

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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SPIRITUAL REFINEMENT

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I desire, beloved, to seek the Lord's help to say a word as to spiritual refinement, a matter which interests every lover of Christ because we are immediately before the rapture. I do not speak of refinement of man because that is hateful to God. The first man could not be refined in the eye of God; he has been removed in the death of Christ. But divine Persons have in view an answer that is so glorious that they serve the saints in order that there might be refinement spiritually. The Father works in many ways including His discipline to refine our spirits. It says as to the Father's discipline that we should be "in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live", Heb 12: 9. One looks round at a company like this and what a weight of discipline there is that lies on the brethren, in their bodies, and circumstances, and in their spirits! How much comes from the Father's hand, but it is in view of forming our spirits.

I desire to speak firstly of the Lord Jesus. There was no need of refinement with Him. Everything that marked that blessed humanity was perfect. It says here regarding the offering of the oblation that it shall be "of fine flour", even in every way, not one feature exerting itself over another as we find in ourselves. If we think of persons in the Scriptures, in a man like Peter the feature of zeal exerted itself, perhaps at times to the expense of other features, which led him to say things that he should not have said - I do not mean to speak badly of Peter = but in Jesus everything was perfect. We think of what it says of our Lord Jesus at the age of twelve - but even before that the prophet had said, "For he shall grow up before him" Isa 53: 2. The Father found His delight in every stage of the growing of the Lord Jesus. He found His delight in every feature that came into expression. He says to His own, "I live on account of the Father", John 6: 57. That was the way that He lived. The Father was the source of all that He drew upon; the Father was the Object, the Father's love the motive for all that He did; and His desire was to answer to that love as He did in its fulness in a way that no-one else could have done. What perfection in manhood was found in Him! Another has said, 'When the Lord Jesus moved here, the Father could not take His eye off Him'. He was so delightful to the

Father, so pleasurable in everything, not only in what He did, but in what He was, every impulse of His heart going out to the Father, and the Father finding in every circumstance that which was perfectly in accord with the longings of His heart. As Mr Darby says, 'the hand that struck the chord found all in tune', JND Synopsis on Leviticus p118. Everything was there in perfection in the Lord Jesus.

He was here as the One who was "mingled with oil": how wonderful it is that the holy humanity, which was of the Holy Spirit, moved here as the One who was "mingled with oil", the Holy Spirit's identification. Even before His public service, there was there in Jesus what the Spirit found His pleasure in because it was of another order altogether. It was here for the pleasure of God.

But then He was also "anointed with oil"; and the Holy Spirit came upon Him, as we know, and you will find these references in the gospels because they are worth following up worshipfully. The Holy Spirit descended upon Him as a dove; He found a resting place in Jesus; He gladly identified Himself with that blessed Man. And He found a resting place for the sole of His foot, Gen 8: 9. When He came at Pentecost, He was sent, but when He came upon the Lord Jesus, He came of His own accord. He found His delight in identifying Himself with a Man who was here entirely for the pleasure of God, the "fine flour"; it needed no refinement. Every motive was Godward.

Jesus moved here in a suffering path. Did that change the order of humanity? What the suffering brought out was the excellence of that humanity in testimony. The One who could say He was, "Altogether that which I also say to you" (John 8: 25) was the One who stood and moved in the presence of the hatred of the Jews who would have cast Him out long before, had they not been restrained from doing so. Finally they did cast Him out as worthless. But God has built a whole world round that blessed Man.

And that is why I come to the second book of Kings because this relates to us. In the first book, in chapter 19, Elijah had been despondent, as sometimes we all get, and he had said to Jehovah "I am left, I alone" (v 10); and Jehovah told him that Elisha would follow on where he had been, and he found Elisha. He "was ploughing with twelve yokes before him, and he with the twelfth", v 19. Elijah took his mantle and cast it on Elisha; and we do not hear any more of Elisha until he is found at Gilgal. That is a good place to be; it is a place of power. When the children of Israel crossed the Jordan they took out twelve

stones; those stones were based at Gilgal, Josh 4: 3, 20. Think of what that signifies. The Lord Jesus has Himself been into death, and the ark went into the Jordan and the waters turned back and the ark stood in the middle of the Jordan, in the bed of the Jordan, until all the people had gone over, Josh 3. It was not the same as at the Red Sea. There was no ark at the Red Sea; Moses stretched out his staff and, with the authority of God, the waters fled, Exod 14. The Red Sea, as we know, relates to the Lord Jesus dying for us to deliver us from judgment, the One who has set us free from the bondage of sin. But when we come to the Jordan, the Lord Jesus has gone into death in order that we might come into the land of God's purpose. If you and I were to come into the land of God's purpose, it involved that He should die and that we should die with Him. We are "buried with him in baptism, in which ye have been also raised with him through faith of the working of God who raised him from among the dead", Col 2: 12. What a wonderful thing that is, dear brother and sister: you have your faith in Christ; your part is not in the wilderness; that is not where your order of life is. We have to work that out in God's ways. But your part is in the land of God's purpose, and Christ has been into death in order that we might come into the land of God's purpose, and that we might find that we have our part with Him as through death. So we can lay hold of the twelve stones that are set up in Gilgal, "and they are there to this day" (Josh 4: 9); they are immovable.

But then Elisha is at Gilgal. He would understand what we have been speaking of in these readings as to self-judgment because if Christ has set me free and brought me over the Jordan, I find that there are things about me that I need to get rid of in order that I might value the One who has done it all and enjoy His love, and that the things that might otherwise hinder might be judged and removed. There are things in us and about us naturally, and I have to say to myself, 'Does this help me spiritually?. Does it further my appreciation of Christ and of the purpose of God?'. If not, let me cut it off! That is what happened at Gilgal. "Jehovah magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel", Josh 4: 14.

Another important thing that Jehovah did at Gilgal was to roll away the reproach of Egypt, and that is a sobering thing, because in our local assemblies there should be nothing that speaks of the reproach of Egypt. The local meeting is not the world; it is not the scene where the world should be. We have spoken of marriage in the Lord, and it is most important that marriage should be in the Lord, but is there any sense

that the reproach of Egypt might mark our weddings? I just mention that. The reproach of Egypt at Gilgal was rolled away, and Elijah says to Elisha here, "Abide here, I pray thee; for Jehovah has sent me to Bethel". We have spoken of the Lord testing His work, and Elijah is doing that here. He says, 'Are you prepared to be without me?' He says, "Abide here, I pray thee; for Jehovah has sent me to Bethel". Does the Lord Jesus mean so much, dear brother or sister, that, come what may, you want to be in His company? When he says, 'Abide here. I am going to Bethel', Elisha says, "As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee!". What an attractive Person the Lord Jesus is! If I might say carefully, we have here a type of Christ as Head; Elisha has found a new Head. We cannot know the headship of Christ without the experience of Gilgal. I have to cut off every other influence in order to know the headship of Christ, and Elisha says in effect, 'I have had the experience of Gilgal, and the Lord Jesus is so attractive to me, His power I have proved, and I want nothing else than His company'. He says, "I will not leave thee!".

