

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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Contents

MATURITY

THREE PRAYERS

MATURITY

Genesis 22: 1-14; 1 Timothy 4: 11-16; Acts 23: 16-22

J.R.S. I suggest that we consider these scriptures together in relation to maturity. I think God has in mind that we should be in our respective places and stages in the testimony as mature persons, those whom God can trust, those who will rightly represent God and those too who can exemplify something of the features and spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. I suggest this scripture in Genesis as being, as we know, a wonderful type of the Father and the Son, but Abraham is equal in his links with God to being given to go this way; indeed it specifically says "after these things, that God tried Abraham", that is after dealing with the matter of Ishmael with all its trials and very deep temptations and after the covenant with Abimelech. And there were other things earlier, as though God would say, My work in Abraham is very deep and it is to bring to light the maturity in that man's soul. The detail affords us a great deal of help as to how real and practical was the fatherhood in Abraham, a word to us all.

In Timothy, Paul is exhorting him as to his place among the brethren. I suppose it would have been in Ephesus - certainly Timothy was left behind in Ephesus - but wherever it was this was to be how he would be, such that no one would despise his youth. He was not to pretend to be an old man, he was not to pretend anything: he was to be what he was in God's workmanship and that there should be nothing about his demeanour or teaching or practice or example or a model among the saints that would cause anyone to despise him: he speaks of many things.

In the case of Paul's sister's son we have one of the children of Scripture who were used in the testimony. Miriam, Moses' sister, is another and there are others who are able to be used by God, while they are still children in the testimony. The way this very young man, or child, is led by the hand, the way that he moves about and the way he is able to counsel the chiliarch and so on - what is it if it is not

youthful maturity operating for the preservation of Paul and his company? I would like to attract the brethren into this thought of maturity and see whether we could help one another into it.

W.L. What would you say maturity is?

J.R.S. I suppose it is the expression of the work of God. It is normal for anything God establishes, be it a plant, a tree, a person, an animal, to grow into maturity. There is a certain delight for God in every stage of its growth.

W.L. I was thinking of the expression in Ephesians 4 "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; in order that we may be no longer babes" (vv 13,14).

J.R.S. That is a helpful scripture. It is not that we leave others behind but that we all do it. That is my exercise that we should encourage one another into it and not be satisfied with anything less.

M.W. Would definite resolve to be occupied with Christ lead to this maturity?

J.R.S. Yes, purpose of heart. Mr Raven has an interesting remark in the notes on John's gospel that when God takes account of purpose in a man's heart He says, so to speak, I will bring in the state that he should be formed by the things about which he is purposed. It begins, as it did with Daniel, in purpose of heart.

M.W. The apostle brings forward a very positive ministry of Christ, but he discloses the burden of his heart. He says to the Corinthians, I, brethren, have not been able to speak to you as to spiritual, but as to fleshly, as to babes in Christ (1 Cor 3: 1). Was that the apostle's burden, but he brings this ministry of Christ to bear upon them?

J.R.S. So that there should not be distraction with other things; we should be simple and clear, undefiled in our thoughts.

Rem. In chapter 18 Jehovah says of Abraham, 'I know him' (v 19). He knew the work of God was there and he tested it to bring out its purity and beauty, a man who had accepted responsibility.

J.R.S. It is remarkable how God is able to commit himself to Abraham there, and after that he intercedes; he is marked by intercession in the teeth of the great and imminent judgment upon Sodom.

Rem. He comes into the gain of his own intercession in chapter 22. He is able to go through this tremendous test.

J.R.S. So that the detail of this chapter is very interesting. From the start God does not diminish the very purpose He is to set about. Isaac had been born after a great deal of exercise and waiting, patience upon patience. Ishmael had to go and there was God's promise still standing as to Isaac. Now he was called upon to go to an unknown place where nobody would see, know or hear anything about what was to proceed and offer him up for a burnt-offering.

J.D.G. He would understand the power of God in resurrection moving in exercise.

J.R.S. You are referring to Hebrews (Heb 11: 19), "and we will come" in this Scripture linking with "counting that God was able to raise him even from among the dead".

J.D.G. That brought out his knowledge of God in relation to His power.

J.R.S. That is something that had been wrought in Abraham's soul through communion. Would that help us in the development of mature links with God?

J.S. It says "After these things ... God tried Abraham". He had light from God, and the word of God; do you think the exercises that he faced in response to that would bring about the maturity that God would bring out in this chapter?

J.R.S. Maturity is not reached by putting things off. The time comes when he has to face the casting out of Ishmael: it was a great pressure on his heart, but unless he overcame in that matter with God, things would come to a stop.

