

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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THE PROPHETIC LINE

D.L.Stewart

2 Kings 13: 14-21

The remark was made recently in one of our meetings, that things which appear to be settled tend to come up again; I think that would be something that we could all recognise. We could think of this in our experience in our own lives, and in local matters too and even universal matters. This led me to the passage, "the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year". The enemy, if he knows he can gain ground on a certain line, will repeat it.

Although a matter is met and there is victory, and there is rejoicing, yet we need to be reminded constantly that the enemy will invade again at the coming in of the year. Not that there is anything special in mind as to that. We have these annual occurrences of times of refreshment and feasting which our brother has been referring to.

Not that there would be anything automatic in the annual recurrence of such occasions, but I am thinking of this matter of the enemy attacking. I recall that Mr Darby said in one of his letters, 'I dread the saints getting tired of unworldliness'. What a statement that is. How well it is put - the fear that the brethren might tire of unworldliness. I just mention that as one of the things that the enemy will constantly be at. He will weaken what is spiritual, he will becloud the heavenly light, he will becloud the whole purpose of the recovery if he can just get in with something of that kind.

This passage would remind us forcibly of the essentiality of the prophetic line as the way in which the Lord and the Spirit will meet what the enemy is at. The king comes to Elisha; I cannot go into the details, but I just want to point out how much is achieved under the direct influence of the hands of the prophet. Even with a man like Joash something is achieved - "An arrow of Jehovah's deliverance".

It is under the direct hands of the prophet. How much has been achieved in the history of things, the history of the testimony in localities How much has been achieved under the direct influence of

what is prophetic We can go back in this great line of the recovery and the great prophetic ministries and see what deliverance has come in. Time and again deliverance has come in as a result of the direct influence of the prophet. The prophet's hands were put in his hands. He was not able for it. Who of us is able for it? But the Lord provides, in what is prophetic, for the securing of a result, a real result according to Himself. We have had that experience, we have had it in recent years. We have experienced something that the Lord has done as a result of a powerful prophetic ministry from Himself.

Then, what are we going to do when we have not got the direct hands of the prophet? The king is told to take arrows and to smite. He has not got the prophet's hands directly. He has his word, of course. Evidently he did not discern the import of the prophetic word. That is something we can challenge ourselves as to, and we can think of our own times and the years in which we have experienced the Lord's help in ministry in a decidedly prophetic way, and the question would be whether we have discerned what the purpose is what the Lord's objective is. "An arrow of Jehovah's deliverance": evidently he should have seen that what was in mind was complete and absolute victory, but when left to himself he wanes. He goes so far, he does not go the full length. That is so much like ourselves. What we are to be concerned about is to discern the prophetic word, the prophetic touch that the Lord would bring in. I believe it ought to be specifically in our prayers that we may be able to discern that. The Lord is bringing in something, using a special occasion like the three-day occasion this week, or this kind of occasion tonight, or reading meetings, and we want to be on the alert to discern what exactly the Lord's objective is in the ministry, what the import is.

So Elisha died, and the bands of the Moabites invaded the land. There is this waning which so characterises us. We are not really meant to go from crisis to crisis. I do not think that the Lord's intention would be that. I think the Lord would intend that there should be an evenness secured in each one of us, and that with the

saints with whom we walk there should be a certain steadiness secured; but the tendency is that things wane and then there has to be an awakening. But then there is revival. The man is cast into the sepulchre of Elisha and he goes down and touches the bones of Elisha. It says he went down. There is almost a suggestion of a certain deliberateness in some way, he went down and he touched these bones. That is really what we need, a touch of what is prophetic. What a privilege we have that we have part in it at all, that we have been given through mercy and grace to be in touch with a great prophetic line that has come down in the recovery and is alive and active in the day we are in. The exercise should be with every one of us just to touch that line of things afresh. It results in revival, the ability to stand up on his feet - take up things in manhood. Paul said to the Corinthians "quit yourselves like men", 1 Cor 16: 13. It is the result of this reviving that takes place as we come into touch with a living line of things and the prophetic side as it is found among us. May the Lord bless the word.