And Elijah goes on to Bethel. Bethel means the house of God. Young people might ask, 'Why does Bethel mean the house of God?'. If you look at Genesis 28 you will find that Jacob lay down, put his head on a stone as a pillow and he dreamt, and when he woke up, he said, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God" (v 17), and he named it Beth-el, v 19. Why was it dreadful to Jacob? It was because at Bethel Jacob began to have a sense of the fear of God. That is a right thing. It does not mean for the believer that the house of God is dreadful, but it does mean that in the house of God, there is to be a fear of God. Paul wrote to Timothy and said, "These things I write to thee, hoping to come to thee more quickly; but if I delay, in order that thou mayest know how one ought to conduct oneself in God's house", 1 Tim 3: 14, 15. Dear brother and sister, we are always in the house of God, always, not only when we are together but when we are apart; when no-one else sees us, we are in the house of God, and the fear of God helps to preserve us in keeping with what is suited to the house of God, and that we have a holy, reverent respect for the holiness and presence of God. Paul sets out to Timothy certain features of the house of God. He says, "I will therefore that the men pray in every place, lifting up pious hands", chap 2: 8. I find that a challenge. What do I put my hand to? Are they "pious hands"? He says, "I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men; for kings and all that are in dignity", chap 2: 1. That is an

important part, beloved, of the character of the house of God. It has an influence on what is proceeding in the world; not that the house of God is known in the world, but it has an influence. The Holy Spirit has come; "And having come, he will bring demonstration to the world, of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment", John 16: 8. Think of the Holy Spirit's presence. Every believer having the Holy Spirit has a part in the house of God, and the Holy Spirit's restraining influence has an effect as we give Him His place. Think of the awful powers that are arising in the world and the breakdown in the church that permits what the Lord hates! All these features should be felt by us and require, if they are to be felt rightly, that men should be lifting up pious hands, supplicating God as to the conditions that there are around us.

And then Paul says, "In like manner also that the women in decent deportment", 1 Tim 2: 9. You may say, 'Well, that does not really matter: God looks at my heart?'. But what is in the heart becomes manifest in the body. These things are expressed. These things bear on the house of God, and we, beloved, as having the Spirit, are to know how we should conduct ourselves in God's house.

But then Elijah says, "Abide here". You might say, 'Well, this is a good place to stay, in the house of God', but Elisha says, 'No. I am not going to leave you'. Have you ever said that to the Lord Jesus? Have you made a committal to Him, dear young soul, that places your body on the altar, so that you do not want to leave Him? You want to have Him for the whole of your life. Have you made that committal? There is no-one better to commit yourself to, no-one greater. Paul in writing to the Colossians speaks of Him, the One who is "before all" (chap 1: 17), the One "who is image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation; because by him were created all things", chap 1: 15, 16. How great He is, and in that blessed pathway here "all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell", v 19. Then Paul comes on to the second chapter and he says, "For in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete in him", v 9, 10. That is the enjoyment of the headship of Christ, "complete in him", knowing Him as the source, knowing the love that understands every situation and bears the load when I do not, and you do not, feel able for it. What a glorious Head we have! But the danger at Colosse was that they might let go of Him, and Elijah was testing whether Elisha would let go of the Head. The Lord may test us, and He has a right to do so, as to whether we are going to let go of the Head. Paul says to them, there were some "not holding fast the head", Col 2: 19. O, beloved, what a Person to hold fast to, this glorious One,

in whom God has found His delight so fully that He has raised Him from among the dead and set Him at His right hand. He is there for the pleasure of God and for our blessing, and that blessed One is the One to whom we are to hold fast. And Elisha, in the Old Testament words, is really saying that to Elijah. He says, 'I am holding fast to the Head; I am not going to let go'.

That is how unity is maintained. Unity, beloved, is maintained through holding fast the Head. Everything derives from Christ. If you are holding fast the Head and I am holding fast the Head, we will go on together; we will think the same; we will have the same glorious Object. Any thought of self-consideration, which never marked Jesus, will not mark me. The desire will be to hold fast the Head.

So Elijah says, "abide here ... Jehovah has sent me to Jericho". If you look at the atlas you will find that this was not a geographical order of movement; so it was a moral order of movement, his going to Jericho. Jericho was that great city that stood against the people of Israel going in to take possession of the land, Josh 6. We have had some sense in these occasions of what God has in view that we should take possession of. How wonderful! And Jericho was there. It had to be overcome. How is it going to be overcome? They were to walk round it for seven days. As they walked round that city, they would have had some assessment of the greatness of the power that was against them and, dear brethren, there are powers that are set in the present day against the saints entering into the purpose of God. How is it going to come down? Joshua tells them that the soldiers were to go first and then the priests carrying the ark, and then the people, and they encircled Jericho for seven days. It was the priests that blew the trumpets. The soldiers did not blow the trumpets. Soldiers were necessary. They were all part of God's dealings with His people, but it was the priest that blew the trumpet; but what made the difference was the ark. In the chapters in Joshua as the people come into the land, the ark gets a place in the affections of the people. You find when they were approaching the Jordan, Joshua says to the people, "When ye see the ark of the covenant of Jehovah your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then remove from your place, and go after it", Josh 3: 3. Christ is the Object in another world.

We have been speaking about reading. Dear friend, if you want to read ministry, and I trust there is a desire, ask the Holy Spirit to give you the desire to read. Ask the Holy Spirit to open up the teaching, to

unfold the glory of what is here in these pages in the Scripture, and to occupy your heart with the Man that is in the glory. Ask the Holy Spirit to do it, and He will. In Christianity we get as much as we are exercised to go in for. In the matter of salvation, God gives us freely from His own resource in blessing, but as we go on in our Christian experience, we get nothing without desire and nothing without exercise, and that is something that the Holy Spirit loves; He loves both to kindle desires in our hearts, and to strengthen and answer our desires, and if we speak to Him - as we have been reminded, He is the greatest Friend we have on earth - He finds great pleasure in unfolding the things that concern our Lord Jesus Christ.

Elijah says here, "Abide here, I pray thee; for Jehovah has sent me to the Jordan. And he said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee! And they two went on". What a moment! "Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together" - no doubt suggestive of the intrinsic power in our Lord Jesus who was able to meet and break the power of death - "and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither". What power Christ has exercised over death itself! Every other person has succumbed to it. Christ has broken its power, brought us into a land of divine purpose, a land of waterbrooks, a land flowing with milk and honey, the place where gold can be digged. What resource there is in the land of God's purpose; so Elijah smites the waters, and the two of them go over. Then he says, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I am taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me". What a wonderful thing that is! The double portion was the firstborn's portion. We are among the family of the firstborn.

The Lord is affecting our spirits, beloved. It has impressed me greatly recently that I cannot come out from the presence of the Lord with a bad spirit. You cannot do that. He is forming our spirits. Elisha said, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me". This was the spirit of the heavenly Man, "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ", Phil 1: 19. How great it is! Is there need for another resource? How that blessed Man, the Lord Jesus, met every obstacle, every foe! He "humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death", Phil 2: 8. What moral qualities came into expression in that oblation, the One who "humbled himself, becoming obedient", the One who was "heard because of his piety", Heb 5: 7. What moral excellence was seen in the Person of the Lord Jesus! And Elisha says, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me". Typically he wanted to move in the

same dignity and power in which the Lord Jesus moved, the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. There is power in lowliness. When John the baptist came, the word as to him was, “And *he* shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias”, Luke 1: 17. There is power in lowliness. That is not how men think of it, but it is so, and it was never more manifest than in the One who went into death.

Now I come to Ephesians because the One who has gone up is the One who “also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it, in order that he might sanctify it”. We do not always understand these words when we are young and perhaps even as we get older, but sanctification means that something is set apart from everything else for the divine pleasure. The assembly is for the divine pleasure. It is Christ’s assembly; it is for His heart. When you come to Revelation 21, the assembly is not only for the heart of Christ, but He administers through it in a city of glorious display, so perfect, so pure. It says “the city pure gold, like pure glass” (v 18) “and the street of the city pure gold, as transparent glass”, v 21. Everything is transparent in this city, nothing hidden. You and I, dear friend, have a responsibility to walk up the street of pure glass even in the present day; we have a responsibility to do that. You say, ‘Well, it does not matter. No-one knows’. Yes, “The eyes of Jehovah are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (Prov 15: 3), and our responsibility is to do what is right and to walk up “the street of the city pure gold, as transparent glass”.