J.S. Do you think every bit of light we have is intended to produce exercise with us so that there should be an answer to it. We may

have to face what is involved, but that leads us on in the knowledge of God.

J.R.S. I feel sure that that is right. Abraham responded to the light that God had given him even though it involved great pressure, such as the light as to God's covenant in circumcision, and Ishmael, and then this covenant with the Philistine, Abimelech. All these things involved exercise, but in it was displayed the Spirit of Christ.

Ques. Do you think his reference to worship would be a mark of maturity? He is thinking beyond the immediate sacrifice for which he is called upon but of what is for God.

J.R.S. He says "I and the lad will go yonder and worship". In all the detail he is thinking of what is for God. That would be a key point in relation to maturity. What is the real purpose of any exercise through which I pass or see the saints passing?

Rem. I thought it would be very fine for God to hear him speaking in this way: he was so formed that his first thought was for what was for the heart of God Himself.

Ques. Do you think that Abraham was characteristically obedient? He obeyed God in the first place in chapter 12 and here it says, "he went to the place that God had told him of". Do you think obedience is a feature of maturity?

J.R.S. I am sure it is. Certainly disobedience never fits in to the line of the work of God. The spirit of Christ, according to Philippians, shows itself manifestly in the matter of obedience.

D.S. Communion is in obedience. Communion and maturity would go together, would they not? They would not be unrelated, neither ahead nor behind as being with God.

J.R.S. So that it is part of the daily exercise of all of us, in spite of the pressures under which we are from various sources, to make time for communion. It is not a question of saying I cannot fit it in today, somehow we have to make it work.

D.S. It has been helpfully remarked that communion is state. We had a word on Tuesday on state in Philadelphia; it all speaks of

maturity.

J.R.S. That is very good and a challenge to us.

J.R.C. Have you something to say about the two or three references to the burnt-offering in this section?

J.R.S. The burnt-offering is my appreciation of Christ. It is offered by anyone whose heart is toward Him. It would involve some impression of Christ formed in the soul. The offering had to be without blemish.

J.R.C. That would be a matter into which every one of us should be capable of entering. We have spoken about youthful maturity - a young person should have some appreciation of what Christ is to God and in those of us who are older it should be growing all the time.

J.R.S. Yes. Sometimes we are impressed with what a young person says. They may be quite young and at times there might be a good deal of rebuke in some of the things they say, but it would all be from some knowledge of God.

Rem. The fact that Isaac does not murmur or complain would itself be a feature of maturity in him.

J.R.S. It would, as would the relations that existed between them, "My father! And he said, Here am I, my son". Abraham was not so overcome by the pressure of what was before him that normal father and son relations came under strain.

Rem. What you said earlier as to the Spirit of Christ would come into that. The character of the seven ewe lambs is carried into this chapter. While God tried him it must have been a time of great pleasure for God.

J.D.G. The burnt-offering would have the pleasure of God in mind, the sweet savour through the fire. Abraham was in the light of that, something was going to come out of the exercise that would be for the divine nostrils.

J.R.S. Very good. The priest was involved in actually offering the burnt-offering. The Lord Jesus was both the priest and the offering and the altar.

W.L. Do you think Isaac's question "where is the sheep for a burnt-offering?", showed some measure of intelligence and maturity. He obviously discerned what was required for the divine pleasure.

J.R.S. So that he was under no doubt that what Abraham was engaged on was something for God. They went so far with the young men, and then it comes to the point when only the father and the son can go together. These things are very deeply affecting when we think of the Lord and the Father together. "Both of them together": it is a sort of a double emphasis on their being one.

Ques. Do you think the fact that Abraham laid the wood on Isaac (verse 6) would imply that he was seeking to develop some feature of maturity with this young man? It says "it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth" (Lam 3: 17).

J.R.S. It is good for him, indeed. Then there is the further matter, "and piled the wood; and he bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood". The Spirit of Christ in submission was in expression there. In Mark's gospel, they bound Him (see 15: 1); they did not need to do that. Isaac was bound here.

J.M. The scripture also presents a woman whom Satan had bound (see Luke 13: 16).¹ was thinking of the Lord Jesus being bound in order that we might be released from being bound by Satan.

J.R.S. He came to undo the works of the devil. He did it for that woman, and if there is anyone amongst us who feels in any sense bound, the Lord is the great deliverer. He used the very circumstances of the temple to free that woman.

J.M. She was also a daughter of Abraham.

J.R.S. So He brought her into what was really her true position.