LONDON

17 October 1978

PRESSURE

J.S.Gray

Genesis 40: 9-15; Numbers 17: 1-11

One of the ways in which God tests us, beloved brethren, as to what comes into expression in us, is pressure, and this dream seems to bring, by the Spirit of God, the light of the manhood of Jesus into the circumstances of the dungeon. How beautiful to contemplate the manhood of Jesus in its precious stages. This figure of the vine presents the stages of growth in Jesus which were perfectly normal at every stage. This man had been in contact with Joseph in the prison. We do not know how much he had enquired, if anything, about his background, why he was there. I suppose ordinary prisoners tend to talk about their experiences, but this one of the king's prisoners tells the chief of the cupbearers why he was there, that he was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also he had done nothing that they should put him into the dungeon. But whether the cupbearer asked about Joseph's history or not, there was brought in, in divine light through this dream, the stages of the manhood of Jesus typically. It seems to me that one thing as to circumstances of pressure that the Spirit of God would speak to us about is that we should contemplate the manhood of Jesus, how He was here. I am not suggesting that all of His pathway involved pressure, in the sense in which I am speaking of it, although the Lord Jesus bore things as He moved about as no one else could, feeling in the sensitiveness of His blessed spirit the things which were among men as affected by sin. I believe the Spirit would help us to contemplate the perfect normality of His growth at every stage so that it might be pattern for us when we are in circumstances of pressure. And one raises the question, beloved brethren, as to the stages of growth amongst us. Growth is a matter which goes on all the time. We do not always notice it - you do not watch the actual growth of a plant for example - although in course of time growth is measured; the scripture makes that clear. And if we think of the growth of the Lord Jesus particularly, as Luke records it, the

perfection of His growing up before God is to be food for our souls. It says that He "advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men", Luke 2: 52. There was nothing abnormal about His growth; it was perfect at every stage.

I believe that we are to be exercised about growth on our side from its early stages. Circumstances of pressure should not be allowed to interfere with normal growth. Maybe there are periods when any one of us may be for the most part out of sight, so far as the saints are concerned, as to the detail of our lives, but normal growth is to be going on and the pattern for it is in Jesus. Even in its earliest stages we are not to be casual about growth. If we take the bud: circumstances can arise in the growth of a bud which interfere with what is there potentially. Let our hearts be alert for what is amongst us in the way of potential for God. The vine and the grapes suggest what is to be for God, that there is to be in due time ministering to God. How perfectly it was secured in Jesus. Then it says "it was as though it budded: its blossoms shot forth". How precious to see the shooting forth of life according to God in Jesus

Think of Him as a Boy, a Boy of twelve; not much is given to us as to the early details, but He was about His Father's business; and how perfect, and I say reverently, how normal in growth was Jesus

So as our young people grow up, this is to be the pattern, that the blossoms are to shoot forth and on our side nothing in the way of abnormality of circumstances should be allowed to interfere with what the Spirit of God may bring about as the young progress.

Then it goes on: "its blossoms shot forth, its clusters ripened into grapes". There is much for us in contemplating the maturity of the manhood of Jesus and what it yielded for God as here. In due time the pressure came for Jesus; it says here "I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand". One would speak reverently as to these precious sufferings of Jesus that are typified, but the circumstances of the pressure, beloved, brought out what was there in its fulness, in its perfection, for God. How God delighted in it. God had expressed before the delight that He had in what had come into expression in

Jesus, and there had already been the side of what was secret and entirely for God as well as the glimpses which are given to us as recorded of His early life. But in due time when the pressure came He takes it on Himself, as it were: "I... pressed them into Pharaoh's cup". I believe that we should think of the Lord Himself taking up the matter of going into death and facing it. He says "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself", John 10: 18. Think of the blessed perfection of that. And in the pressure what came out was what was entirely for the pleasure of God. And so God is looking for fruit from us out of circumstances of pressure, that there might be enlargement, as the psalmist says (see Ps 4: 1); and the Lord Jesus is pattern for us as in His manhood He considered entirely for God, and the fruit was presented to God: "I... gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand".