The Lord Jesus is presented here as having purchased the assembly, “delivered himself up for it, in order that he might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of water by the word, that *he* might present the assembly to himself”. What a wonderful moment when He will present it to Himself, entirely in keeping with the perfection of His own manhood. This glorious vessel is “the fulness of him who fills all in all” (Eph 1: 23), and she will come out in display. All that she will display will be the perfection and glory of Christ morally. It will be seen in the wonderful city, and it is being formed now in the present time. We must be careful what we do and where we go because the Lord Jesus had to die to purify this city, to purchase it and to purify it. Just be careful where you go! Our mother used to say, ‘if you loved Him you would not do that’. If you loved Him, you would want to please Him, and His present service and the service of the Holy Spirit is to set this vessel apart from everything else even while we are here. No features of the world, the “beggarly principles” of the world that Paul speaks of to the Galatians 4:

9, belong in this city of pure gold. All these things, “philosophy and vain deceit”, that he speaks of to the Colossians (chap 2: 8), do not belong in the city of pure gold. The spirit of men reigning at Corinth (1 Cor 4: 8) does not belong in the city of pure gold. It is Christ, Christ, Christ. That is the Object of the assembly. He serves her that she in her undivided affection for Him might hold herself wholly for Him and answer to His own love, and that is what is proceeding now.

We often speak of what the enemy is doing and we should be aware of that, but let us speak also of what the Lord is doing. What is the Lord doing at the moment? I believe He is taking us from Gilgal to Bethel to Jericho to the Jordan that we might move here in the dignity and spirit of our glorified Christ and that what might be seen in testimony in the present day might be the very features that will come out in display, refined, glorious and beautiful. How wonderful that city will be: “And the nations shall walk by its light; and the kings of the earth bring their glory to it”, Rev 21: 24. The nations will bow in the sense of its majesty and glory, and Christ Himself will be the One who gives character to it all. May the Lord help us in these things! May we be increasingly prepared for the refining! He sits “as a refiner and purifier of silver” (Mal 3: 3); it is His own work that He refines. In Revelation chapters 1, 2 and 3 we have the Refiner in this dispensation. He looks at every local company and He says, “I know”. What a comfort that is: “I know”! You can go into His presence and lay the whole matter out before Him, as Hezekiah did, (2 Kings 19: 14), and you find He is saying, “I know”. How wonderful to be conscious that He sits as a Refiner in those addresses to the seven assemblies. He tells them what He approves of, and then we have what He has to draw to their attention that He condemns, so that in the enjoyment of what He is Himself they might come to appreciate, and we might come to appreciate, what is out of keeping with the holiness of His presence and judge it before Himself. It is all in view of the city shining. The hymn writer says,

The city shines with precious light,
As bride adorned in glory bright,
All fair in every trait; (Hymn 258).

May the Lord help us for His Name's sake!

Address at three-day meetings in Aberdeen

6th August 2016

DIVINE COMMUNICATIONS

John Laurie

Hebrews 1: 1-4

1 Corinthians 2: 6-13, 16 (last sentence)

1 Peter 4: 7-11

I seek help, beloved brethren, to say something about the importance of communications. It is very evident that it is one of the subjects considered by men to be of prime importance at the present time. The numerous devices and systems contributing to communications between persons and around the world are advancing rapidly, and have such an astonishing place in the times we live in, but nothing can ever surpass the communications from divine Persons. I seek help to say a little about the outstanding importance of these divine communications, so that, on our part, we might have a ready ear to hear not only what has been said but what is being said at the present time. The brethren will appreciate that I feel a considerable responsibility resting upon me here at this time because Peter, as we have read, indicates that if anyone does speak, he should speak “as oracles of God”. It is a vital thing to be able to communicate the living mind and word of God for the moment. I might be helped to say what would be perfectly in accordance with the Scriptures, but to speak “as oracles of God” is more than that. It would not conflict in any way with what is set out in the Scriptures, but it involves the communication of something in a special and living way with immediate and direct importance from God.

There has been no speaking like that of God in Christ the Son. That is the subject which is introduced here in Hebrews 1, the subject of God speaking “at the end of these days”, and He “has spoken to us in the person of the Son”. What distinctive, marvellous speaking, “in the person of the Son”. John in his gospel refers to Him as “the only-begotten Son” who has declared God. He has made God known and announced that wonderful Name. He who dwells in the Father's bosom has made God known; the love of God has been brought out into expression. The marvellous range of divine attributes have been brought into expression in the Son Himself. What can be known of God and communicated to men has been so fully expressed in the Son.

The subject of divine speaking is very great, but almost immediately the writer to the Hebrews proceeds to say something

about the greatness of the Son. It seems to be of importance that we should all have some distinctive impression of the glory of the Son of God. The language here is profound language. Another has said that it seems as if human language is put to the utmost test to give expression in some way to the greatness of all that has been expressed in the Son and communicated by Him. The language here is outstanding; it says, "who being the effulgence of his glory". No one has seen God at any time; He remains the invisible God according to His greatness and deity, but what can be expressed has been brought into radiant expression through the Son. He is the effulgence of God's glory; what a remarkable expression! I would not presume to encompass the fullness of that wonderful thought in what I am saying now, but I can see this, that in the Person of the Son, God has been pleased to draw near to His creature man. The radiance of God's glory has been and is expressed in the face of Jesus Christ. God's intention has been to speak through Him to men. Think of the wonder of the link God has in communing with His creature man. God drew near right at the beginning, and He must have felt it very keenly that, when coming to speak to Adam and Eve, He found that they had hidden themselves through guilt of conscience in order to seek to keep out of the immediate presence of God when He should draw near. What a sad thing!

God's pleasure is involved in what He would say to us, and continue to say to us at the present time as well. What marvellous things have been brought into expression in the Person of the Son. It says He is "the expression of his substance", the expression of the substance of God. I hesitate to say much on that remarkable expression save that I understand this to be involved in it, that what might be made known of the vast range of God's blessed nature and His attributes, all that substantially characterises the deity, has found expression in the Son, "the expression of his substance". We can hardly fathom the depths of what these words convey, and yet they give us to understand in some way that the importance and greatness of the Son is being so highlighted in order to give us to understand the significance of the communications to us in the Person of the Son.

There is something really profound and glorious about divine speaking in the Person of the Son, He who upholds all things by the word of His power. I do not know that I considered too much until recently this remarkable reference that He upholds all things "by the word of his power". We think of God introducing things in creation by a

word of power, but they are upheld by the Son, “by the word of his power”. That is another amazing statement brought out by the writer here. Think of the Son currently speaking in whatever way He may be pleased to do so in order to uphold all things. That comes as a very great encouragement. You might fear the course things are taking and be distressed at times by the way things are apparently going, perhaps even among believers. Be encouraged that the Son is able to uphold everything. He would speak to our hearts again today in order that there might be an upholding of divine interests among the saints here. He is upholding everything by the word of His power. Christianity and the testimony here will never collapse; that is an impossibility. So long as the Spirit of God is here, my understanding is that there will continue to be divine speaking and that there will most certainly be power for the maintenance and preservation of everything that is of God to the end of the dispensation. Such a Person is the Speaker who has “made by himself the purification of sins” and has “set himself down on the right hand of the greatness on high”. How great He is! I say these things to leave some impression upon our hearts of the majestic glory that is embodied in the Son of God to bow our hearts worshipfully before Him, and to encourage us to have a much readier ear to hear what is being said at the present time. How important to hear what the Lord would say; Do you have an interest, and an ear to hear what is being said at the present time?