R.J.C. I wondered whether this chapter links with the presentation of the Lord in John's gospel. At the end there are one hundred and fifty three great fishes. I wondered whether that was the result of the

movement of the Father and the Son. It secures maturity, and there are mature persons such as the woman in chapter 4, and the man in chapter 9.

J.R.S. Nicodemus too comes forward at the Lord's burial in a remarkable way. I suppose we can think of him as progressing to maturity. What you say is right, this section of the chapter, the father and the son together, would be answered to in John's gospel. Your reference to the great fishes is interesting; the Lord brings Peter into the experience of what he was going to find in the assembly.

J.T. Does the building of the altar suggest something that is done experimentally and sacrificially with God, culminating in the building of the altar? There was no command to build the altar. The burnt-offering might imply it, but Abraham did it here deliberately.

J.R.S. That is very good. What was the instinct in him that led him to build the altar? The altars in the history of these patriarchs suggest a point reached in experience. This would be a time point to be reached in experience with God, that to appreciate fully what was in the heart of God in Christ being offered spotless to God, would involve an altar.

J.T.B. Laying him on the altar suggests something measured and deliberate and calculated.

J.R.S. That is right. We are tested as to what we can say as to these things, but I think we can see in it the attractiveness of what mature relations with God reach. I would like to attract the brethren into that, something that is definite and experienced and for the pleasure of God in our relations with Him.

G.McK. Do we grow therefore in and through our appreciation of Christ? The section ends with the ram caught in the thicket by its horns. Would there be something there in Abraham and his appreciation of Christ?

J.R.S. So that he says "where is the sheep for a burnt-offering?", and what they found was "a ram caught in the thicket". It was remarkable that the Lord gave Himself up into the hands of sinners,

became our substitute. We cannot really enter into these things or touch on them without a worshipful spirit.

J.R.C. Does the spirit of God help us in our appreciation growing in the line of maturity for what is for God?

J.R.S. I believe that is where the whole matter turns around. We cease to think of ourselves, even if we are thinking of our own growth. A child does not think of its own growth. In saying what we do as to maturity, it may be that in a subtle way we have ourselves before us. That is not sufficient.

J.R.C. I was thinking of what is referred to in the Hebrews "Christ, who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God" (ch 9: 14). That is the fulness of maturity of what was for God.

J.R.S. It is a wonderful contemplation just to rest in the glory of that. There was One who could say "I have completed the work which thou gavest me that I should do it", John 17: 4. His spirit was fully in accord with all that He was practically, and His body always fully in accord with what He was in His spirit.

M.W. Would God's pleasure in Abraham here therefore be on account of his mature self-sacrificing devotion that has brought him into line with what it says elsewhere - "He who, yea, has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all", Rom 8: 32. One hardly knows what to say about Scriptures like that.

J.R.S. Sometimes we are better to say nothing and just listen, but I know what you mean. What can we say, what are we able to say? The Spirit of God would quicken us in relation to speaking to God rightly.

D.R. There is no reference to wicked hands in this section; it is the father and the son. The son carries the wood, the father carries the knife and the fire. It suggests death in a love setting. I wondered if some of us may be held up at thinking of the death of Christ as having met our need, but do we need to have some understanding of the death of Christ as having accomplished God's pleasure and brought in an abiding result that will remain for God eternally.

J.R.S. That is all very helpful and regulating. I feel measured, I am sure we all do, by just thinking of what the death of Christ was in the purpose of God.

J.D.G. Do you think it enters into Abraham's conclusion as to the name of the place, "on the mount of Jehovah will be provided"? God had provided everything from His own side.

J.R.S. There must have been something by way of a result of this exercise with Abraham in that he names the altar in that way.

J.D.G. Do you think it is the conclusion of the exercise in his soul that something is arrived at that is substantial?

J.R.S. You would encourage us then to go through every exercise, although we do not feel equal to it, and we would rather most often avoid it, and try and escape from it perhaps - to go through, in order to reach a result with God.

W.L. I am not sure we understand much about the death of Christ according to the purpose of God.

J.R.S. I wish I knew more about it myself. I think we can take account of the fact that divine love is only made known in its fulness in the death of Christ. That would be one aspect of the death of Christ in relation to the purpose of God.

W.L. I was thinking of John's gospel, the grain of wheat falling into the ground and dying (see John 12: 24). It abides alone otherwise, but if it dies it brings forth much fruit. That is a mature thought.

J.R.S. So that every redeemed saint is of the same order as Christ - the much fruit. Adam was not that. Wonderful pleasure to God that Adam was as created in His image and after His likeness, he was not of the same order as Christ. Is that the truth?

W.L. I think so. What would the 'much fruit' involve?

J.R.S. It would take all the saints to answer to Christ, formed in His features, something of that order, that character, out of death.

