

# **A WORD IN ITS SEASON**

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## **THE PURPOSE OF GOD AND THE WILL OF GOD**

**C. Kenneth Robinson**

**Ephesians 1: 3-6, 9-12**

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I would like to say a few words, beloved brethren, on two truths. One will lift us up, and the other will bring in comfort. I would like to speak about the purpose of God and the will of God. As we go through each week, we constantly need to be uplifted and also comforted. Both of these things will prevent us becoming restless in mind and activity because we are deepening in our souls in spiritual truths and blessings. God has always had both His purpose for us, and along with this exists His will for every believer. These two truths need pondering. As we go through the various stages of our life, it is sometimes profitable to stop and consider; perhaps as the Psalms would say, take a "Selah". Do I realise that God had His purpose for me before I was ever here? Before anyone of us was ever here, God included us in His purposes. Before even the worlds were in existence, we were chosen in Christ: "before the world's foundation". If you are down tonight or if you are anxious and coming under the attack of the enemy in your mind, I commend this verse to you. We all have these experiences, perhaps more regularly than we may care to admit to others, including those very near to us; and the purpose of God is a great uplifting truth. It is unchangeable and unchanging. God has never changed His purpose; He never had any need to change it because it is perfect, and everything God does is perfect. These matters are wonderful for faith: faith gives the capacity to grasp hold of, and to believe in, such a God as this. As we have often been reminded these days, Great Britain is becoming more and more ungodly, and yet there are souls in it - and I trust we are amongst that number - that have an implicit faith in a God who had His purpose for men before the world was.

And so one man here, Paul, was given distinctive light from God. Oh, what light and what ability Paul was given under the hand of the Spirit, in the prison epistles particularly, to bring out the greatness and glory of the truth of the purpose of God. He could trace it all back to "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" from whom the whole purpose has come. He "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ": blessed, glorious truth. As you get older the

purpose of God becomes more and more assuring, more and more stabilising, more and more uplifting - we may change but God's purpose for us never changes. Let the word just come to us all to pause and consider, and never ever let us forget the greatness of the purpose of God. By taking us into sonship, choosing us in Christ before the world's foundation, God had selected personnel who would be fit for His universe of glory eternally; they were predestined for glory. The Lord Jesus was loved before the world was. We cannot speak of Him at that time as a Man in sonship, but this brings out the inscrutability of His own being. He also said He was loved "before the foundation of the world", John 17: 24. It is unchanging and unchangeable because the purpose was according to God Himself. How precious sonship is; it is such a near and dear relationship as it envelops us in divine affections. The Lord Jesus was and is supremely so as the Son, and He is the only One who could be described as the Beloved, but we are taken into favour in that One. His place becomes our place. We are accepted in all the glorious worth of the perfection of Jesus to the Father, and such is the purpose of God. I say these few words for our uplifting that the purpose of God is there in all its grandeur and glory. Sin has not affected it and could not, the enemy cannot touch it, and Satan cannot mar the fact that Christ was there in purpose before man ever failed in responsibility; and the purpose of God has included men for eternal blessing and favour. God demonstrated the magnificence of His ways and His attributes in order to recover man and fit him to be brought into the greatness of His purpose. How fine these things are: God in Christ has brought out the calling at its height; and the Lord Jesus as Priest is serving to preserve the saints at the height of their calling. May we all know this, and prove the reality of it. It is for you. Take this away and ponder it. God has His purpose for you and me. My state will never change it; my failure will never dilute it, although that does not condone low state, but God's purposes will always be for His own glory, and that is for ever. How precious!

And so in this section Paul also touches on the will of God. I think the will of God is a comforting truth. You have "the good pleasure of his will", "the mystery of his will" and "the counsel of his own will". This gives us how God is securing His purpose. Central to this is Christ, the glorious One who came into manhood in a condition in which He fulfilled perfectly the will of God. He is the only Man who has ever been in this scene in complete committal to the will of God. He glorified God on the earth; He fulfilled the law and made it honourable and every

element that God ever sought in man He found in Jesus. Mr Darby says, in the Synopsis on Leviticus 2, 'The hand that struck the chord found all in tune', page 118. He answered and displayed God's thoughts of grace, holiness, goodness, and judgment of evil. He spoke words of sweetness to every weary ear, and fully made God known. Mr Darby goes on, 'Every element, every faculty in His humanity, responded to the impulse which the divine will gave to it, and then ceased in a tranquillity in which self had no place. Such was Christ in human nature'. What a wonderful truth this is for comfort for our restless minds, and often wayward affections, that the divine will was brought out by our Lord Jesus Christ.

But I thought we might be encouraged to see the will of God for us. There is the will of God for you; there is the will of God for me, and that really brings out how God in His love hedges us around, brings matters before us, tests our discernment, and tests our outlook. But it appears that the great appeal to start with is to place your body on the altar in response to the compassions of God that have come out and reached you in the gospel. Let us realise that each one of us has a body: so by what principle are we going to think and live? You place your body on the altar, once, and never take it off. Through every decade of our lives we are to "prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God". The will of God for each one of us, like His purpose, is perfect. It accomplishes His end as it forms the features of Christ in brothers and sisters as they go through the many and varied experiences in life. In the testimony, in private matters, in family matters, in household matters, and in assembly matters, we prove what is the good, and acceptable and perfect will of God. That is a comforting thought. We are in a learning time, and we are in a forming time. God has His eye upon us. His love lies behind His eye. His eye is never off us, which is a great comfort. As we go through an exercise or burdens, or times of encouragement, think of God watching over every soul, watching to see how they shape up through an exercise or a developing situation. And through it all there is the will of God for every detail of our lives. Let us yield to His grace; let us yield in dependence to His overtures. The compassions of God continue; they continue new and fresh as in Lamentations 3: 23. They are there for us to prove, but let us always remember, and be comforted by the fact, that God has His will for us, and that will is perfect. It is good, and more than that it is acceptable, and more than that it is perfect - God's purpose and His will are two blessed glorious truths.

But ever also let us also remember the authoritative nature to the will of the God as Acts 21 shows. In a very testing point in Paul's history when he was absolutely adamant that he was going to Jerusalem, the word of the Spirit comes from others who are concerned very much about the wisdom of going to Jerusalem. But the conclusion was, as it ever will be in any exercise, "The will of the Lord be done". That means, in effect, that God will have His way, and the will of the Lord will be done in everything. That is a fact. That should keep us restful, but keep us prayerful.

I just commend these two thoughts: one to uplift us and one to comfort us, and let us see that both of these work together for the blessing of every one of us, for His Name's sake.