These things are made good through the active service of the Holy Spirit among us. The mind of Christ is being unfolded; the Spirit communicates the things of Christ to us. What a wonderful service He renders! No wonder those words are so often repeated in Revelation, “He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies” (Rev 2 and 3). Oh the remarkable communications that are continuing! If we have an ear to hear we will discern them and they will be for our preservation and growth. In a certain sense the whole range of truth is out; Christ has brought all that into full expression, and has caused the fulness of that to be set out in clarity amongst His lovers here through the gifts given in order that there should be no doubt left as to the blessedness of the revealed truth. So these things may be known and enjoyed by us as our great inheritance, and we may be brought into the living appreciation of them by the Spirit.

Now the apostle Paul, as we read of in Corinthians, was used in an outstanding way to convey these things to the saints. Christ is the

truth; He bears that wonderful title “the Word”. The expression of the mind and heart of God has come out in wondrous glory in the Person of the Son. One of the hymn writers says,

Whose title is the Word (Hymn 224),

Think of that, One who has such a title, “the Word”, the very expression of the mind of God embodied in Him. The apostle Paul was granted this remarkable ability to be a mouthpiece, more than a mouthpiece, but he was a mouthpiece in so far as he was appointed to communicate these things to the saints, not in human wisdom, nor in anything taught by man, but in power in a living way by the Holy Spirit. These precious things have become part of our great inheritance to cling to and enjoy. I believe someone said to Mr Darby at one time that we need to get back to first principles. His reply was, 'No, I never leave them', CAC vol 10 (Outline of Luke's Gospel) p246. That is a very sobering thing for us all to consider. If we are all moving in the gain of the living communications from Christ as Head, there could not be disparity and differences of outlook among us, nor could there be confusion of speaking or communication amongst ourselves. That is part of the import of this chapter finishing off with these remarkable words, “But we have the mind of Christ”. That is the outcome of each one individually drawing from that same blessed Source, so that as found in the assembly it can be said of those belonging to it, “But we have the mind of Christ”. Things are made livingly good in the souls of the saints as the mind of Christ is conveyed and brought in, in power, by the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul sought to serve in that way. We may say that the apostle Paul is not here now, which is very evident, but the things conveyed by Paul are. We need to cherish the truth as set out, not only by the apostle Paul, but by those used of the Lord Jesus to speak on His behalf. Thank God for the gospel writers with all the treasure contained in the holy writings. Thank God for the other apostles who served with distinction too, these great ministries that have been set out and recorded in the written Word for us. These things form part of a treasure. It speaks here of “wisdom which God had predetermined before the ages for our glory”. That is a very precious word, as if God had in mind that a certain vast range of things should be treasured up until the time became appropriate for their communication and dispensing amongst those who love Him down here. He loves us; we give thanks to God for that, but you will notice those words further down where it says in verse 9, “Things which eye

has not seen, and ear not heard, and which have not come into man's heart, which God has prepared **for them that love him**". Are we truly found as lovers of God who have an ear and an interest to take in these marvellous things that have been communicated? How we should cling to the value of the treasures that have been unfolded for our blessing.

We are thankful for enquiry in the temple when we can be together and, by the Spirit's help, look into these treasures that reside in the assembly. The assembly is the great vessel like the custodian of truth at the present time. Christ is absent from this scene but there is a vessel here indwelt of the Holy Spirit containing the wealth. The mind of God is to be found amongst His people. We might at times have some inclination to project our own mind and opinion about things; we must be careful for there is wisdom found amongst the people of God. The mind of Christ is to be found there; the Spirit speaks in the temple. Do not despise these things. We need to have regard and love for one another as those who have been called into the enjoyment of these treasured things; "things", it says, "which eye has not seen, and ear not heard, and which have not come into man's heart, which God has prepared for them that love him, but God has revealed to us by his Spirit".

This wonderful present service continues through the Holy Spirit here. I have no doubt in some way when the apostle speaks of what "God has revealed to us by his Spirit", he would be speaking of the distinctive knowledge of these things that had been conveyed to the apostles, but then they, and Paul in particular, served in view of the communication of these things to the saints so that we should become intelligent in relation to the mind of Christ, and all that finds its continuation through the service of the Holy Spirit among the saints at the present time. That is a very precious thing. There are multitudes of documents produced by men giving advice, reports and communications about subjects. Amongst the people of God here, living things are conveyed in the power of the Holy Spirit, a divine Person who is here. They rise above things that have ever entered into the range of man's thinking. We need to make sure our own thinking does not deprive us of the enjoyment of them because persons can become so occupied with their own opinions, and own mind about things, as to miss out the relevance and value of divine speaking through the power of the Holy Spirit. Superior wisdom is brought out in

the power of the Holy Spirit among the saints. Following that, reference is made to “communicating spiritual things by spiritual means”. It shows how important it is that we should sit down amongst the saints with due respect for one another where we anticipate the opening up of things in a distinctive way and by a spiritual means of communication. One of the things I have dwelt upon a little in relation to the holy city is that we are told through the record of John in Revelation that “nothing common” shall enter it (chap 21: 27); that is, not necessarily evil, but rather “nothing common”. It seems to me that even our language should not drop below the level of assembly dignity to what might be unsuitable, even although it might be common language amongst men. We necessarily have to speak in understandable terms, but there should be holy reverence and dignity about the communication of things amongst the people of God. That is to be maintained in our conversation with one another, so that we speak in an appreciative way of the things that God has treasured up for us, as those who love Him and seek to come into the good of these things. Common language seems to be deteriorating almost day by day. There are things spoken about now and in such a way as would never have taken place in my younger days, what is common amongst men is going downhill daily. What is proper to the treasured things is maintained in spiritual dignity through the presence of the Holy Spirit here, and should mark the language of communication amongst ourselves, and in our times of enquiry. It brings about a certain restraint on what is unsuitable so that there might be opportunity for the dignity and holy character of these communications to be maintained among the saints in view of profit. What the apostle Paul said to the Ephesians was that the gifts had been given “with a view to the edifying of the body of Christ”, Eph 4: 11-12. It is not my place here to just say what may come into my mind; I have a responsibility to my Master to convey His mind in order that there might be edification amongst the saints, and I think if we all felt that increasingly we would be a more careful in the way we speak and in what we communicate in order that it might be for profit and for edification among the saints. “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him; and he cannot know them because they are **spiritually discerned**”.

How indebted we are, beloved brethren, to the presence and service of the Holy Spirit here. We cannot proceed without the present help of the Holy Spirit. We cannot progress in divine things without maintaining communion with the Spirit of God. How important and vital

that is in our daily lives, to speak to the Spirit of God. He would delight to speak to us. Do you think it is possible for a natural man by human effort to advance himself spiritually? It can only be by the Spirit of God. It is the only means whereby spiritual things can be suitably communicated. It is only by the Spirit's service that they can be understood and taken in, and it is by His precious service to us that they are enjoyed and the fulness of the life experienced that we have been speaking of in the reading. It is by His help that they are brought out into testimonial expression here and in responsive expression Godward among the saints in view of God's glory. It is important for us to be preserved in these things, in order that there might be an area maintained where the consciousness of divine speaking is valued by us. It is not common to the world; it is distinctive to the sphere of the assembly, and the functioning of the temple where the light and mind of God are brought out.