I was thinking of the link between this scripture and the other figure we have in Numbers which, of course, is in a different setting, and one would refer to the fact that this is brought in in connection with the rebellion which had taken place. Beloved brethren, if there is pressure on the saints in a general way, publicly in the testimony or in relation to the assemblies, I think that the answer to it is in the priesthood of Christ. The Spirit would help us to appropriate the service of Christ as priest, the power of His life where He is now. So that this wondrous demonstration of life, life out of death typically, comes in as the answer to the murmuring of the people following upon the occasion of the band of Korah. There are the details that come in early in the section, in particular the staff of Aaron according to verse 6: "the staff of Aaron was among their staves". Jesus has actually lain in death. Think of that! And what has been demonstrated is that He is the One in whom the power of life is manifested as risen from the dead. What a glorious occupation for us! What an answer, too, in power, as the Spirit helps us to appropriate Him there. God's answer to these circumstances of murmuring is in the power of life in Christ where He is. This was a miraculous happening, that out of all the staves one overnight should bud, bring forth buds bloom blossoms and ripen almonds. There is

thus established for God typically the power of life in Christ where He is. Everything is sustained in Him. One does not wish to refer to rebellion on the part of the saints; what I have in mind is that if there is any circumstance of pressure in relation to the carrying forward of the testimony, the appropriation of the priesthood of Christ is the answer to it. There is power with Him, and the Spirit would help us to take advantage of that power. The Spirit is life in us subjectively, but we are to recognise that the One whom God has established in the power of indissoluble life is the One in whom there is power for us to meet the circumstances of the testimony. So it says "Jehovah said to Moses, Bring Aaron's staff again before the testimony, to be kept as a token for the sons of rebellion". The thought of God having established before Him One in whom everything is maintained in life and power for Himself is involved in this figure as we apprehend the truth that God has fulfilled all His thoughts in Christ. "Whatever promises of God there are, in him is the yea, and in him the amen, for glory to God by us", 2 Cor 1: 20.

Well, one can only touch on these scriptures, but I have been impressed by the way in which the perfection of growth in Jesus, and the power of life in Him where He is, is to be the answer for us as provided by God to meet circumstances of pressure, whether they be upon us personally in our experiences with God and among men, or related to the course of the testimony. God always has an answer, and the answer is always in Christ and in the availability of the Spirit in the assembly who would link us with that Man where He is. May God help us, for His Name's sake.

LONDON

27 June 1978

"IN THE SPIRIT"

F.C.Mutton

Luke 2: 25-32; 22: 24-27; Romans 15: 25-29; Psalm 29: 9

I desire to refer to these scriptures in relation to the way we are found among our brethren and the way we approach our comings together. Each of these scriptures bears upon this important matter. We have been introduced by grace into a circle of persons of very great distinction, the brethren of Christ, those who have part in the assembly, the assembly of the living God, the place where God Himself dwells, those who are the sons of God. Therefore it is very important that we are in such august company, in such distinguished surroundings, suitably. To come to a meeting like this is on the one hand a very happy thing, but on the other hand it does require of me that I assemble rightly with my brethren. Luke says in Acts 20: 7, "we being assembled to break bread"; that involves assembling with care and a certain preparation.

In Luke 2 we have a fine example in Simeon of a man who came rightly into the temple. The Lord had to deal with some persons who were *wrongly* in the temple, sellers of oxen and money-changers, and He cast them out. He acted judicially in cleansing the temple of that foreign element, and the Lord is very jealous as to the temple, jealous that nothing should be introduced there that is foreign to it, as He says, "My house is a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of robbers", Luke 19: 46. What a terrible thing that was, and anything that in any way introduces man according to flesh into the assembly, into the temple, is robbing God of His rights and His glory in the place where He dwells.

But in Simeon we see a man who came rightly into the temple. He was "a man in Jerusalem". His whole life was related to the interests of God and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It is a remarkable thing that that is said of him before the Spirit had come at Pentecost. He had close and constant links with the Holy Spirit and the Spirit had given him a very precious promise which no doubt he treasured above everything else, that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ. Now that supreme moment in his life had come and it says "he came in the Spirit into the temple". Now that preposition 'in' involves power; there is a footnote about it. He came in the power of the Spirit into the temple. It links with what John says; "I became in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Rev 1: 10) - *in the Spirit*. It is a similar expression. Now this is one aspect, beloved brethren, of how we should assemble. We should assemble in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is very good if we have to do with the Holy Spirit before each meeting. I know time is short but let us seize a few moments with the Spirit so that we are settled and ready, prepared to merge, prepared to link on with what the Lord may do in any occasion.