**Glasgow**

**9th March 2010**

## **CHRIST FOR YOU; YOU FOR CHRIST**

**Paul W Burton**

**Galatians 2: 20**

**Philippians 3: 12**

I would like to speak of two sides of the gospel that God would present to you. One is that Christ is for you. The Lord Jesus is for you, and can be yours. The other is that you are to be for Christ; you might belong to Him. Do you know the reality of these two things? Are they true of you? He is yours, and you are His? Can you say, 'Jesus is mine'? Does He belong to you? That is what God offers to you in the glad tidings, in His wonderful grace and marvellous love, His gift. There are many gifts in the glad tidings, but the primary gift is the Lord Jesus. God has given Him. We read of that in one of the best known verses of the Bible: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal", John 3: 16. That is the breadth and the expanse of God's love towards the world. He has, as it were, enveloped the world in His affections, and everyone in this world is involved in that. We can say in the glad tidings that God loves you.

We might speak of it in a general way. We might speak of His care and goodness to His creation, the way the sun rises every morning, the way we get the rain, the way He gives us food, clothing and shelter - everything we need for life. He is a good God. I say that reverently. He is a God that cares, cares for His creation. Many go on unthinking and unthankful of God's care but He does care, and He cares for you. The Lord Jesus speaks of it in a very precious and intimate way, "But even the hairs of your head are all numbered", Luke 12: 7. Are you conscious of God taking account of you in that way, caring for you? Every breath you take you can trace directly back to God because your very breath is in His hands. That is how intimately and closely God has set Himself in relation to you. Every time you take a breath, God has to do with you. "If he only thought of himself ... All flesh would expire", Job 34: 14, 15. That is how intimately God has to do with you in your life, as you sit here now. But, He does not just care about you; He loves you. It is not just a general and beneficent love for His creation; His love is personally towards *you*.

I love the first scripture that we read because it is so intimately

personal: "the Son of God who has loved me and given himself for me". Here is a man who wrote many great things about the truth of Christianity - some things that I do not yet understand or could explain to you - yet the foundation of everything for Paul was "the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me". It was he him that the Son of God loved, and it was he him that the Son of God gave Himself for. Do you know that as intimately and as really as the man that wrote this? Can you say that it was the Son of God who loved *me*, and it was the Son of God who gave Himself for *me*? Have you claimed Christ for yourself, do you have your own link with the Lord Jesus, so that you can say it was "for me"? That is what God offers you in the glad tidings. That is what He would give to you. Have you taken it up? Have you received it and said, 'It is mine'?

Think of the way that that love of God shines and through the gospel is magnified and intensified. You might say God loves the world in a very general way, but the gospel is not general; it is very specific. It is for you. God's love envelops the world just as the sun shines around the world. If you take a magnifying glass and you let the rays of the sun shine on it, those rays are intensified and it magnifies them. You can set alight paper or dry grass with a magnifying glass. Think of the love of God shining through the Lord Jesus, intensifying the rays into your very heart so that it might burst forth in affection and fire for Him. That is what this verse suggests, "the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me"; all the intensification of the rays of the love of God shining in the heart of Paul through the way that the Lord Jesus met him on that Damascus road, setting him on fire for Christ. Have you experienced that? Have you experienced the warmth and intensity of the rays of divine love upon you, towards *you*? It comes home to each one of us. There is not one person in this room outside of that. It is for *you*, "the Son of God who has loved me". How much love! Have you felt that love towards you? Maybe you have turned your back upon it. Maybe you have said, 'Not for now'. O let His love shine on you afresh today!

How much did He love you? He died for you. He gave Himself for you. He is the One that went to the cross. "No one has greater love than this, that one should lay down his life for his friends", John 15: 13. He is the Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep, the One that has stood in a place where you could never stand, the One who has taken your place before a holy God and borne the believer's sins in His

body on the tree. All the believer's sins, He, the sinless One, has taken upon Himself. In His own body He bore them. Everything that you, as a sinner, need, the Lord Jesus has done for you because He loves you. If you turn to God in repentance and trust the Lord Jesus, put your faith in what He has done, you will know what it is for Him to have borne your sins on the cross.

He stood there in a place that you could never stand. You could not bear the wrath of God. I could not bear it. I could not pay before God for one of the wrong things that I have done, but Jesus paid the price for all of them. He is my Saviour. He has saved me from everything that I justly deserved. The malefactor said on the cross, "we indeed justly, for we receive the just recompense of what we have done", Luke 23: 41. That should have been my place. Justly I should have been on that cross. Jesus took my place because He loved me and gave Himself for me, and He loves you and has given Himself for you. He would give you the realisation, the joy of that. Is He yours? Can you say, "the Son of God, who has loved me" with an absolute certainty that He is yours and He is yours for ever? What a gift we have in the Son of God: the greatest Person in the universe, the One who commands angels, the One who created the heavens and earth, the One to whom every power and authority is given. You can claim Him for yourself. Think of God's feelings in the glad tidings, how long they have gone out, how He would say to men, 'Here is Christ; He is my very best for you in your very awful state of sin; He is for you'. Many turn away. Many say, 'It is not for me'. Many go on in darkness away from God. Think of the heart of God! What does God do? Strike them down in judgment? Cease to appeal to their hearts? Is that what you would do? It might be what I would do. But God is still appealing. You might have heard the gospel many times and you might have said, 'No, it is not for me. No, I am not interested. No, not tonight'. And here it is again, the Son of God offered to you. All you have to do, by faith, is take God at His word.

If Christ is yours, then you are His. The second Scripture that we read says: "I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus". You are His. Mr Darby wrote those words:

O Lord 'tis sweet the thought  
That thou art mine;  
But brighter still the joy  
That I am thine!

Do you belong to Christ? That precious blood that was shed for you, the blood that washed you from your sins, the blood that met the righteous claims of God upon you as the sinner, the blood that cleansed from every stain of sin for ever; how precious is that blood! It is the blood that has bought you, and entitles Christ to every claim over you. "Ye have been bought with a price", 1 Cor 6: 20. The price was His precious blood.

His love is now towards you, not only as a sinner, but as one that is His - one of His own. He speaks very precious of His own. He speaks of "his own sheep", John 10: 3. Are you one of them, one that has heard His voice? He speaks of His love for His own: "having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end", John 13: 1. Do you belong to that company, "his own", those that are His? Have you been taken possession of? From His side you are His, and He will never let you go. We might not always think about being His; we might not always *act* like we are His; but He will never, never let you go. Let the Lord Jesus take possession of you, let Him have what He has paid the price for! It is covered really in the first scripture that we read because it says, "no longer live, *I*, but Christ lives in me". There the Lord Jesus has taken possession. "Christ lives in me." Once you lived your life for yourself doing everything that you wanted to do and just followed your thoughts and your hobbies and all the things that interested you. Well, we have all done that. Perhaps some of us are still doing it, living our lives to ourselves. What a joy it is when you can say, 'I belong to Jesus - I am His, and He has every right to take possession because He has bought me'. Are you going to give Him that possession so that your life is no longer yours, but "Christ lives in me"? I am living for the Lord Jesus for His joy and His pleasure and what I do is for Him. I wonder if we have any real understanding of how much joy the Lord Jesus has in taking possession of one of His own. What is yielded to Him from the life and the body of one of whom He has taken true possession! The same man who wrote "the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me", in the appreciation of the full outpouring of divine giving, also wrote these words: "I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus". No other response than complete possession would be worthy of such a love. He speaks earlier in this chapter of all the things he used to do and all the things he used to be, but he gladly counted them as "filth" in the recompense "that I may gain Christ" (v 8), and "I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus".