This expression at the close of the chapter seems to be a very remarkable one, "But we have the mind of Christ." Think of a vessel here with the capability of understanding and taking in things and expressing them in such a way that they should be in perfect accord with the mind of Christ Himself. What delight the Lord must have in what is resident in the body of the saints here where the expression of His own mind is to be found. I would like to have a greater appreciation of that. I think it involves respect for my brethren and appreciation of those who have been called by the grace of God to be participators in these holy things. There is an atmosphere among the saints that contributes to the liberty of divine communications.

I then read in Peter's epistle. There is a background first of all indicated, "But the end of all things is drawn nigh"; we are in those times. If it was appropriate for Peter to say, it is of all the more relevance now. We are surely in the last days. "The end of all things has drawn nigh; be sober therefore, and be watchful unto prayers". What a time we are in when we feel the need of being watchful that we might not be caught up by all the communications in the world around us, many of them so defiling, and at best but common. We need to be watchful and marked by prayer, watchful and waiting in view of the coming of the Lord. We are in the last days; the coming of the Lord has drawn nigh. How near we are to the moment of our rapture, to be taken out of this scene to be with Christ above, and to be like Him. Then will follow His appearing; have we some sense of being prepared for these times? Certain things contribute to it.

Peter goes on to say, “but before all things having fervent love among yourselves”. That would seem to be a prime thing, “fervent love among yourselves”. That is not difficult to understand but we may find it testing to work out. Perhaps there are certain persons that we find just a little uncomfortable to work with, and to speak to and commune with. May the Lord help us to be preserved with fervent love among ourselves. It is indeed a matter of prime importance. Then he says, “because love covers a multitude of sins”. I do not set about to define exactly what that might be, but I can see that if there is not a spirit of love for one another it becomes very easy to take issue with a multitude of things instead of bringing in love in order that there might rather be a covering up of things that can be suitably covered in view of the promotion of divine interests among us. It says, “hospitable one to another, without murmuring;” and then, “each according as he has received a gift, ministering it to one another”. How graciously the Lord has provided for the maintenance of His interests; we all have something. To each has been given “a measure of faith” (Rom 12: 3), and we have each been the recipients of divine grace. The intention would be that these things should be liberated in their value among the saints in view of the mutual profit among us of what is pleasing to the Lord, “as good stewards of the various grace of God”.

Then he says, “If anyone speak - as oracles of God; if anyone minister - as of strength which God supplies”. That is a sobering word. We are privileged to have times of divine speaking among us; we gather in view of these occasions for ministry and at other times; it is an opportunity for distinctive speaking to be heard among us. This is quite a searching word the apostle uses here, “If any one speak - as oracles of God”. He is almost suggesting that unless someone can bring in some living touch in relation to the mind of the Lord and in a suitable way, then he should rather not be speaking. Anyone that does speak has to speak in this way. That is not to prohibit persons from speaking, but rather to make way for the liberty of heavenly communications to be opened up among us, that they should not be obstructed but rather liberated in power in view of profit. “If any one minister - as of strength which God supplies; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ”.

Following that he then progresses into one of these passages that we would call a doxology, that is, a spontaneous outburst of worship to a divine Person, “to whom is the glory and the might for the

ages of ages. Amen". What a beautiful touch that is in the course of bringing out these thoughts as to the suitability of communications amongst the saints. The apostle's heart rises in view of yielding glory to God Himself, "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ"; it is to God that he raises this ascription of glory through Jesus Christ. We can easily see, I think, beloved brethren, how fruitful the answer would be in view of divine glory where conditions proper to the assembly are maintained among us and the distinctiveness of divine speaking clung to.

I just appeal to all our hearts that we might have a ready ear to hear what the Spirit might say, as we are exhorted to do, and that there might be an increasing desire among us to have respect for what is of God amongst the saints so that these things may be ministered among us and suitably taught in view of the growth and preservation of us all to God's glory.

May it be so for His glory!

Manchester

15th October 2016

PSALM 45

Percy Lyon

If we take up this psalm dispensationally, we are in a very rich realm, as bearing on the remnant of Israel crowning their King; or still more, spiritually, as bearing on the assembly as in the kingdom of the Son of His love exalting her glorious Head. That is just a touch on the matter dispensationally, for we must cut in a straight line the word of truth.

One would just touch first upon the three previous psalms without alluding to them in detail. Psalm 42 gives us great pressure; but as Psalm 30: 5 says, “at even weeping cometh for the night, and at morn there is rejoicing”. Psalm 45 is like a morning without clouds. We know that, according to David, the king was to be such. It is important to see that Israel are suffering governmentally through their own folly, and God will allow instruments of wickedness to attack them, antichrist and others. I refer to the coming day when the church has gone. But

Out of the eater came forth food,
And out of the strong came forth sweetness, Judg 14: 14.

God causes the wrath of man to praise Him (Ps 76: 10 KJV), and out of the furnace of affliction does the gold appear, Isa 48: 10 and Prov 17: 3. It becomes characteristic of Israel, for we are told that the queen is marked by the gold of Ophir, the choicest of the gold; and then she is marked also by wrought gold, bearing particularly on what is woven amidst suffering conditions into the very texture of her being. It is within that she is connected with the wrought gold, and it is publicly she stands as queen in the gold of Ophir as she is displayed according to the glory of the King. There is what is retained for His own heart secretly. She can grace Him in the outward position; she can minister to Him in the inward.

These great thoughts, dear brethren, of course, anticipate an intensity and wealth of thought in the assembly that even the redeemed remnant of Israel will never know. Hence the Lord opened up the scriptures from Moses and the prophets with those who would be the nucleus of the assembly, all showing that in the gift of the Spirit, then promised by the Lord, there would be an intimate understanding of those which immediately bear on Israel, but inferentially and spiritually bear supremely on the choice vessel of Christ's building - the assembly.

In Psalm 44: 4, the psalmist says they are under pressure, and accept it as they proceed, knowing God to be their King, and in the spirit of Christ's suffering in verse 22. This utterance is taken on by the Holy Spirit in Romans 8, giving a lustre to it and only operating in this wonderful economy - "For thy sake we are put to death all the day long; we have been reckoned as sheep for slaughter", v 36. You can see, dear brethren, that, while outwardly their conditions do not change, they are bowing submissively to them and in that sense they rise in moral triumph present here, because everything awaits the King. In Romans 8, where we have the quotation from Psalm 44, the King is known. I am referring to the utterance, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?", v 35. Now we have got an environment of adoration and appreciation of the King, which is so essential; and I therefore allude to the prefix (or heading) of the Psalm, the title, addressed to the chief Musician. One might liken it, just by way of figure, to the Holy Spirit. I know we could rightly apply it to the Lord, surely, but there are many presentations of this phrase that could be applied to both. The word "chief" at once draws our attention to a divine Person who stands alone, unique in whatever the matter be on hand. It means there are going to be others, thank God, but the chief is outstanding. How the Spirit has raised melody in our hearts to the Lord, blessed Spirit! God would never have had a note of praise without Him, nor would Christ, nor would the saints to one another - "speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and chanting with your heart to the Lord", Eph 5: 19. As we are in the hands of the blessed Spirit, how He loves to strike a note delightful to God and to Christ.

And then it says further, "Upon Shoshannim". The word "Shoshannim" is generally admitted to bear upon the thought of lily-like instruments, delicate instruments; probably instruments connected with strings, harps and so on. The harp is a lovely instrument. Stringed instruments suggest great delicacy, and what is priestly. The use of a plural, and the feminine idea, suggest the assembly to a great part; and Israel, of course, in the coming day. The strings are tightened through discipline. Half-open flowers are found in the temple (1 Kings 6: 29) - life bursting out in the work of God.