So Simeon came in the Spirit into the temple, a prepared man, a priestly man, so prepared and so priestly that heaven could entrust into his embrace what was supremely precious to it. It says "he received him", he received the child Jesus into his arms and he blessed God. What a spectacle it is and this is the kind of thing that

happens in the temple. We are entrusted with impressions of Jesus, as we sang in our hymn to the Spirit,

'Thy joy is e'er afresh to show
The things of Christ above' (No 97).

That is, He puts into our hands, into our affections, fresh impressions, fresh presentations of Christ, and the great need is that we should assemble in the power of the Spirit, that we should come in the Spirit into the temple, so that we get the full advantage of these precious heavenly ministrations, and answer to them. Not only did Simeon receive the child Jesus into his arms but he blessed God. There was an immediate return to God in relation to what was embraced in his intelligence and his affections, and therefore that one man filled out all that the temple is - a place of divine light, and a place of immediate response to the light given, to God's glory.

Now in the second scripture the Lord Jesus tells us how He was among His own, and we are to be among the saints in this same character. How wonderful that the Lord should take advantage of this unseemly strife, as to which should be held to be the greatest, to give us this precious light as to the position He took among His own. How humbling if such a thing is active in any of our hearts! It is in all our hearts, because one great feature of the flesh is that it promotes itself, seeks its own prominence. Now the Lord says that that is the kind of thing that prevails among the nations, "But ye shall not be thus". We are in a circle, as we have reminded ourselves, which is morally distinguished, marked out from all that surrounds us in the nations. Here completely different principles are to prevail: "Let the greater among you be as the younger, and the leader as he that serves". One need hardly comment upon those expressions, they just speak for themselves. They come to us with all the gracious authority of the Lord; "For which is greater, he that is at table, or he that serves? Is not he that is at table? But / am in the midst of you as the one that serves". How amazing this is, dear brethren! This was how the Lord was in the midst of His own, as *the* One that serves, not just *a* one that serves. In a household there would be a servant, the one that served; if something needed to be done the

servant would be asked to do it; he was 'the one that serves'. What an example we have in the Lord Jesus that He was among His own as *the* One that serves. His own were at table and in *that* sense He viewed them as greater and in infinite grace condescended to serve them.

Dear brethren, let us be among our brethren in this way, counting it an honour, a favour, to serve these persons of such distinction in the eye of heaven, the brethren of Christ, the saints of God, the sons of God. What an honour it is if any of us can render any service of any kind to one such. This is the position the Lord took and the position which He would have us take, and He will give us grace and help in seeking thus to be available. What a privilege it is if any of us, brothers or sisters, can be thus a source of comfort and ministration to those who belong to our Lord Jesus, and let us be concerned to find ways, maybe simple ways, ways that lie ready to hand, to render whatever service needs to be done to the people of God.

Now in our scripture in Romans 15 Paul is speaking. He was going to Jerusalem because the saints in Macedonia and Achaia were making a contribution for the poor saints there and Paul was taking it. He says, "Having finished this therefore, and having sealed to them this fruit, I will set off by you into Spain". That was his programme. He hoped to go to Jerusalem and then via Rome to Spain. Then he puts in this rich verse: "But I know that, coming to you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ". How they would look forward to Paul's coming, a servant coming to them in the fulness of the blessing of Christ. The exercise I have as to this verse is that we are to be among the brethren in the spirit of blessing. I would love in some measure to be among the brethren in the spirit of blessing. They would see Paul walk in the door and they would say, There is a man who has a wealth of blessing for the saints. How pleased they would be to see him - "I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ". As you read Paul's epistles you get an impression of the blessing of Christ, beginning in Romans and going on to Ephesians, the wondrous blessings of the gospel, justification,

peace, reconciliation, deliverance, the service of the Spirit, life, sonship - one blessing after another. All that relates to the fulness of the blessing of Christ, and here is a man coming to visit Rome who is coming in the *fulness* of that blessing to dispense it amongst the saints.