Ques. Would it be right to say that there is no moral issue in this incident?

J.R.S. I think that is the truth; it is not dealing with the sin of the world. That is another aspect of the death of Christ. This brought out the love of Abraham or the pleasure of God, the love of God for His own pleasure, and prepared to go to whatever lengths could possibly be devised in order to show that divine love was paramount.

Ques. Is it the fullest thought that God "will provide"? He has provided for His own pleasure and His own glory.

J.R.S. That is good, He provides for Himself. I think it is attributed to Mr Stoney that he once said to a brother, God does what He does because He is what He is, and, in doing what He does, He displays what He is.

J.M. It says of the ram that he was caught in the thicket. Is that like the Hebrew bondman, "I love my master, my wife, my children, I will not go free"?

J.R.S. That is good. He accepted the limitation, he accepted the being caught, the restriction.

K.M. I wondered if the thicket would be the will of God. I feel touched that the ram was caught, and with the Hebrew bondman, it was a matter of love - "I love my master".

J.R.S. The Lord Jesus in manhood loved the will of God. We have been instructed, that there is one will of God, but there are three willings in relation to it. The Lord Jesus expressed His willingness; if it involved suffering, he would embrace it because of His love for the will of God.

Ques. Does that come out beautifully in the garden of Gethsemane, where it says "My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; but not as I will, but as thou wilt", Matt. 26: 39.

J.R.S. It says He pleased not himself (see Rom 15: 3). The proper use of the body is for the will of God, that is what we have our bodies for. I speak to my shame in saying that, because we are all self-willed, but the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh filled out the will of God. He loved righteousness and hated lawlessness.

Ques. Is this a mark of maturity that is available to us all - "here am I"?

J.R.S. I am sure that is the way of it. It is not that he was choosing the way in which He would seek to serve God, He was subject to what God put upon him. I believe that the beginning of the course of maturity is subjection and readiness.

D.S. The ram of consecration is consecration to God - you commit yourself, consecrate yourself. That is the way of maturity.

J.R.S. The ram exemplifies that maturity. It is caught in the thicket by its horns, that is its strength. It says He gave His strength into captivity (see Ps 78: 61), but that is not quite the setting here. The setting here is more that His strength was given in relation to being subject to the will of God.

Ques. Could you say further as to in this place in which they were alone, there was no one to see them, they were alone in an unknown place. Did you have something behind saying that?

J.R.S. Only in the sense that God called Abraham to offer up his son and there would be nobody else to see that but God. He could not receive anybody's approval or otherwise, he was not in any sense before men, the whole matter was to be judged and assessed by God. That is a wonderful blessing and we would touch it in our circumstances.

Rem. We need to seek these things out and work them out alone with God. It is not attendance at the meeting (of course there is nothing wrong in attending meetings) but there is something that you work out alone with God and perhaps the resulting growth is seen as we attend the meeting.

J.R.S. The meetings are what they are because the saints are what they are. As we come from our closets alone with God to the meeting, the saints will be greatly helped together.

J.S. Was it God's assessment of what was in Abraham 's soul that comes out in what God says, "now I know that thou fearest God"?

J.R.S. It was not that there was any doubt about it before, but God was proving His own work. He tried Abraham, He was seeing that what He had formed in Abraham was equal to this test that was put upon him.

J.S. It brought out just what Abraham was to God. Would maturity be developed in the fear of God?

J.R.S. I am sure that is right, the fear of God is a very necessary, wholesome matter and it is one of the things that is becoming so absent from the world, the fear of God.

J.B. Maturity of affection, love, has been referred to. With us, what you are speaking of is the result of development in experience with God, and in affection for God in response to His love torus. We see these things in Christ. Would it be right however to say that we see maturity in the Lord Jesus, because we think of maturity as the result of a process and we could not exactly say that of the Lord Jesus Himself? We see in Him in perfection the things that we reach for in maturity, and love predominantly.

J.R.S. What is formed in the saints is features of Christ and when they are formed that is what we speak of as maturity.

W.L. James tells us that it is the result of this incident that Abraham was called friend of God (see ch 2: 23). Would that be a feature of maturity?

J.R.S. That is in the sense of confidant. What a fine thought to reach, not from the point of Abraham being able to say, I am a friend of God, but that God spoke of him as His friend.

W.L. That it says in verse 14 "as it is said at the present day", would show the far-reaching effect of this incident. It affected God and it is affecting us today. The Holy Spirit would use it to affect our souls, and perhaps bring about a resolve of heart.

J.R.S. I trust it would, but then in whatever circumstance we are and however unable we may feel, we would be able to take on this word, "on the mount of Jehovah will be provided".