That is the two sides of the glad tidings. The Lord Jesus is yours and you are His - a wonderful opportunity for you to embrace. As the hymn says:

Swing the heart's door widely open,  
Bid Him enter while you may.

Open your heart, and let the Lord Jesus in, and let the Holy Spirit in. As one that belongs to the Lord Jesus, God would give you the Holy Spirit; so not only are you “taken possession of by Christ Jesus”, but you become a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit too. What love that would pour such blessing into your heart!

May you know the joy of Christ being yours! May you claim Him for yourself, and may we each yield our hearts, our lives, our all to the One who has bought us! For His Name's sake.

**Brechin**

**8<sup>th</sup> August 2010**

## **BONDMEN AND FRIENDS**

**Roland H Brown**

**Matthew 10: 24-26 (... therefore)**

**John 13: 13-17; 15: 11-21**

I seek the help of the Lord and the Spirit to convey an impression as to bondmen and friends of Christ. The two are often put together in the scriptures and sometimes in contrast to one another. One striking example in the scriptures where the two are brought together is Moses. The Spirit of God speaks of him as “bondman of God”, Rev 15: 3. He is not spoken of there as a great leader, which he undoubtedly was, or a prophet; indeed Moses was a king, “he was king in Jeshurun” (Deut 33: 5); but he is spoken of as “bondman of God”. Yet, of such a one, it says, “And Jehovah spoke with Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend”, Exod 33: 11.

I would like to exercise our hearts, firstly as to bondmanship. It has been given its character in that a divine Person whom the scripture tells us was “subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself, taking a bondman's form”, Phil 2: 6, 7. In the society in which we live that is an old fashioned word, but the word translated 'bondman' here was used at that time to denote a slave. He Himself said, “For I am come down from heaven, not that I should do *my* will, but the will of him that has sent me”, John 6: 38. He said of Himself that, “the Son of man did not come to be ministered to”, Mark 10: 45. We all enjoy being ministered to, being served by others; and our brethren here are serving us in the provision of this occasion and much labour has entered into it; but, “the Son of man did not come to be ministered to, but to minister, and give his life a ransom for many”. In taking a bondman's form the scripture tells us that He “learned obedience”, Heb 5: 8. He learned what it was to obey. He came into the condition of manhood; you cannot improve on the words of the Spirit of God - indeed if we venture out of them, we become greatly at risk of falling into error; but the Spirit of God says He was “found in figure as a man”, Phil 2: 8. He “did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself, taking a bondman's form, taking his place in the likeness of men”. The expression “likeness of men” preserves the fact that He was no mere man, but He was a real Man. Elsewhere the scriptures tell us that He was sent “in likeness of flesh of sin” (Rom 8: 3) - what an extraordinary

expression to be applied to a Person of the Godhead, that He was sent "in likeness of flesh of sin". How near God has come to us in Christ; and not only has He drawn near to us but He has set out in His life here something for us to take account of: He "learned obedience". He was accustomed to command; the scripture tells us that, "*he spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast*", Ps 33: 9. Think of one word of divine power in creation and millions upon millions of stars came into existence, and of such a One it says that He "learned obedience" - what it means to obey. The scripture draws attention to His obedience as something distinctive, "the obedience of the Christ" (2 Cor 10: 5), is referred to by Paul. There is something distinctive about it; a Man here in flesh and blood conditions apart from sin, but a life that was devoted in its entirety to the will of another, and "becoming obedient even unto death", Phil 2: 8. That is, that the will of God required that He should lay down His life sacrificially, and He obeyed.

That is the great feature of a bondman - he has no will of his own; he is there to do his master's bidding. One man, as he came in contact with Christ, recognised that and he said, "*I also am a man under authority*", Matt 8: 9. He recognised Christ as One who was under authority, "*I also am a man under authority*", but also he had under him men and he says, "*I say to this one, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my bondman, Do this, and he does it*", Matt 8: 9, 10. That epitomises bondmanship. The bondman does not question what he is asked to do, he certainly does not negotiate it, he certainly does not say he will do it at some other time: "*Go, and he goes ... Come, and he comes ... Do this, and he does it*". I say, with the greatest reverence, such was the life of Jesus here. He says, "*On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it again*", John 10: 17, 18. Think of the Father's affections drawn out by the perfection of Manhood in flesh and blood conditions. Everything that God ever sought from man was found in that One blessed Man, who unquestioningly moved, "*he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem*", Luke 9: 51. The will of God required that He should enter into circumstances that for Him were personally distasteful. At one point the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness (Mark 4: 12), and he was tempted of the devil and, at a time when He had not eaten, and in the reality of His Manhood, the Spirit of God said He hungered, Matt 4: 2. The will of God required that that blessed Man should move into

conditions that would not have been of His choosing as a holy, sinless Man here on earth. Ultimately, as He faced the awfulness of being made sin, He asked, "My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; but not as *I* will, but as *thou* wilt", Matt 26: 39. What perfection of Manhood is seen in Jesus. At one point, as He confronted the awfulness of what the will of God required, He said, "Father, save me from this hour. But on account of this have I come to this hour. Father, glorify thy name", John 12: 27, 28.

I want to appeal that we might commit ourselves to this character, the spirit of a bondman. He said prophetically, "man acquired me as bondman from my youth", Zech 13: 5. Think of the Lord here in obedience to the will of God but serving men in grace, and as we have read, serving His own in feet washing, in doing menial service. Some of our brethren here today come from India, and in that country there is a caste system and there are persons of a particular caste, the untouchables or *dalits*, who perform menial work, that is their lot in life. If they are born into that caste, that is what will be expected of them; and the Lord of glory, He who was above all, came into the position where He washed the feet of His own. It is difficult to conceive of a more menial service; a common courtesy in those days for those that travelled on hot and dusty roads was that water was provided for feet washing. When He entered into one house, where He was despised, the host said, "This person if he were a prophet would have known who and what the woman is who touches him, for she is a sinner", Luke 7: 39. The Lord said, "I entered into thy house; thou gavest me not water on my feet" (Luke 7: 44); think of that; think of the conditions into which Jesus came in bondmanship. I think we are intended to be affected by it, and not only affected by it but to take character from it.