Paul is an example to us that *we* should be among the saints as ministers of blessing. The Lord says "freely ye have received, freely give", Matt 10: 8 (A.V.). The blessing we have received and enjoyed is to be freely dispensed in the spirit of blessing among the beloved people of God. We are to be blessers. I think it is one of the greatest favours we have that we can be an influence for good and joy and prosperity, peace and life among the saints. The Spirit would help us in this. Paul's links with Christ and with the Spirit enabled him to say this without any doubt: "I know that, coming to you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ"; and there is no reason, beloved, why it should not be so in our measure because as having the Spirit and having a link with Christ as He is and where He is, the centre of that realm of infinite blessing, we have the privilege, like those sons of oil in Zechariah 4, of emptying the gold out of ourselves. What we receive and enjoy is to be, in the grace and wisdom that Christ and the Holy Spirit would afford, dispensed among the saints.

Our last scripture in Psalm 29 presents another feature of the temple. We began with the temple in Luke 2 and this scripture brings us back to it: "in his temple doth every one say, Glory" (The footnote says, or perhaps, 'everything saith'). I think it confirms our impression as to Luke 2; that holy man Simeon was a worshipper.

The temple, the assembly, is the holy sphere of glory to God; "to him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages", Eph 3: 21. "In his temple doth everyone say, Glory": it means that we are ever to be assembled in a spirit of worship. I am quite sure that the Spirit would not let any occasion go by without imparting to us some impression of the divine glory - the glory of the Father, the glory of the Son, the glory of the Holy Spirit - and this verse involves that there is a sensitive spiritual state in which there

is, as with Simeon, an immediate response to an impression given. "In his temple doth every one say, Glory": it is an expression of wonder, worship, and response as some fresh ray of divine glory enters into our minds and affections, and we are united in it. It is not some, it is *every one*. How blessed that this should enter into all our occasions. In our readings we are not only concerned to read a scripture and get the teaching of it, but the greatest object is that as a result every one should say, Glory. Thus there is, in a continuous and constant sense, glory to Him in the assembly in Christ Jesus. May the Lord help us to be exercised to be rightly in the assembly, and to come in the Spirit to our occasions, so that there may be more for the saints and above all more for the divine pleasure.

ROTHERHAM

20 January 1979

THE ASSEMBLY FOR CHRIST

A.J.E. Welch

Song of Songs 4: 7-11

An impression remains from the Supper of the ardent affection of Christ for this vessel, the assembly, so precious to Him. I have no thought of speaking of the rich detail of this section but rather just to bring into focus, as the Spirit may affect us, the peculiar quality of affection, on the one hand with which the assembly is loved of Him, and on the other hand the unmingled refinements in which He delights in the affection of the bride for Himself. We know well how these things have coloured the ministry which has entered into the revival as we speak of it. It is just a question whether this great key point of this time of the Spirit is affecting us enough, whether we are determining the course that we pursue, severally and together, in the light of this unique bond, this holy bond of affection that subsists between the Bridegroom and the bride. The impression is strong with me that as holding this in our hearts and minds rightly we find the Spirit free to engage us with heavenly things, in the sense that

this precious matter is so peculiarly the objective in the Spirit's own mind, to bring the bride to the Son.