J.M. It says of Abraham that he lifted up his eyes and looked. I was thinking of what the Lord Jesus says in regard to Abraham, that he rejoiced to see my day and was glad (see John 8: 55). Would there be a connection with that?

J.R.S. I think that is a good touch as to it. He saw the place on which he was going to offer up Isaac, he would see something of what God had in mind as to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

J.M. I often feel that I need to lift up my eyes as Abraham did.

J.R.S. More than once in his history he lifted up his eyes. God told him to look at the stars. I suppose in Ur of the Chaldees they would look at the stars in a very superstitious sort of way (astrology and the like), and no doubt that caused him to be dubious about looking at the stars, but God says, You look at the stars in a right way; he would be helped in his outlook.

Paul is speaking to Timothy in relation to his example and service amongst the saints - "enjoin and teach these things". He is speaking of what is of God in a right way, and he had spoken before of the mystery of piety. He had spoken of other things in the epistle and he speaks of what he is to teach, observe and enjoy and he goes on to speak of Timothy as a model "in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity". That is a fairly full matter.

Ques. In Genesis 22 it is father and son. Could you view Timothy here as Paul's spiritual son? He refers in the beginning to "my child" (ch 1: 18). It is a wonderful relationship between Paul and Timothy.

J.R.S. The first epistle to Timothy, especially, is the exhortation of the father to a son. We would do well to fit ourselves in to this line of exhortation from such a one as Paul.

G.McK. Is it remarkable that he is not told to be the model of a young person, "a model of the believers". Does that support what you are saying that what a believer ought to be can be set forth in a younger person?

J.R.S. That is what I was thinking. He is not asked to step out of his youth, or something like that; he is to be what he is according to the

work of God as a model amongst the believers. Every one of us could fit into that.

Rem. It has been said that Timothy was a timid sort of person, but I do not think he would be intimidated, I think he would show maturity.

J.R.S. If he was to enjoin and teach, it may well have involved a considerable exercise with him; it would not have been easy. But he is to do it and not in a way that will cause anyone to despise him as a result.

P.B. "Occupy thyself with these things; be wholly in them". Is it an appeal to do it now?

J.R.S. That is right. It is as being occupied with them and practising them that he saves both himself and those that hear him. It is the actual doing of it, that is the example.

J.D.G. The thought of a model is not something that he is to show without reality; it must be what was there with himself. Would the exercise be to display the features of Christ in relation to the work of God in my soul?

J.R.S. That is what I thought. It was not the idea that this is to be drawn attention to, follow it, so much as that what he did he would do as displaying Christ in it.

J.D.G. It is what is there in the man that would come out. It would not be something put on like a garment. The exercise would be to guard himself so that scope was made to illustrate what he is.

J.R.S. In following that up he would have to be careful what he engaged himself in and read, in order that the growth should not be impaired or corrupted.

J.D.G. At times when exercises come up, sometimes we feel like expressing ourselves in a certain manner, but would that be a model of how Christ would have me to express myself? You might restrain yourself so as to display Christ and not the flesh.

J.R.S. That is a very real exercise for some of us. Paul says of Timothy to the saints in Philippi that he had genuine feeling, how

they got on; he was not so much interested in putting them right, as he was in making sure that they got on.

W.L. Mr Darby helpfully links it with Luke 2 as to the Lord Himself.

J.R.S. That is what our brother was saying, what he was in himself would come out in expression, and what we are, like it or not, mostly does come out in what we say and do. That is where we are tested. Paul was exhorting Timothy to use the Spirit to put to death the deeds of the body; by the Spirit we have to do that.

W.L. What does he mean by "thou shalt save both thyself and those that hear thee"?

J.R.S. I suppose it is that they might be lost to the testimony. There are those in second Timothy who were lost to the testimony, and some of them are named. We look around this room, and would say to ourselves are any going to be lost or are they all going to be saved? We think of the little ones, and those that may have difficulties; are we going to ensure that they are saved, or are we going to allow to be lost through our lack of care?

W.L. It would apply to older ones too. There have been a lot of losses.

J.R.S. It would, and Paul is exhorting Timothy to be as much of an example to the old ones as to the young ones; the old ones need that sometimes.

J.S. Do you have in mind that a man of this kind would be an influence for good. Paul refers to him later as "O man of God" (ch 6: 11). Do you think such would exert the right influence?

J.R.S. That is a big matter. A person's influence is beyond what they say or do; it extends in a hidden way, either for good or not so good.

J.S. I am sure that is right. The way that Paul is guiding Timothy in what he is to be occupied with and aiming at would have in mind that he should be an influence in the right direction.