In Matthew 10 He says, "The disciple is not above his teacher, nor the bondman above his lord" - what I am saying springs from coming to know Jesus as Lord. Most, if not all of us here, I trust, know Him as Saviour. We know Him as the One who bore our sins and has washed us from our sins in His blood, and we love Him for that. One preacher said that when we think of Him as our Saviour we remember that He gave His life for us personally. That is, He did something for us that no one else could do or has done. Therefore, He has a claim upon us that is superior to every other claim. Many persons have claims upon us, legitimate claims, claims of nature, claims of employment and so on, but there is one claim that is to precede them all and that is the

claim of the One who gave His life for us. To come to know Him as *Lord* is that I give my life to Him. That is why I think there is a shortage of bondmen. The Lord said, "The harvest is great and the workmen are few" (Matt 9: 37), and, if I might speak practically, attending recently the burial in Scotland of a beloved brother who has served the saints well, is a reminder that they are few, perhaps getting fewer. The Lord has need of bondmen. You will remember that the ass and the colt were required and the word was, "The Lord has need of them", Matt 21: 3. It may be that in this company someone might hear that from the Lord, that He has need of you. The work of the Lord is going to continue until the Lord comes, in its many and varied ways. The question that would be raised in the hearts of those that love Him would be the question that was raised in the heart of Paul when He was converted, "What shall I do, Lord?", Acts 22: 10. Have you ever raised that question with the Lord? If He has taken you up for blessing, if He has given His life for you that your sins might be washed away, it is that you might become His servant, His bondman; He has something for you to do. It is not a question of envying what others are doing, but finding what He would have you to do. In a great system over which He presides for God's glory, He has something for each of us to do. You will remember that He said of one woman, "What *she* could she has done", Mark 14: 8. That was the greatest commendation that anyone could receive from the Lord. He is not asking you to do what you cannot do. The servants of Naaman said to him, "if the prophet had bidden thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he says to thee, Wash and be clean?", 2 Kings 5: 13. There is one thing that we can all do that He has put within our reach, and that is to remember Him in the breaking of bread. Remember the sacrifice that He made when, as He says, "No one has greater love than this, that one should lay down his life for his friends". He has asked to be remembered, not in any great complicated way, but as they sat and had a meal, bread and wine were there on the table, and He said, "this do in remembrance of me", Luke 22: 19. Do not only have it as an ordinary common meal but do it as a memorial. He invested those emblems, so simple in themselves, with a meaning so profound when He spoke of His body and of His blood, and He asked to be remembered. If my circumstances or my exercises lead me into conditions where I cannot remember the Lord, I think it would raise a very big question with me. He has asked us to do it, and it is within our reach to do it. He has not bidden us to do some naturally great thing: He has asked us to

remember Him in the breaking of bread, and if we recognise Him as Lord, His word is a commandment to us. He is Lord of all. He is the One of whom the scripture says, "whose right it is", Ezek 21: 27. The right to reign has long been denied Him publicly, but He is Lord of all. Soon He is coming to take up that right and exercise it publicly for God's glory.

Then, those who have been faithful to Him and serviceable to Him in the time of His absence will share with Him in that. Indeed, there is a certain mystery attaching to it, but He speaks of His servants, "coming up he will serve them", Luke 12: 37. Think of a day to come when those who have been His bondmen, who have been obedient to His will even into circumstances that might not have been of their choosing, will learn His appreciation of what was done in His Name when He serves *them*. It is a very touching thing. He said too that, "if any one serve me, him shall the Father honour", John 12: 26. Think of the Father taking account of those that are committed to bondmanship. It was infinitely pleasurable in His beloved Son, how much it must appeal to the heart of the Father to see those that are devoted to the work of His beloved Son.

He speaks of it in Matthew in relation to the public scene, the persecution, the insult and abuse, and He says, "The disciple is not above his teacher, nor the bondman above his lord. It is sufficient for the disciple that he should become as his teacher, and the bondman as his lord". "It is sufficient..." That is what the work of God, the work of the blessed Spirit in our hearts, is directed towards that there might be formation after Christ. The work of the ministry has that in mind, "until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ", Eph 4: 13. What a statement that is. What pleasure for God to see us arriving, to see a work of formation after this blessed Man going on, so that He is preserved in testimony. The cry went up, "When will he die, and his name perish?", Ps 41: 5. The divine answer is, "I will make thy name to be remembered throughout all generations", Ps 45: 17. That is not only in the remembrance of Him at the Supper, but it is in the formation of that blessed Man in character in testimony. So He says, "It is sufficient"; it is sufficient for God: God is not looking for anything more than that, but that you should be formed in the pattern of Christ. Is it sufficient for you or would you like something more than that? Is your heart set on some greater objective than that? Or, is it

sufficient for you to become like Him? Perhaps the Spirit of God might raise that question with you inwardly. Will it suffice your soul to be here where Christ was and to be like Him here? He says, "It is sufficient ... If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul" - what a term to apply to the Lord of glory - "how much more those of his household?".

In John, it is not the testimony; it is the inner circle. It is the circle where He is known and loved and where He performed this menial service. He says, "I have given you an example". He says, "Ye call me the Teacher and the Lord, and ye say well, for I am so", but then He reverses it, "If I therefore, the Lord and the Teacher". What I am saying relates to whether we know Him as Lord. We may know Him as Saviour, but have we given our lives to Him, have our bodies been presented as a living sacrifice to Him? How challenging these things are. It is only as coming to know Him as Lord personally that we will know Him as Teacher. It is only as we know Him as Lord personally that we will begin to experience and appreciate His headship in the local meeting. If we are not subordinate to Him in our wills and outlook personally, these things will be a closed book to us. It is as He is enthroned as Lord in our affection that these things become blessed realities, things that you might have read about in the ministry, or heard the brethren speaking about in the reading, suddenly become the experience of your own soul. That is a very blessed thing, to find truths that you may only have heard and understood in their terms becoming actual experience in the place where you are. He says, "I have given you an example ... The bondman is not greater than his lord, nor the sent greater than he who has sent him" - the Lord Jesus is spoken of in this gospel as the 'sent One', the One who was sent of the Father to do the Father's work, to find the Father's men, those that the Father owned. He said to the Father, "They were thine, and thou gavest them me", John 17: 6. As He looked at the woman in John 4 He recognised one of the Father's persons coming to Him. In chapter 9, the blind man is another one, and he became a bondman; he became not only a bondman but a friend. The Lord Jesus said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, which is interpreted, Sent. He went therefore and washed, and came seeing", v 7. He went, he did not argue, he did not suggest that he could go somewhere else and get the same blessing, he did what he was told and his eyes were opened. Then he discovered, as many have discovered, that there is no room in this world for people whose eyes have been opened. He was not wanted; he was maligned. "Thou hast been wholly born in sins, and thou teachest us?" (v 34), said the religious rulers of the day as they cast him

out. But Jesus found him and, as has been pointed out, his casting out by them was really the Lord leading him out. He could be led, he was leadable. As the Lord unfolded to him who He was, he was leadable, "And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?" (v 36), and he came to know the Son of God. He became attracted to Him and attached to Him; he came into the greatest secrets that could be known at that time as He came in contact with the Son of God. What about you and me? Are these things real with us? The Lord says, "The bondman is not greater than his lord, nor the sent greater than he who has sent him".