The opening words of this passage were particularly in mind: "Thou art all fair, my love; and there is no spot in thee". The way in which superlative expressions are used, which is characteristic of this unique book of the Scriptures, is to lift our minds and hearts to the true, holy level of what is proper to Christ, the heavenly Man, and to the assembly, the creature vessel, but the vessel viewed in perfection that is for His heart. How much there is in the course of things around us to bring down the level of our minds, but how the Spirit is in our time intent, we could say energetically intent, upon keeping our thoughts and enjoyment, and enquiries and exercise together, on the true level, the heavenly level of Christ and the assembly. Such affections as His, operating among us in our collective relationships, which is where we distinctively know them, are calculated to affect us positively all the time towards Himself and towards God, to carry us into the great realm of things which I think we could say we shared together on Lord's day in the morning and in the afternoon, maybe in the preaching too, in which the wonderful ardent character of the love of the Christ for the assembly is affecting our spirits, reaching our affections all the time. "There is no spot in thee" - wonderful conception as if the Lord can examine this cherished vessel and find nothing, not a spot, but what is delightful to His own heart. How this should affect us! We sometimes speak of corrective ministry, and we know the Scriptures give us that side, as for example in the epistle to the Corinthians, but what a way the Spirit has to affect us in a positive sense, to bring about the exercise as to purity and holiness, sanctification practically, in bringing before us the immense positiveness of the love of Christ for the assembly, and the wealth of impression that the Lord is pleased to disclose; not only what He has in what we might speak of as the secret of His own affections, but what He is pleased to disclose to us in such remarkable passages of scripture as this as to what He finds in the assembly.

What a study, dear brethren, for our hearts to delight in, to think of how the Lord regards this precious vessel, to think of such expressions being used. "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse". How the Lord would affect us by the way in which the Spirit presents the matter in such a book as this, a book in which we are engaged in a sense with what is typical and yet which brings to light a certain language, a certain line of thought, a certain realm of love's extended explorations, which are calculated to bring in the touch of power and affect us in relation to all that is delightful to Christ. So it says "How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse". How the Lord in type uses that expression "my sister, my spouse", as if He would dwell with a certain delight of His own on the reality of relationship that is there, the directness of kindredship to Himself, and then the reality of the bond of holy love which unites the assembly to Him.

Well, I believe, dear brethren, that this is something with which the Spirit would absorb us to a greater extent, that we might be affected and carried along more and more in the heavenly course of what relates to Christ and the assembly. As the beloved apostle could say in certain connections, "I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly", Eph 5: 33.

LONDON

18 July 1978

THE PEACE-OFFERING FOR THANKSGIVING

E.C.Burr

Leviticus 7: 11-14

The offerings in this book, beloved, have very much instruction for us, perhaps less gone over and enquired into by us than they have been at one time. Perhaps we would profit from enquiring into them. They present, as we know, a range of thoughts as to what God found in Jesus, both in His life and in His death and in His present life. The burnt-offering has perhaps peculiarly in mind what He was when He offered Himself to God, a sacrifice "for a sweet-smelling savour" (Eph 5: 2), something in a sense that you might almost say God needed to find from man; and the sin-offering and the trespass-offering needed by the people, provided in grace by God, and in another sense needed by God Himself, that He might be able to go on with a people amongst whom sins and trespasses interfered with communion both among themselves and with Himself; and the oblation in its blessedness, as Mr Lyon used to say, to go in before God and enjoy Christ with Him, a very blessed thing, the Christ once humbled here, or the Christ who is now glorified, to be fed on in His manhood as the oblation.

The peace-offering no doubt presents something for God, but something also for us because it speaks, as we well know, of the prosperity and enjoyment that the brethren have, and of their fellowship together in that enjoyment, as they enjoyed this peace or prosperity offering when it was offered. I referred to this chapter because of what is added to the earlier reference to the peace-offering in the beginning of the book. As the saints know, the offerings are prescribed, then the law of them is set out so that the people would know how to offer what God had ordained, and you might say, the way He required things. It is very important that we should know the way God requires the things that are presented to Him, just as Jesus says in the gospel, "No one comes to the Father unless by me" (John 14: 6) and as Paul says in the epistle to the

Ephesians, "For through him we have both access by one Spirit to the Father", chap 2: 18. Not only what is yielded is prescribed but the way of it as well.

The peace-offering is presented in this chapter peculiarly in relation to thanksgiving, as it says: "If he present it for a thanksgiving". No doubt that is with us constantly. Many things occur for which we have the occasion for thanksgiving. We should not forget it. Some of us were speaking on Lord's day about the way in which the prayer meeting is announced, and noticing that here and there it is announced as a meeting for prayer and thanksgiving.