J.R.S. The matter of influence is very much bound up with the thought of our place in the body. Would you say that is right?

J.S. Yes, because there is going to be someone in close proximity to me in the body, who will probably be the first one whom I will influence. I want to influence that brother or sister in the right direction.

J.R.S. I feel the importance of what you say and to ensure that I am on the line of encouraging the brethren into the truth, and that involves example.

D.S. Is that why he stresses "give heed to thyself and to the teaching". That is what has been at tacked all through the dispensation, particularly Paul's teaching, and salvation in this day is in Paul's teaching.

J.R.S. That is right.

D.R. The best influence is to go on yourself. I was affected by a remark of Mr Stoney's about Mr Darby; Mr Darby told him that he was not interested in influencing people, and that may seem a strange thing, but Mr Stoney said, but he influenced people by going on himself. It is not by argument that we influence one another, or by ability to reason with one another but by going on positively as believers.

J.R.S. I do feel that and that brings out, as has already been said, what we are. In Acts we have this young man - I suppose it is right to refer to him as a child, the scripture speaks of him as a youth - he was taken by the hand. There would be something leadable about him. He does not dither about, he hears of this awful plot and its determination to exterminate Paul by any means whatever. He comes in and speaks to Paul and even stands before the chiliarch and counsels him as to what to do. That is a remarkable thing for a child. He is not stuttering - he might well have done so before such an important man - but for the moment he is enjoying youthful maturity in his preservation of the testimony.

J.B. Do you think that in principle he is showing that he has the spirit of power and of love and of wise discretion? (2 Tim 1: 7).

J.R.S. Those three things are put together. So that one does not have to be of great years or of outstanding history or anything like that; it would appear he is just a child.

J.B. Paul in writing to Titus exhorts through Titus that the elder men be discreet and the younger women be discreet and the younger man be discreet (see Titus 2: 2,4,6). Discretion would be an important component of what you have been bringing before us. Do you think that we get it with the Holy Spirit's help? We have not spoken much of the Holy Spirit in this reading but do you think that His influence and power would be essential in reaching towards what you have had before us?

J.R.S. I am glad you say that: there will not be any progress in the things of God unless we draw upon the Spirit.

J.B. It was not a rebuke, but I just feel the need of it for myself and He is the great source of this.

G.A.B. In Mark's gospel the Lord speaks about growth. He refers to first the blade, then an ear and then full corn in the ear. Would these three scriptures that you have brought before us, perhaps in reverse, bring out these three features of normal growth?

J.R.S. This young man here was not able to do any more. He had heard something; it was against the testimony, it was against the truth, it was against Paul and against the government, against the ordering of God. He heard these things and he thought I must do something about that.

Rem. He was an example of one who was delivered: he was not thinking about self at all, he was thinking only about the Lord and His testimony and the preciousness of that "elect vessel."

J.R.S. The section where we read finishes with him being able to keep things secret. That would be a very difficult thing for a boy to do. He had stood before the chiliarch, he had been into the fortress he had told them all about what he had heard and now he had to

keep it to himself. That was going to grow into something mature in his soul.

EDINBURGH

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Key to initials

Edinburgh unless otherwise stated (Not all speakers were identifiable from the tapes - any omissions or mis-identifications are regretted)

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THREE PRAYERS

John Surtees

1 Kings 18: 30-39; Ezra 9: 5-9; Daniel 9: 20-23 (to "beloved")

I would like to speak a little of the prayers of these three remarkable men, and the evening oblation comes into all of them. It was at the time of the evening oblation. We would know that God said that there was to be a continual burnt-offering and with it a continual oblation, in the morning and in the evening. The evening was to be like the morning; it was to be the same measure, the same quality, the same devotedness, a lamb in the morning and an oblation, and a drink-offering, and a lamb in the evening, and an oblation, and a drink-offering, the continual daily oblation. Of course there was, in addition to that, an individual oblation, "when one offered an oblation". It speaks, I understand, of the humanity of the Lord Jesus, "fine flour mingled with oil", and upon it was put frankincense (see Leviticus 2). The fine flour would be that which has come within our range; the priest was to handle it, he was to take a handful of it. It is the beauty of the manhood of Jesus that has come within our range, that we can understand, that we can draw near to. There is no quantity specified in the amount that the one who offered the oblation could bring, he could bring as much as he liked; as much as his appreciation of the manhood of Christ he could bring to be offered in the oblation. Then "mingled with oil". It says in Numbers where it speaks of the morning and evening oblation (ch 2: 8) that it was to be mingled with beaten oil. It is that experience with God as a result of the Spirit's work that is brought in, in the appreciation of the oblation. The Spirit of God has come because the Lord Jesus has suffered and because He has been glorified, and it was to be brought in and offered morning and evening. There is a measure attached to it in the offering in Numbers, that is to say it has to be maintained; it is only a small measure. I think it is the same portion as the manna, the omer that was to be brought, or a tenth part of an ephah, which is the same measure as the fine flour that was to be brought for the oblation and that was to be mingled with oil. It was