In chapter 15 He speaks of commandments. That is why I think the great question of bondmanship precedes the matter of friendship. He says, "If ye shall keep my commandments"; and then he says, "Ye are my friends if ye practise whatever I command you". That is a great test. Is His word law to me? If I could venture a practical word (I do not want to be critical), sometimes I ring up, and ask a brother to come and serve in the preaching, and I hear some extraordinary things - 'I only preach once a month', or 'My wife is not up to it at the moment', or 'I have some relations coming'. Is this the language of a bondman? I just put that simply to highlight the point. A bondman does what he is told when he is told; he has no will of his own about it. His object is to serve the Master. He is a Master that surely we would all own is worthy to be served by us. That word "Master" - is He that to me? Is He my Master? Paul writing to a young man, to Timothy, speaks of the Lord as "Master", 2 Tim 2: 21. We speak of Him in many ways, as Head, as Minister of the sanctuary, but it begins with learning Him as Master. He writes to Timothy that he might be a vessel, "sanctified, serviceable to the Master", 2 Tim 2: 21. "Serviceable", that means that he is handy. If the Lord has need of him to preach the glad tidings on a particular day, he is handy; he is available to be used. And he counts it an honour, not a chore, to speak well of the Master that bought him. He is available, "sanctified, serviceable to the Master", ready and fit for the Master's use. Paul speaks in that epistle of one who is, "prepared for every good work". In the next chapter, in speaking of the scriptures, he says, "that the man of God may be complete, fully fitted to every good work", chap 3: 17. There are two things there for us to think about as we think of the Master and the needs that He has in the testimony. What a privilege to think that He has put within our reach some way in which we can honour Him, in which we can express our personal appreciation of Him. In that epistle we have - prepared, ready, willing and then fitted.

There were great men in the Old Testament that baulked at the

prospect of serving God. One man said, "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit", Amos 7: 14. Moses himself who is described as the "bondman of God" said he could not speak well, he brought forward all sorts of excuses why he should not do what God was asking him to do, and we see our own hearts in that. He persisted in it until God was angry with him about it and He said, "Who gave man a mouth?", Exod 4: 11. We have been speaking about God's mouth, but "Who gave man a mouth?". What a remarkable feature the mouth is, that wherewith you take in what you eat and drink, but then what can come out of the mouth. James speaks a good deal about that, what can come out in a negative way, what can be dangerous and damaging and inflammatory, James 3: 5, 6. Then the Spirit of God speaks about what can come out of the mouth in the power of the Holy Spirit, "Let no corrupt word go out of your mouth", Eph 4: 29. The mouth needs to be controlled. James teaches us that; it is an elementary lesson in Christianity that I have an inward spring in me that, if it is not judged in the power of the Holy Spirit, is capable of doing a lot of damage and defilement to myself and to others who hear, "lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and many be defiled by it", Heb 12: 15. It has a great potential for damage and negativity. But then the Spirit of God says, "Let no corrupt word go out of your mouth, but if there be any good one ... do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God", Eph 4: 29, 30. How wonderful to think that the Spirit of God should take up a human mouth to convey a good word. A good word would draw attention to Christ, a good word in the power of the Holy Spirit would engage your own soul as well as the souls of those who hear you with the greatness of Christ and of the realm that He fills.

Paul says to Timothy, "doing this, thou shalt save both thyself and those that hear thee", 1 Tim 4: 16. To take up bondmanship in fidelity to Christ is a great self- preservative. If you acknowledge your calling as a bondman of the Lord, you readily see what is inconsistent with that, and it is a means of practical salvation; you save yourself. But how blessed to be used, possibly, under the grace of Christ, for the saving of others, for their practical salvation in the testimony. How many of us here - I certainly have - have experienced a good word that has saved us from our own folly on many, many occasions. I trace it to the Lord Himself in His grace and in His love, but it came through a human mouth. How wonderful to be a bondman.

But then as we practice His commandments He says, "Ye are my friends if ye practise whatever I command you". I want to come to

the thought of friends. I think I am right in saying that there are not many bondmen, but I think that there may be even fewer friends of Christ. He Himself was a friend of the friendless; He was criticised for being a friend of tax gatherers and sinners, Matt 11: 19. He drew near to persons in great need and distress, and He drew near to them in their circumstances. That is what a friend does. But He is looking for friends. Not just that He should come into my circumstances and support me in them and comfort my soul, but that I might share with Him what is in His heart. I wonder if you have ever thought about that? How few there were in the days of His flesh that shared with the Lord what He had before Him. He spoke often of the cross, the means of His death; He also spoke of going to the Father. John says, "They knew not that he spoke to them of the Father", John 8: 27. The Lord had all this in His heart and desired to share it with His friends, but they were concerned with place and position, who would sit at His right hand, who would be first and so on. These things are there in the scriptures for *our* education, not to criticise them, for they were very great men. I am sure we would acknowledge that they were much greater than any of us, men who had given up everything for Christ, and most of them martyred on His account. They formed the nucleus of the assembly. I think when the Lord looked at this little company here, He was looking at the nucleus of the assembly and He said, "Ye are my friends" - how wonderful that He should have friends, those with whom He can share His things. They are not only persons that want Him to come into their circumstances, but those with whom He can share what is in His own heart. He says, "Ye are my friends ... I call you no longer bondmen, for the bondman does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends". That is a more exalted thing, but it is reached through bondmanship, the preparedness to be obedient to the will of God and active in His service, whether in public testimony in the world, or amongst the circle that is so precious to Him, the circle where, "Christ is everything, and in all", Col 3: 11. He looks for willing bondmen. The work is great, the facets of it are very varied, there is something in that work that is within your ability, with His help, to perform. Then He is looking for friends that know what He is doing. I think He is looking on to the assembly. Paul says of the assembly, "we have the mind of Christ", 1 Cor 2: 16. How wonderful to be in the secret of what He is doing, to be His confidant. That is what He looks for in His bride. It is a wonderful thing to have a companion with whom you can share what is in your own heart. He is looking for that in His bride, but He is looking for that in each one of us, that we might be His friends, that we might seek His company, and seek it above the company of the world. He goes on to