The "sons of Korah" suggest the moral side. They were delivered from the doom of their guilty father, preserved to sing lustily of mercy, exalt here the King, the great vessel of mercy: "Remember Jesus Christ raised from among the dead, of the seed of David,

according to my glad tidings", 2 Tim 2: 8. There is no song short of Christ in resurrection among the saints. There is nothing to sing about *here*; all lies in death, and it would be a mockery to sing. "But thanks to God who gives us the victory by our Lord Jesus Christ", 1 Cor 15: 57. The light of the situation is known in the prison in Philippi by the two prisoners and voiced by them in no uncertain tone, in no hesitant whisper, but in a bold psalm, for the prisoners heard them. The walls of the Roman prisons were thick but they could not deaden the sweet notes of those lusty singers, Acts 16: 25. They were like Korah's sons, both of them. Paul himself would tell you so - "mercy was shown me" (1 Tim 1: 13); chief of sinners he!

The word 'Maschil' means 'an instruction', intelligence. Psalms are associated with learned, spiritual men of Israel who know what to do. There will be great stress, persecution, antichrist; what will these wise men not be in steadying the saints under the storm? They are referred to in Daniel, you know, "they that are wise shall shine..... as the stars, for ever and ever", chap 12: 3. They furnish light in divine wisdom in a day of terrible darkness, the elements of intelligence, dividing in a straight line the word of truth so that the saints can have peace together. God's mind is known on the one hand as to His service Godward; and as to His testimony manward, as Spirit taught, the Spirit of truth. As we give Him His place, we are to hold in our souls every component part of the truth in relation to the whole.

And then again, it is "a song of the Beloved". Some might ask why it does not start with that. He must have song; so He is set up as the Chief Musician, and He must have it in a holy way. The lilies speak of purity, "Shoshannim". Hezekiah says, "the living, he shall praise thee" (Isa 38: 19); there is life bursting out in plants of the Father's planting. I believe the lilies suggest another generation, and the sons of Korah are that generation steeped in mercy as divinely recovered. The newness of the generation must come first. The ways of God in recovery to bring us into it must follow, and it is an instruction, intelligence together. We know how playing in an orchestra, for instance, requires continual practice, for just one individualised note would be jarring in the harmony of the concerto.

'An instruction' involves our intelligent part in the economy, our niche in the body, if you will, our place in the assembly; intelligence enters into it. Sober-mindedness is connected with it, the mind is renewed (Rom 12: 2), and there are no high thoughts, v 3. "For I say ...

to everyone that is among you not to have high thoughts above what he should think; but to think so as to be wise, as God has dealt to each a measure of faith". This word "wise", as the note shows, is 'to have a sober judgment', the wisdom indeed that finds us in our place and operating in it in intelligent concert with the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit, and with our brethren in the great vessel of praise, the assembly.

But now, "a song of the Beloved" *the* Beloved. He is not one to share our hearts with many; there is never *a* beloved; "Beloved" means "**the** Beloved". David means 'the beloved', and he was the only king to Abigail. It was not official kingship, with all its external trappings, but as the *unchallenged* sway of the Son of God's love pervading us individually and collectively. So that in the Colossian epistle, where the Lord personally is made so much of, and who He is, and then what He has effected in the fruit of His death (He has brought in on the whole scene in reconciliation for divine complacency, anticipatively in the assembly, soon so publicly and gloriously in the universe of bliss), there is the great thought of tuning up in concert practice in our hymn singing to one another - even admonishing one another. You may say you have talked to the brother about something, and you have told him where he was wrong and you have not got very far: how about *singing* him into it! That is the idea, "admonishing one another, in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs", Col 3: 16. But then the Psalms are many, are they not? There is not one of them that will not be used appreciatively by the remnant. I believe they will be their most used part of the Scriptures; they will furnish them with material for the service of God. And while the Psalms are not exactly set in Christian language, as we know it - that is, God known as Father, and so on - still we can cull from what will be the joy of the remnant something that we can take on in the lustre and liberty of our own portion as sons with God and brethren of Christ, through grace - and of the queen; for these great thoughts, worked out finally in Israel on an earthly level, have a lustre eternal and glorious in relation to the assembly.

And so it is here, "My heart". It is not a borrowed psalm; it is composed. Every saint should have a psalm: "each of you has a psalm", 1 Cor 14: 26. Have you one? If we have not, we have a dirge. Such was Job's. He refers to it in that character, which can only be in relation to the man who is the source of all the grumbles in contrast to the blessed Man who is the source of all joy. And so it is, "My heart". It is not the study-chair composition: something has made the heart

tender and sensitive to divine writing. Even antichrist in all his malice has had to play his part under divine control, little as he will know it, in the breaking up of the stony heart, and making room for God to place a heart of flesh there in the repentant remnant of Israel, because all is changed now the King appears. Of course it would be. Deliverance in Romans - "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord" - is when the King appears; before there is a dirge, a groan, "O wretched man that I am ...", Rom 7: 24-25. But I am not referring to this quite in its initial side, though it must bear on it in that the whole position is changed as the morning dawns - the morning star having already arisen in our hearts (2 Pet 1: 19); the King having come into our view and filling the horizon of our soul and the praise of our lips. "My heart" has a love song. How could God take a song of His Beloved except from love? "My heart is welling forth with a good matter": how selective! A lovely note of praise in the assembly, serving there, dear believer, because you cannot help it in the spontaneity of love that is welling up, springing up, as we have it in the Spirit of God.

"I say what I have composed". This is authoritative, dear brethren. You may ask what about the books? Oh, any light shed by those who know Him better than we do on the King is good, surely; value them we do, but what about your own composition? The brethren of Joseph are asked as to what is their occupation. What is *our* occupation? 'Well, a rather trying one just now; trade union black looks, and strenuous circumstances' - that is the three previous psalms: this is the holy and free occupation of worshipful lovers. It is the occupation on which we enter in the hour of love that is before us on the morrow if left here. But it must be our occupation, dear brethren. Pharaoh asked them a very searching question, "What is your occupation?" (Gen 47: 3), and Pharaoh represents God. Joseph is 'Christ among the gentiles'; that is, "Christ in you the hope of glory", Col 1: 27. What is your occupation? "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs", Eph 5: 19. That is the Ephesians' occupation. Other things are incidental, wearing down the will, enabling us to provide for what is honest and to have something over for the testimony. For Tyre is referred to in this psalm, showing how the fruits of commerce are subordinate to the prosperity of the testimony. She is there with a gift: but not before the queen is there. If you brought Tyre's daughter in before, you would be using your money to sell the brethren, to acquire a place for yourself. Paul refers to the Ephesian saints to working with his hands, and it is more blessed to give than to receive, Acts 20: 34, 35.

The saints had acquired queenly distinction in first love in relation to Christ. I only say that in passing, but your occupation - what is absorbing you? What is your life? "I say what I have composed". Yes, the heart meditatively, contemplatively, adoringly moving livingly and lovingly in that realm where Christ is all and in all.