not to be left. The children of Israel throughout all their journeyings were never to miss it; and by way of application, each one of us is never ever to lose sight of the manhood of Jesus, the wonder of it. Here He was, He walked in this scene; He was a real Man, sin apart, and the scripture does say tempted in all things (Heb 4: 15). The reality of His manhood shines for example in Luke's gospel when it says that He "fell asleep". Think of that; He was the Creator, yet here He was in conditions of flesh and blood and it says "he fell asleep" (Luke 8: 23). How real was His manhood, and do I appreciate that?

He knew what it was to feel hungry, and weary, He knew what it was to be rebuked by men, and what it was to suffer unjustly, and what it was to be hated without a cause. I suppose we could scarcely think of the many ways in which He is spoken of in the scriptures as suffering. A brother from this locality spoke recently very helpfully of the five senses of the Lord Jesus, how they were engaged in entering into the suffering, how as Man His senses were all touched by the sufferings that belonged to men. I thought of the Lord at the grave of Lazarus and Martha says "Lord, he stinks already" (John 11: 39). What He had to go through sympathetically in the sufferings of man, in the reality of facing death. There are many ways in which we can take account of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus and all in manhood, intensified by the perfection of what He was.

Now as to these three prayers. Elijah's prayer stood in relation to restoring what had broken down. It tested the people and proved to themselves that there was nothing other than pure idolatry and superstition and sentiment, and all that kind of thing that goes along with idolatry in their offerings to Baal. It comes closer home. How people of the world are swooned into things by music and the like. These things are part of the idolatry that is in the world. It was so here just as much; it had the name of religion, but it affected all the people, they cut themselves and shouted and cried. We know what the flesh is capable of, but Elijah says, now there is another way, "Draw near to me". Elijah drew the people near to him. I suppose

he would have the power for that; he was a man with God, he would be attractive to the people. They were exhausted with their day's activity, and it had yielded nothing for them, and certainly nothing for God.

It says that he "repaired the altar of Jehovah which was broken down". He would say that there is a certain order about drawing near to God; it is not haphazard. It involves the way in which God had been made known, it involves sonship, it involved the twelve sons of Israel, the way that God had taken up Jacob and that at one time he wrestled all night with God and with men and prevailed. "What is thy name? Jacob" (Gen 32: 27,28). God would bring us back to our true substance, what we are before Him. God gave him a name in purpose, Israel, a name which would fit into His own thoughts, so that men should call upon the name of the God of Israel. So Elijah uses these people, I think he brings about their sympathy, he gets them to do things. I do not suppose that they particularly wanted to help with this offering, but he was a man of influence. We spoke of that in the reading; he was a man of right influence, he could get people to do things, not necessarily what they wanted to do, but what was going to help in some way to fill out the revelation of the majesty of God. The time of the offering up of the oblation comes. It must have been the evening oblation, the day had gone by, noon had come and gone, the people had been thoroughly exhausted with all their efforts all the patience that Elijah exerted and at that time he draws near to God. The people had drawn near to him, but now he is drawing near to God. He would think of this oblation, think of what was for God, of the contrast with all that he had seen, all these prophets of Baal, cavorting around and behaving themselves as they were, and he would think typically of the Man who was epitomised in fine flour. What a contrast! You think of the handful of fine flour. I cannot appreciate it all, but the priest could take his handful of it and offer it to God. The priest's measure would be in that, what he could take of all that was brought; he would offer what he could to God, and what was left was for his food, he would have it to feed upon and he would delight to feed upon it.