speaking of the world, the world where He was hated and where they would be hated. It is a very real thing and we shrink from it. We do not like to be hated: "ye shall be hated of all on account of my name", Matt 10: 22. These men were prepared for it; they valued their friendship with Christ and they were prepared to be hated, even to be martyred for His Name. What an example we have before us in these things. He says, "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, on account of this the world hates you". Does the world hate us? Or do we find a place in it? He was "cast away indeed as worthless by men" (1 Pet 2: 4); there was no place for Him in this world. There was no place for a meek and lowly Man in the counsels of this world. There was no place for Him in the great commercial enterprises of this world: what part would a meek and lowly Man have to play in an international conglomerate? That is not the kind of man that they want to promote, that is not the sort of chairman they would look for; they are looking for somebody who is aggressive and assertive - a meek and lowly Man could not be built in anywhere in this world. You could not make a politician of Him, because scripture says of Him, "neither was guile found in his mouth", 1 Pet 2: 22. He would never make a politician; He would never make a director of a commercial enterprise. You could search the various opportunities in this world, and there would be no place in it for Jesus. There was no room for Him at His birth, and He was "cast away indeed as worthless by men". And He gave His life that we might be delivered from this present evil world. Scripture tells us that, "Whoever therefore is minded to be the friend of the world is constituted enemy of God", James 4: 4. What a solemn word that is. I would not wish to be one of God's enemies, but I think the Lord would appeal that we might become His friends, friends of the lowly Man of sorrows, friends of the One who gave Himself in obedience to the will of His God and Father. He is looking for bondmen, but He is looking for hearts, like the heart of that woman who sat at His feet, into whom He can pour things that are peculiarly His own. What a blessed portion. He said, "Unless I wash thee, thou hast not part with me", John 13: 8. What a blessed thing to have part with Him in His things. May we know something of it dear brethren.

**For His Name's sake.**

**Malvern**

**28<sup>th</sup> August 2010**

## **ROOTS**

**Alistair M Brown**

**Revelation 22: 16-17 “bride say, Come”**

**Isaiah 53: 1-3**

**Colossians 2: 5-7**

**Ephesians 3: 14-19**

I was interested in this matter of “the root” that is spoken of in Revelation and in Isaiah, and also in the matter of being “rooted and built up” and “rooted and founded” in the scriptures read in Colossians and Ephesians.

In Revelation it is the Lord Jesus who is speaking; it is not through a prophet or an angel, but the Lord Jesus Himself. He says, “/ Jesus”. He has sent His angel to testify certain things, but then He says, “/ am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star”. The Lord is bringing before us something as to Himself. We might find the scripture a little mysterious. What does it mean, “/ am the root and offspring of David”? If you feel that certain scriptures are mysterious and hard to understand, seek help from ministry which helps us to understand the scriptures, and which is a great help to us in building us up and letting us have things in order in our minds. What I believe the Lord is referring to - and you can read about this in ministry - when He speaks of Himself as “the root ... of David” is His own deity, that He is God. He is “the root ... of David”. That was there before David ever was; it was outside the genealogy in which you can trace David's roots, naturally speaking, back to Adam. God was the Originator of all of that. In referring to Himself as “the root ... of David”, the Lord Jesus is drawing attention to His deity. The Lord Jesus is wonderful! He is beyond our comprehension. There are scriptures that speak of that. Jesus said at one point, and it is recorded in John's gospel, “Before Abraham was, I am”, John 8: 58. That was something that the Pharisees who had gathered round Him were entirely unable to understand: “the root ... of David”. The Lord Jesus speaks of Himself in a similar way in a passage in Matthew: “And the Pharisees being gathered together, Jesus demanded of them, saying, What think ye concerning the Christ? whose son is he? They say to him, David's”. The Lord says to them, “How then does David in Spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit on my right hand until I put thine enemies under thy feet? If therefore David call him Lord, how is he his

son? And no one was able to answer him a word”, chap 22: 41 - 46. The Lord Jesus was drawing the attention of these unbelieving Pharisees to the greatness of His Person, and they were not able to answer Him a word, indicating that He was drawing attention to His own deity. How wonderful His is! How majestic a Person!

He is also the true Melchisedec. If you read in the Hebrews, you will find one “without father, without mother, without genealogy; having neither beginning of days nor end of life”, Heb 7: 3. What a personage he was, “assimilated to the Son of God”. Scripture speaks of Melchisedec in that way, “without father, without mother, without genealogy; having neither beginning of days nor end of life”. Christ is “the root ... of David”. He was there before beginnings were, and we are able to speak of Him as the Lord Jesus, the One who spoke of Himself as “*I* Jesus”. The same eternal majesty was there, whether as “the root ... of David”, or “Before Abraham was, I am”,. What a wonderful personage, and He would bring Himself before us in all His glory, “*I* Jesus”, “*I* am the root ... of David”. He would do that to fill our hearts with a sense of His majesty and of His greatness. He was there in all eternal counsels, the great One. What can we say about that pre-incarnate period, the immense scope of eternity before the working out of divine counsels when the Lord Jesus became flesh? In time, the One that we know as the Lord Jesus became flesh: but He is “the root ... of David”. The thought of the root conveys fruit that is going to be borne. It conveys the thought of life in potential in the root, and I am sure there is some reference to that here. It was God's purpose that He should dwell with men, that He should bring into existence creatures that were after His image and after His likeness. He would put hearts in them that were capable of affection and intelligence, and finally God would dwell with such. That was God's purpose, that creatures would know the blessedness of His heart of love. His counsels involve how that should be brought about, how one Person of the Godhead has come into manhood. That has taken place. We refer to it as the incarnation, when one blessed divine Person was found here in manhood's form, when the Word became flesh. What a marvellous matter that was; the One who is the Root of David came into manhood's form. I speak of these things, not as able to open them out in detail, but to appeal to our hearts and minds and to bring before us the greatness and wonder and glory of this One who speaks of Himself as “*I* Jesus”. Wonderful Person!

Then He refers to Himself as the “offspring of David”, the One who is the true Son of David, 'Great David's greater Son!' (Hymn 36). He is the One that we sang about; He is the One whom Israel will come to know in a day to come, the “offspring of David”. The “offspring of David” would bring before us His royalty. David was the king, and even now people in Israel know about King David and call things after him. As far as an Israeli is concerned, David was **the** king. Well, there was One greater than David and He was here. When He was here His own to whom He came did not receive Him. The Light was there, and it shone on them, and they turned their backs on Him. In general, as a mass, that was true. There were those that did receive Him and there was one man who said, “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel”, John 1: 49. There was one man in that scripture who recognised the greatness of this One, the “offspring of David”. He recognised His true royalty, His moral right to be king. You might say there was no king in Israel at that time. They were bound to the Roman yoke, and the Romans allowed a governor to be over the Jews, but there was one Man who had the right, and the sway was His, the sceptre was His, and He was not recognised, He was rejected.