And now it goes on, "Thou art fairer". He is coming to detail, and priestly detail is the touchstone with us. We can get through on generalities maybe, and well known and hackneyed expressions current among us in regard of the Lord, but what about priestly discrimination? The priest fed on the flesh of the sacrifices on some occasions (Lev 6: 26), and he had to cut up the inward parts as well as skin the animal, Lev 1: 6. He was to be versed in the inward motives of Jesus, typically, and as the priestly company were at it, they would be together in it. Well, how is God served in the sanctuary if we are not at home in relation to the inward motives of Jesus, fed on them, discriminating between them? For if He is glorious as one blessed whole, how infinitely glorious He is in His holy parts, shall I say in reverence, "Thou art fairer than the sons of men"; His unique humanity in the glory of grace? Men have set places in humanity in tyrannical power: Jesus holds His place in incomparable excellence amongst His own; even His place as Head of humanity that God has made Him provisionally is as the Vessel of grace to humanity, giving men a new Head in His presence. Glorious grace of God to do that! But here it is His excellence as known, I suppose, among His lovers, grace poured into His lips. Oh, the excellence of dependent grace with Jesus! His ear opened every morning (Isa 50: 4) to have a word from His Father to speak to those that were weary, wonderful grace! "Fairer than the sons of men". All humanity of all degrees is set aside in the incomparable worth of His Person. "Grace is poured into thy lips". And how it poured out, that grace - the gracious words which fell from His lips. His mouth was most sweet in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke 4: 22): gracious words proceeded in lovely rhythm and cadence and moral beauty and order from the lips of the anointed Man. "God hath blessed thee for ever". God says He will go on for ever with man in that blessed Man, He will never want another, and they will never want another. Rejected in the synagogue of Nazareth by His would-be murderers, among whom He had lived in such grace over all those years, God says that if He is refused in the tiny synagogue of Nazareth, He will give Him the whole universe, where He shall be the vessel of His grace. They thought to remove Him from the tiny pulpit of their parochial synagogue, and God

says that He has exalted Him on that throne of grace - He shall address the universe from it. And we are the fruit of that grace here tonight, thank God!

"Gird thy sword". We have grace and truth. Do you think that such grace is going to go unchallenged by Satan? Are people going to listen? It was the examples of grace they would not have: Naaman and the woman of Sarepta, Luke 4: 25-27. They would not mind grace in the abstract, so to speak, like the picture on the wall; it was the living exponents of that grace, persons who had no title to anything, and were, therefore, the suited objects of that grace and became the happy subjects of it. And so it is the sword. If grace holds the field, then the field must be cleared of all that is foreign to it. And so He came by grace and truth (John 1: 17), lest we become lopsided in grace at the expense of truth, which is not grace at all. "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O mighty one". Things have to be faced. The first scripture, in verse 2, is the Lord morally, or else none of us would be here tonight. Verse 3 is the Lord militarily. I suppose verse 2 would attach to Luke - personal; verse 3, to the mighty warrior, Matthew's gospel; verse 5, the skillfulness of the great archer, Mark's gospel - "the Lord working with them", chap 16: 20. Joseph's hands were made strong:

... his bow abideth firm,
And the arms of his hands are supple
By the hands of the mighty One of Jacob.
From thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel, Gen 49: 24.

What does it mean, this archery? God, the mighty God of Jacob, is holding the hands of the Archer, because what a skillful place the hands have in archery: and the result is "the shepherd, the stone of Israel". It means that the sheep are going to be saved, by "the shepherd, the stone of Israel". The councils of God are going to be made sure. God is going to give everything through this great archer; the Lord Himself, of course, supremely. "The Lord working with them", in Mark. He shot to the bringing down of that stubborn heart of Saul of Tarsus; and yet in the tenderest grace of the Son of Man. His arrow found its billet in a heart encased in the armour of religious pride. The Lord knows where to touch the person in the chink of the armour, the conscience. Read the gospels in this light. The great Vessel of divine grace, in Luke; the Vessel of divine light. Matthew - the mighty Warrior riding in truth and meekness: all the truth of God for the universe in one blessed Man, and He riding meekly into the very city that was to hate

Him, lowly, meek, riding upon an ass and the foal of an ass. You might say, 'What about the heart of the King's enemies?'. The truth finds its billet in Mark: "And no man dared question him anymore", chap 12: 34. What a time it was! His bow abode in strength! "Pay what is Caesar's to Caesar", v 17. And then, "Do not ye therefore err, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God?", v 24. In their sad tale everybody died, it was a black picture. There were seven husbands and there was one woman and last of all the woman died, v 19-23. But they were in the presence of Him who would die knowing that God would raise Him, and that men would live on account of Him; and His arrows were sharp in the heart of the King's enemies.

But there was one man there who was a scribe, and the Lord said to him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom", v 34. And then in chapter 14, you have some fine trophies of the mighty Archer, whose arrows, in this dispensation of grace, are not steeped in poison to destroy the enemies, but rather steeped in grace to win them. "Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?" You can see how these matters come out: the heart at home in the grace of the great vessel of grace, and His beauty; the heart with Him in the conflicts of the testimony in the light of that great victory, v 3, 4.

Trod all our foes beneath His feet,
In being trodden down Hymn 24

This is the great thought in Mark, the great Archer, and he is teaching us archery: "the Lord working with them". So that He holds our hands, the mighty one of Jacob, and we ought to know more about it. You may say that the great battles are over now. Well, they are in a certain way - three thousand captured in one blow, a great number of persons, bound in love's fetters to their loving captor, the Lord Jesus Christ, preached so faithfully by that happy captive of His, Peter. But it is important to see that we all ought to be archers. The archer hides himself; he keeps out of sight, but the arrow of a good archer finds its billet. I believe open-air preaching furnishes a field for archery - an arrow shot at a venture as a person may be passing by - that day will show.

Verse 6 relates to John's gospel (I am only making applications to the gospels). We have what He is morally in grace, in Luke's gospel - as seen in verse 2. What He is militarily in Matthew's gospel is suggested in verses 3 and 4. What He is in spiritual strategy, and wondrous accuracy as the great Archer in Mark's gospel is in verse 5. I

believe that, if Mark once retired from the field, the Lord's arrow reached him, through Paul, I presume, and he was brought back a willing captive instead of the free-lance his will had made him in leaving Paul and his company. And now we come to verse 6: "Thy throne, O God". I am not limiting this of course to John's gospel; it is essentially the Person, who He is. The Lord speaks of His kingdom in John: "I have been born for this", chap 18: 37. Nobody in the royal lines of this world has been born a king in that sense. He was born a king. One loves that, who He is. And He is saluted of God. Wonderful! These marvellous subjects of grace presented first and then saluted of God. You may ask why that is not put first: because we reach the truth of His deity through the grace of His humanity. It is the question of priestly power to understand the ark. And so all these lovely traits of the three synoptic gospels are introduced before we reach the great climax. Co-equal in the Godhead He, with the other Persons, but what is so wonderful is all that He is in the glory of His Person as God. Still in Manhood, of course, for we shall never know Him as God save in Manhood; a divine Person, but Man; all these glories of His grace and truth, His skill against the king's enemies, all conclude together to the great climax of His Person. And what is He going to be now? Oh, you might say that He is out of our reach for ever - "over all, God", Rom 9: 5. No; He is going to be Head of the heavenly choir, anointed to that end and chosen of God: "in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises", Heb 2: 12. He is "anointed with the oil of gladness above" His companions. What for? He wept alone, but who shall say what these tears were? We are told that God gathered them into a vessel and wrote them in His book (Ps 56: 8), the tears of Jesus; God is ever treasuring the tears of Jesus. Soon all tears will be wiped away; but I suppose anything attaching to Jesus must abide for ever. And when tears are for ever gone, the excellency of what the tears of Jesus convey shall abide with us as with God, who alone could fully assess them. And so there is such joy with Him, the oil of gladness above His companions, companions that He has reached in grace; companions that He has delivered from the empire of darkness by bringing to them truth in His wonderful meekness and righteousness; companions that His skillful bow as the great archer has won with His divinely directed arrows. There are they, His companions; the grace of it! What were they not once? "And these things were some of you; but ye have been washed.", 1 Cor 6: 11. What are they now? *Companions of Christ*.