Whether it is announced for thanksgiving or not, it would be well that thanksgiving entered into it, because I think it is the spirit of thanksgiving that leads to the worship that should underlie the prayer meeting and frequently find expression in it. So that things are presented here in a certain way on a high level of enjoyment. The peace-offering is for enjoyment in any case, and then it is for thanksgiving, so that the people, or the man that offers a peace-offering for thanksgiving, is in a happy, liberated, joyful state. What I wanted to remark on is that while there are the cakes and the unleavened wafers mingled with oil, what there is peculiarly in addition to them is that there is the fine flour saturated with oil. I thought it was interesting that that entered into the peace-offering for thanksgiving. Now of course, if we referred to the oblation, we would think of the fine flour as representing the humanity of Jesus, and there is no reason why in the setting of the peace-offering we should have that aspect of things out of our minds. In fact, I do not suppose that any of us would ever think of coming to God without some thoughts of Jesus as there as Man. If we come in our failure, it is to think of Him in His perfection. If we come with a sense of things being right, we appreciate Him all the more as the firstborn among many brethren. However we come to God we would have some distinct sense of the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. But I wondered whether one would be justified too in applying this thought of the fine flour to the way in which fellowship is actually to be enjoyed and, you might say, handled among us. It reminds me of

the scripture that we had before us in the reading on Lord's day: "that they may be one as we" (John 17: 11), and as you think of Jesus as Man saying that to the Father you get some impression, in the relationship with the Father to which He there refers, of the quality of the relationships which are intended to subsist among, in that setting, the disciples, or we might say to subsist among the brethren. And I would think that when He asked the Father to keep the disciples which He had given Him in His name "that they may be one as we", the character of that would be something like the feel of the fine flour, because there were no inconsistencies in the relationships between the Father and the Son. Everything was perfect, everything could be touched and handled. Everything was of a blessed consistency. Everything was delightful and soft - one might say tender - as one handled it; the blessedness of the relationship between the Father and the Son. It has been remarked before by Mr Darby, in regard to the fine flour, that if there was one thing that stood out in the character of Jesus it was grace. And as you came with the peace-offering for thanksgiving, and you brought the fine flour, I think that you would feel, as you touched the aspect of fellowship in the peace-offering, that that was the normal state of relationships among the brethren: a state formed by grace, that was easily handled, that had no anomalies or inconsistencies in it. That was what was intended to be enjoyed in the peace-offering for thanksgiving - a very blessed thing to have to do with, to enjoy, even to experience. And of course if we think of things on this level we must think of them in relation to what belongs to the body rather than what is external, what the Spirit in the scripture our brother has referred to is about to warn us against; how there would be departure and all that kind of thing. You have to touch things in the area where you are beyond what has come in by way of breakdown, to touch something of the reality of what the relationship among brethren was intended to be. As you handled the fine flour in the peace-offering you would be saying "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps 133: 1) and, as it says here, it is saturated with oil. I suppose that in that enjoyment you would find that diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit had been

maintained (see Eph 4: 3). The fine flour saturated with oil would be the product of something which could be suitably added to the peace-offering, something related, as I say, to the unity of the Spirit kept in the uniting bond of peace.

One thinks of Barnabas going to Antioch. He just went into the meeting and he saw the grace of God. What I suppose he saw was that the brethren were together in the gain of the peace-offering for thanksgiving and that the fine flour was there, mingled with oil. If one characteristic stood out it was grace. What he saw when he went in was the grace of God, and it must have been in the power of the Spirit, saturated with oil. There is no hope, beloved, of touching these things in their reality apart from the power of the one Spirit. If we think of things we might study in Scripture (and I value the references to what we might study), one is the references to the one Spirit. You would be quite surprised how often Paul refers to the one Spirit.

I think the fine flour saturated with oil is found in the saints enjoying prosperity and fellowship together in the power of one Spirit. The integrity and consistency and smoothness and fineness of the flour brought and enjoyed, and I suppose that according to this (because this is the law, this is not optional) if you could not bring the fine flour like this you could not bring a peace-offering. That would be something to sober us, that if there are anomalies and if there are inconsistencies, if there are irregularities, the question is whether the peace-offering can be brought, and if the peace-offering cannot be brought, then God is deprived and the priests are deprived and the sons of Aaron are deprived; Israel is deprived if it cannot be brought.