You see that in Isaiah 53, but there will come a time when the One who is the Offspring of David, great David's greater Son, will be on the throne. That is the day that we know as the millennium, the day to come. It says, “the habitable world which is to come, of which we speak”, Heb 2: 5. Maybe we could speak about it more. That is when the Lord will hold sway, and He will hold sway on this earth. He will do that through the assembly, which is not of the earth; and through His people, Israel. It says at the beginning of Isaiah, “that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains ... and all the nations shall flow unto it”, Isa 2: 2. There will be a recognition that there is blessing which has its source in the Offspring of David, the true King, and it will be available to men through His people who are now the tail of the nations and who will become the head. That blessed One who speaks of Himself here as “I Jesus ... the root and offspring of David” will exercise benign sway. It will be for the blessing of men from shore to shore. What a wonderful time it will be! If you read Isaiah you get some idea of it. Isaiah is full of references to how wonderful His reign will be. The government will be on the shoulder of One who is “Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace”, Isa 9: 6. How could it not be a wonderful time when such a One is in the ascendancy; when that One, the true Offspring of David, is on

the throne? It goes on to say, "And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall be fruitful; and the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him", Isa 11: 1-2. This is a reference clearly to the Lord Jesus. Later in that passage you can see the Lord in His pathway here brought out, but you can also see the greatness of His millennial rule, "And righteousness shall be the girdle of his reins, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins", v 5. Then it goes on to say in verse 10, "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, standing as a banner of the peoples: the nations shall seek it; and his resting-place shall be glory". What a wonderful matter that is, this blessed One who speaks of Himself as "offspring of David", the One whose right it is to reign and who will reign. He will reign actually over this earth. He will stand "as a banner of the peoples: the nations shall seek it". The nations do not know what to seek at the moment. They seek peace and they find destruction and they find war, and somebody was quoting a scriptural expression earlier - the Psalms speak of that as to the sailors, "they are at their wits' end", Ps 107: 27. Men are like that, and there is one Man who has the answer. He will have the answer and He will reign in righteousness. It will be a wonderful time when that One who is the true "offspring of David" exercises His blessed rule.

Thinking of these things enhances the glory of the Lord Jesus in the heart of the believer. The day to come will be a day of majestic and wonderful rule. Righteousness will rule and things will be in order. People will invite each other under their own vine and their own fig-tree, the families on the earth will do that. But these things are available in their principle and in their characteristics to the believer now, because Jesus must reign in my heart and He must reign in your heart; and as He does so, there will be peace and order, grace will be known, and neighbourly relations will be rightly worked out. What the Jews and those on the earth will do in the day to come, when they invite one another under their own vine and their own fig-tree( Zech 3: 10), believers to whom Christ is Lord can do now. They can know these felicitous conditions now. We were speaking of some of these conditions in our reading together. These matters are real. What will be in the day to come has its reflex, has its imprint, as it were, now. We have to be interested in these things, in "the habitable world which is to come, of which we speak". All of this is to enhance our appreciation of the glory of, "I Jesus ...I am the root and offspring of David".

Isaiah 53 speaks of Christ prophetically, and most wonderfully

prophetically, coming in as Man. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is truly remarkable. If you wanted proof for your mind of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, you could read the fifty-third of Isaiah. It is undeniable. It was written, I suppose, about seven hundred and fifty years before Christ was here, and it speaks about Him so wondrously accurately in every respect. It speaks of Him growing up before God "as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground", and this is that blessed One whom we have read about as "the root ... of David" now coming to manhood, now as a real Man on this earth. He grew up "as a root out of dry ground". There was that root character in Him as a tremendous source of life. There was the potential there to cover the earth in life that is according to God, but He grew up out of dry ground, that is that the earth naturally conveyed nothing to Him, He drew nothing from it. He drew nothing from the human race after nature because He was a different kind of Man altogether. You read the rest of this chapter and you see how different He was. He was not like you and me. He was not like any other kind of man. He was God's Man, but He is God Himself. He is the Centre and the Object of the faith and love of every believer, I trust of everyone in this room. It is very significant that He grew up before God "as a root out of dry ground". This would remind us that there is nothing in this world that is for Christ, nothing that He can draw from or identify with in this world in its fallen moral state. What a sad condition the world is in. I do not want to occupy you with that, but there was nothing that Christ could draw from here. The established religious orders cold-shouldered Him; they would rather that He was not there. He made them feel uncomfortable. They were worried that if Christ's teaching and preaching went on the Romans would take away their place and their nation. But there were some that found Him, people who were able to say that He spoke like no-one else could speak, who did things that no-one else did.

I wonder if you have found Him like that, friend, Somebody who you feel that you could not do without. How blessed it is! Read the rest of this chapter. I do not think any believer can read it without being affected. He was "despised and left alone of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and like one from whom men hide their faces; - despised", and then it says, "and we esteemed him not". How sad and sober that is, and how true. Unless the Spirit of God had worked in my heart and stirred up something there that appreciated something of the glory and wonder of the Lord Jesus Christ, I would not esteem Him. Naturally we would not esteem Him were it not for God's

sovereign work in our souls. This remains the case today, but thanks be to God, there are those who do esteem Him, there are those who appreciate that “root out of dry ground”. He is One who grew up before God, who went on to glorify God in all His pathway here, One who brought out the fulness of committal to God's will, obedience in all its fulness, even to the cross. It speaks later of His sufferings, as being “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted”. I suppose that is what the orthodox Jews thought, that the Lord Jesus was being smitten of God. Well He was, but not in the way that they thought: in Him being smitten He was bearing your sins and my sins on that cross at Calvary. This One was doing that, One who grew up before God “as a root out of dry ground”. He is the One who is the Saviour for every one of us. Do we love Him? Do we hold ourselves for Him? Are we loyal to Him? Is there none like Him in our eyes? There is none like Him in God's eyes. This One is now exalted. He was “raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father” (Rom 6: 4), and He exalted Him and sat Him down at His right hand, having given Him a place that is higher than the heavens. Wonderful Person that He is, He is now rightly crowned; the One who was once that “tender sapling ... a root out of dry ground” is now crowned with glory and honour. How worthy and how wonderful an Object for our hearts and for our lives, dear brethren! He is a wonderful Person.