"Myrrh and aloes, cassia, are all thy garments": that is the Lord

appearing now in character; as He is supreme in our praises Godward, His character would shine in features. The garments of Jesus speak of the saints; myrrh, aloes, cassia, the new man, if you will, the fruit of suffering. The myrrh and aloes represent bitterness; cassia, the perfume of all that goes to make up that kind of man in the history of the saints. "Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made thee glad". That is tomorrow morning at the Supper; those "who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption", Eph 6: 24. It is said you can bury elephant's tusks for a century and bring them up afterwards uncorrupted, which is very suggestive. There are those who are of the ivory palaces - inherent purity, constitutionally. It is the work of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

We come then to "King's daughters" - now we have got the queen. You might say that she is a long time coming. Yes, but not too long. It would be artificial, dear brethren, it would be mere language, only words, if we had her before. It is the transforming glory of the King that assures the status and state of the queen; standing in public display - "**the queen** in gold of Ophir". We have the officers of the royal household attached to the queen. Are they not subject to the King? Of course they are, they are the King's servants, but they are specially set aside to attend to the queen. And, dear brethren, we ought to have it in the economy, actively. We are not slouching (I mean spiritually), but in the dignity of attendants on the queen. There she is. We must have her in gold of Ophir; just anything will not do. It must be the best - Ophir's gold was without compare. The great urban area is here, in order to provide a dress for the queen. Such dressmakers would make no secret of their glory, that they had furnished the queen with her wedding trousseau, shall we say. Do we appreciate that we are here in order to see to her wedding garments? It refers to the way things are done publicly, the way we are here in eldership. Man must be irreproachable - that bears on the side of dignity; standing, not sitting yet, not in the inward apartments - that is coming, that is Ephesians. But this is more like 1 Timothy here. Later it does not refer to Ophir in the inward apartments; and there is a reason for all that.

So, "Hearken, daughter". The hymn says,

We have nought to regret nor to lose.

No 139

Well, you may say, 'You have some might-have-beens at times'. While ravished with the King adoringly in the kingdom of the Son of His love, you will have power to leave these things behind. Paul says,

“forgetting the things behind”, Phil 3: 13. We are lovely to Christ as forgetting. Rebecca was lovely to Isaac as taking a journey where she left behind all her heart could call dear for a man she had never seen, but of whom she had heard so perfectly from the one who speaks to us of the Spirit of our God. And then Ruth was delightful to Boaz in that he had heard from the Spirit, as we should say, from the chief over the reapers. She had left her home, left it for ever, as she made no secret of to Naomi. And then Paul says, “for we have not here an abiding city, but we seek the coming one”, Heb 13: 14. Oh, that we may be more forgetful of what is to be forgotten. (We are not to forget to entertain strangers, v 2). To forget means that you have no reminiscences harboured and no inclinations to return; in other words, if they arise, you nip them in the bud. Dear brethren, we are not lovely to Christ till we forget, and we do not forget until He is lovely to us - “Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is far off”, Isa 33: 17. How near that land is brought now; the King and the land are one. In the assembly we have the land, the territory, the circle, as well as the Lord, the Centre; it is the kingdom of the Son of His love.

And then as we proceed, what scenes are unfolded now.

Incline thine ear; and forget thine own people and thy father's house;
And the King will desire thy beauty.

Here are the conditions. The Lord says, “Ye are they who have persevered with me in my temptations”, Luke 22: 28. You say, 'They made a poor thing of it'; and we would have made but a poor thing of it; but He credited them. Indeed, Peter had said, “to whom shall we go? thou hast words of life eternal”, John 6: 68. So that they did leave all for Him and they were wonderfully beautiful in His eyes. He thanked the Father for them as they rallied to Him as babes in Matthew 11, and He blessed the Father for them in John 17, as He had made men of them under Himself in His culture of love. He thanked the Father for the gift of the babes; blessed the Father for the gift of the men. What it means to Christ to have the assembly now!

The daughter of Tyre comes in rather late. There has been some difficulty in the collection coming into the morning meeting. Why does the box come in there? Because the daughter of Tyre comes in there. You can well see the daughter of Tyre, symbolical of commerce, liberated from that environment, holding the fruits of commerce in the sense of what God has furnished materially at the disposal of the queen in her appreciation of the King: “the Lord Jesus, in the night in which He

was delivered up, took bread”, 1 Cor 11: 23. How kingly! And she is for Him; and ere He passes into the apartments made for the queen, in the morning meeting, you have there the daughter of Tyre with a gift, and a good one too, moved by the grandeur of the scene.

All glorious is the king's daughter within; her clothing is of wrought gold:

She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of embroidery; the virgins behind her, her companions, shall be brought in unto thee.

She is giving a lead inwardly, a queenly, spiritual lead inward. That is what the saints want, and they will join in. Lydia would give that at Philippi. She, like Paul, would forget what had naturally dominated her; she is a spiritual woman, she took heed to the things spoken by Paul, Acts 16: 14, 15. It says, “the virgins ... her companions, shall be brought in”. What a lead she has given, and then coming into the king's apartments. The companions are the cities of Judah; to us it would be what is of assembly character today, cherished; a potent influence, a living current afforded whereby saints not in the light and intelligence of the assembly shall have some part in it. We think of them in this great urban area and thank God and long for them.

“Instead of thy fathers shall be thy sons”; you think of the fathers and the good times we used to have here 20 or 30 years ago. Thank God for them, but that is not what we are to be taken up with. **“Instead of thy fathers”**. We do not put away the fathers, not spiritually: the psalmist gathered up the fathers in a most lovely way in speaking of the cross. He says,

Our fathers confided in thee; they confided, and thou didst deliver them.

They cried unto thee and were delivered; they confided in thee, and were not confounded.

But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and the despised of the people, Ps 22: 4-6.

Think of the fathers' faithful feelings gathered up rightly in Jesus in the very hour of His abandonment by God. The faith of “our fathers” must be carried through the cross. It was the faith in the God of resurrection. He whom God raised must carry through the faith of the fathers in His holy soul, as He did the praise of God, as He did the assembly in His heart. But note the word: “Instead of thy fathers shall

be thy sons". Thank God! As we have noted what we had then - all is Christ. What we have now - all is Christ and glory too: "princes shalt thou make them in all the earth". What does it mean? Royal all over the earth. The precious inward light of the assembly. "Arise, shine! for thy light is come", Isa 60: 1. What she is in the inward apartments; what He is to her as loving her; and giving herself to Him; and what she is to Him in private, the whole earth through.

Who are they? Bishops? *No*. First in the city? *No*. *Princes! Men!* Large-hearted, competent to represent God in the magnanimity of His grace. Princes! The young people may have been taught at school that, in medieval ages, princes were known to be of a royal family even when travelling *incognito*, by the princely habit which ever marked them, always tendering their money in gold and never asking for any change. And, dear brethren, what opportunities have been lost over the change, maybe in a care meeting; for you are on the gold standard, not on paper. The whole realm of the King and queen is permeating throughout the whole earth in the catholicity assured in Corinthian assemblies governed by Ephesian light.

May the Lord bless the word.

Strood

14th May 1949

This script has been taken from an unrevised shorthand transcript and carefully revised by the editors, but not of course by the author.