverently, is that we should share with Him in *His* conditions, "sup with him, and he with me". That is the Saviour; He has our blessing in mind. Why? Because He loves us, every one of us. May it be that every one of us here would have some sense of the Lord's own love resting on them, and of His care for each one of us, so that we may answer Him as we should for His Name's sake!

Word in a meeting for ministry, Grangemouth

9th May 2017