I want just to speak about some of the ways that we are to be affected by Him, brought out in the scriptures that we read in Colossians and in Ephesians. In Colossians 2 the apostle says, “I am ... rejoicing”. He was rejoicing in the Colossian brethren, “and seeing your order, and the firmness of your faith in Christ”, and then he says, “As therefore ye have received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, walk in him, rooted and built up in him”. What does it mean to be “rooted and built up”? One thing that being rooted in Him conveys to my mind is that He is the Source of our life. That is what a root is. We do not need to do much gardening to know that the root is that from which a plant or a tree or a shrub derives its life, and if the roots get damaged, or if the plant or shrub is separated from its roots by rough handling, or by a spade going in, then it dies. It can no longer derive its life from its root, and the root is deep down. Being rooted also leads to steadfastness, firmness and permanence, and a believer is to be rooted and founded in Him. “Founded” would be more the idea of building, the foundation, what is permanently laid, and we had something of that in the reading. That is very interesting too. It is interesting to see how what is organic or

agricultural runs along with what relates to building. The apostle Paul often uses these metaphors, but we are occupied for the moment with this matter of “rooted”, and Paul is exhorting the Colossian brethren to be rooted in Christ. “As therefore ye have received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, walk in him, rooted and built up in him”. I appeal to all of us to be exercised to be rooted in Christ. Where do we derive our life from? Where are my roots? The conditions of the roots of a plant become manifest in its leaves and its shoots. You can read about that in Mr Stoney, whose ministry is always very interesting and who uses many of these horticultural or agricultural metaphors. He was interested in things that grew. He indicates (vol 12 p505) that the state of the plant, and the state of the believer as to our connections with the root will become apparent. The root may be hidden, but what we are and our connection with Christ as rooted in Him will become apparent. If we want to be flourishing and growing in the courts of God, then we need to lay hold of that Root, the One whom Paul is exhorting the Colossians to be rooted in. And who is He? He is the Christ, Jesus the Lord.

So I appeal to all of us, we want to be here as believers who are in life, manifesting something before God and before men as to the life of Christ. That is what the believer is to be, and in order to do that we must be rooted in Him. We are not going to be blown about by things, as this chapter speaks about being deluded by persuasive speech, and then being led away “as a prey through philosophy and vain deceit”. None of us would want to be like that. Being rooted in Christ is the antidote; it is the solution to being blown about. Christ is the solution for everything. Thinking as we are about being rooted, and referring to what is firm and unchanging and immovable, then Christ is the antidote to having a change of mind or being unsure about things or feeling your testimony is not really worth very much because you do not feel you can be firm for Christ. He is the solution to that. Be rooted in Him, love Him, and derive your life from Him. Put your roots down to that One, be occupied with Him. I speak to myself more than any.

Then this will become apparent, because a third aspect that roots make us think of is fruit-bearing. If the root is good, the fruit will be good; and the Lord speaks of Himself as “the true vine” (John 15: 1), which would, I think, include the roots of that Vine, and He speaks about fruit-bearing for God. Christ Himself bears fruit. He went into death that He might bear much fruit, and there is much fruit being borne now all over the world to God because of what Christ has done, and some of

that blessed fruit is in this room this afternoon, and we thank God for it. John 15 speaks about bearing more fruit, and the Lord says, "In this is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit", v 8. What is in mind is a cornucopia, a large harvest of fruit, a plentiful return for One who died so that much fruit might be borne, a horn of plenty. What God has in mind is that you and I should bear much fruit. How are we going to bear it? We are going to bear it as being rooted and founded in the Christ, Jesus our Lord. There is no other way, but what a blessed way it is, and as we find Him and draw from that real and living Man in glory, then we will find firmness, we will find that we are immovable, we will find that Christian life is real and vigorous and bears testimony, and we will find that there is fruit, and the fruit is for God. The fruit is not for me to eat, the fruit is for God. Then, as God is satisfied and pleased with what He sees in me, there is blessing for me. God does not leave us out of that. As He is satisfied in the fruit that is borne to Him, there is blessing for us, there is peace, there is satisfaction, there is joy, there is company, there is everything that your heart desires as a believer in that blessed Christ, in being "rooted and built up in him".

We should look at Ephesians. You could say that in Colossians we are to be in Christ, our roots are to be in Christ; and then in Ephesians Christ is to be in us. He is to be in our hearts and He is to dwell there through faith, "being rooted and founded in love". I think that refers to us being rooted and founded, Christ being in our hearts, being rooted and founded in Him within us. It seems that what we have read in Colossians relates to moral exercises, as to doing what is right and drawing our lives from Christ, being found in testimony true to Him and pleasing to Him, with a view to bearing fruit. This chapter in Ephesians has to do with spiritual matters. Being rooted in Christ is the source of spiritual life so that there might be response to God, as we get at the end of this section, and so that there might be growth in the apprehension of the breadth and the length and the depth and the height, and growth, too, in the knowledge of the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge. It says "and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge", and then the apostle adds, "that ye may be filled even to all the fulness of God". What blessedness! Could anyone encompass that? I do not think we can comprehend it. Scripture says, "apprehend". Mr Darby translated this with great spiritual sensitivity, I believe, in using the words "fully able to apprehend with all the saints". These are spiritual matters, and saints are prepared for the full apprehension of the greatness of God's thoughts by having Christ

dwelling in our hearts, “that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts, being rooted and founded in love”. This is to be our experience, it is to come off the pages of Scripture and to go into your heart and my heart, and be real there. Thank God that these thoughts are in the pages of Scripture. We have been reading Ephesians on Lord's day afternoon in Grangemouth, and if these thoughts were not conveyed by the Holy Spirit through the words that have been written in the pages of Scripture, no one could ever have formulated them. They could never proceed from man's heart or man's mind. They could only proceed from God's heart and God's mind. They have been made known to us by the Spirit-indited Holy Scriptures, and they are wonderful. They have to come off the pages of Scripture and be in my heart, as blessed, living, spiritual realities. The way to them is to have Christ in our hearts through faith, and to be rooted and founded in love. What that goes on to is the capacity to “be fully able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height”. What scope God has in mind for us. He wants that sphere to be populated by people, by believers, who are become like Christ. That love of His embraces a whole living realm that is populated, and will be populated for eternity, by those among whom He finds His rest. God is preparing for that now, and there are many being gathered in who will form that rest of God.

Then it says, “and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge”. You might say that is a contradiction in terms. How can you know something that surpasses knowledge? Well, the Spirit will help us to know that blessed love. It is God's love and Christ's love and the Spirit's love, and the Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, and every day, as we let Him, He increases our capacity, “to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge”, and to the end “that ye may be filled even to all the fulness of God”, even to that. What grace, what matchless, glorious grace that this should be so, that God should so operate that we should be filled even to His fulness, so that our hearts should be filled, and so that we should be full vessels who are able to respond to God.

The One who is “the root and offspring of David” is also “the bright and morning star”; and He records, because they are His words in the end of Revelation, that “the Spirit and the bride say, Come”. This brings us in a great circuit, because what is being worked out in the hearts of individual believers is Christ. He is the One who operates in our hearts, who works there, who desires to dwell in our hearts through

faith, that we might be rooted and founded in love in Him. He is gathering you and me among the personnel of His assembly, His bride; and the time is coming soon when that One who has made Himself known as “the root ... of David” and who is the “offspring of David”, and who is Head to the church - its blessed living Head, will be seen as its Bridegroom, and the church His bride. What a wonderful culmination of all this wonderful process that has been going on through these two thousand years. Well, may we be in it livingly, dear brethren and friends. We are at the close, waiting for and hastening that day. For His Name's sake.

**Edinburgh**

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