Therefore beloved, I think that the Spirit might test us as to how far the reality of fellowship is on the level that can be brought to God in the area of prosperity and enjoyment and peace. How real is that? How much is it known? And if any of us is discerning that in any way it is not known, then I suppose the thing to do is to go back to the trespass-offering and the sin-offering and discover what has brought in the inconsistencies, that they might be removed in the power of Christ's death, so that the fine flour saturated with oil might

become available for enjoyment as the peace-offering is offered to God by one who comes with thanksgiving.

There are many things that occur, beloved, that test us. It is always a mistake to promote a crisis amongst the brethren. It indicates more one's own state of mind than it does the state of the brethren. It is a mistake to promote crises. It is a mistake to think that every small difference of opinion threatens division, but this is not to say that we are not to be concerned about things that come in of that kind, things that do indicate an inconsistency: I do something different from you, and which of us is right? Perhaps neither, but the need is that we are both in the gain of fine flour - companies, localities, brethren every where, all needing to be kept in the gain of fine flour as marking the reality of what can be brought along with prosperity-offerings so that there is fulness for God. As I say, beloved, this is the law, it is not optional. This is not 'if any man will', this is the law of the peace-offering. If you want to bring a peaceoffering you have to come like this. As has been said (I have said it myself often before), a peace-offering is not to make peace; it is a sign that peace exists, a sign of enjoyment, happiness and liberty already existent. The peace-offering is brought in order to display what exists, and it displays, amongst other things, the reality of this fine flour. I am sure one would be supported in connecting it with "that they may be one as we". That is the enjoyment of things on the level of the fellowship, if one could use that word, the communion at least which Jesus enjoyed with the Father, enjoyed among the saints.

Well beloved, the desires of the saints are for prosperity, they are for peace, they are for communion for fellowship, for love amongst themselves, for the unity of the Spirit. Let us be sure that each of us is contributing to it and that if, as Paul says to the beloved Philippians, any be otherwise minded God would reveal it to them (chap 3: 15), reveal it to any of us, reveal it to any place, any company, any person, in order that this might be enjoyed universally.

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THE CHILDREN'S FIVE SENSES

The young people at Ephesus listening to the reading of Paul's epistle to the assembly there would learn that the believer should grow up to Christ in all things. In Him we have the perfect standard of what is wellpleasing to God. Just as the growth of our natural body is served by five distinct senses, so too is our 'moral being' which receives impressions and governs our thoughts and actions.

These senses have to be well exercised by habit to enable us to tell good from evil.

A miracle said by the Jews to be reserved for their Messiah, or Prince, was the giving of *sight* to those born blind. One whose eyes were opened by Jesus said that no such thing had been heard of since time began! But by the same divine power believers have the great favour of seeing things as they are in God's sight, having the eyes of their hearts opened and the true light to see by.

It would be difficult to say whether sight is more precious than *hearing*. The soul of Job, an old man, was indeed more affected when God was revealed to him than when he had only heard of Him. However Samuel, when quite a young boy, had ears keen enough to hear God patiently calling him by name, so that he became an example of the way in which faith comes by hearing. Like him we should early learn that to answer to God's call leads to our blessing and to a part in His service.

By means of *touch* many people were healed when Jesus was here but perhaps a greater favour was when He Himself touched persons as was the case even with little children. Who would not have sought such blessings? Yet now that Jesus is risen and glorified these things still take place by the prayer of faith and by the Spirit of God.

The senses of *smell* and *taste* are a protection from what is corrupt, or bad, and also the means of enjoying what is delicate and refined. No doubt for these reasons Paul, in writing of the truth of the one body in Christ, asked "if all hearing, where the smelling?"

The earliest mention of this sense in Scripture is that God smelled an odour of rest offered up by Noah after the flood. We too have the privilege of enjoying in our spirits the sweet savour and excellence of the sacrifice of Jesus in its many aspects.

The apostle Peter assumed that those to whom he wrote had tasted that the Lord is good and kind; he had surely done so himself. This is one of the believer's earliest blessings and it should make us as eager for the word of God as a new-born babe is for its simple and natural food. Are you?

J.C.Evershed