At that time Elijah draws near, "Jehovah, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel", if things are going to be restored for God, it involves God's outlook, the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac. The Lord says in Luke in relation to these patriarchs that he is not God of the dead but God of the living (ch 20: 38). Elijah says "let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel". He would affect them. I suppose they would not have been ready for this before, but he affected them, he drew them near, and then he had them find these pitchers and fill them and pour them over the offering. It was a time of famine, the famine was in the land for three and a half years. It does not say where the water was obtained, but they found it, there was exercise in it, and he had them do it again and again. He would make them ready, make them expectant for what was going to happen. He draws near and says "Answer me Jehovah, answer me". Can we speak to God like that? What faith there was in his soul! There he was before these hundreds of prophets of Baal, all of them having some name, I suppose, or some previous skill in their disgraceful conduct of idolatry, and there was Elijah drawing near to God and saying "Answer me, Jehovah, answer me". Would God not be affected by one who had drawn near in this way? There would be some feature of Christ, some feature of the Man about whom the oblation spoke. "Answer me, that this people may know that thou Jehovah art God, and that thou has turned their heart back again". Elijah had faith as to this, faith that what is of God in Israel is going to be brought to its real function. And it says "the fire of Jehovah fell and consumed the burnt-offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench". What a triumph! There would be nothing left, no water in the trench, no offering, no wood, nothing left. There were these people and there was God having made manifest His power and His love. All was consumed, the people would see nothing there. God had made known His power, His glory, but apart from that I think He had made known His love in relation to His people Israel. It says "And all the people saw it, and they fell on their faces and said, Jehovah, he is God! Jehovah, his God!" Elijah uses the people. They were convicted, they had sorrowful histories, all

had been known persons in this conduct before, and now they were converted, all touched, all affected by what was due to God having been brought in again. It refers to the restoration of Israel. John the Baptist speaks of one who comes in the spirit and power of Elias, he would come to restore what is of Israel, and a very great restoration it will be. You think of the remnant of Israel after the church is gone, as we speak, and when the days come of which God says, that if He did not cut short those days no flesh should have been saved (Mark 13: 20), that in the teeth of that violence and bitterness, and warfare, in which the whole globe will be engaged, the godly remnant of Israel will evangelise the world, go round through tremendous suffering, and sorrow and persecution of all kinds, and it will be in the spirit and power of Elias. It will be like this man who could turn to God at the time of the evening oblation and say "Answer me, Jehovah, answer me". Are we able for that? Is the testimony on our hearts? Do we see the breakdown, the public side of it and the activities of men, so organised and uniting together, bridging language and finance arrangements and time-scales, all those things to activate what is commonly against God. The world is full of that and it will get worse. Someone will arise who will co-ordinate it all: that person is spoken of in scripture. It says more than once that he will be blasphemous along with other similar characteristics. But before that it is within our understanding to think of what is for God that is to be restored for His own pleasure and to be able to speak to Him about it.

When we come to Ezra there had been considerable development. They had come out of Babylon by the ordering of God; they had built the house and Jerusalem was beginning to be restored. There were those who came out with Ezra - a remarkable man Ezra was, a priestly man, a chronicler. Not much was missed by Ezra, he would know the Scriptures, which is a test to me and he contributed to the Scriptures, God used him for writing part of the Scriptures and transcribing and giving the sense. There had been good progress in Jerusalem so far and then it comes to light that there is an underlying state of corruption. Ezra is rightly affected by that. What strikes me in this scripture is that it says "at the evening

oblation I arose up from my humiliation". Ezra would know what was due to God. He was feeling stunned by the revelation of what was going on, persons no doubt whom he would be surprised about even the priests and the levites, affected by it. It affected and corrupted most, if not all who had been so successful and helped of God in building the house. Ezra felt that, but nevertheless "at the evening oblation I arose up from my humiliation." Ezra would know that what was for God had to go on. He would understand that somebody has got to maintain the service of God in purity, somebody has to be available to do that. He would not say, I cannot go out today, I am so much depressed by all that has come into my ears, and I am affected by it; it has made its in-roads in my household and in my family, and in my circumstances, it has knocked on my door and it has found an entrance into my life (I would have to say that) I could not possibly go out today. He does not say that; he says "I arose up from my humiliation". He would know that there is such a thing as examining ourselves before God, as being able to take God's side against whatever comes to light, not in any sense making little of it. He says "our trespass is grown up to the heavens. Since the days of our fathers, we have been in great trespass to this day; and for our iniquities we, our kings, our priests, have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands". He can see the government of God in relation to it. What they have to do to put it right is very drastic, Ezra does not minimise that. He does not say, we cannot deal with those things because it is all around, it is accepted as normal practice. He did not say that sort of thing. They had to deal with the things that Babylon had taught them. Ezra goes on and looks forward to what God may do "now for a little space there hath been favour from Jehovah our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place", something upon which the glory of Christ would eventually come, a nail in a sure place. They had been given a little opportunity once again, just a remnant, in the present situation to keep something for the Lord's heart, to keep it for Himself, to enable it to function as it should function. Ezra understood this and he would understand that this is all part of the lamb in the evening. The lamb in the morning has been sacrifice. We have seen the lamb

in the morning; we see it especially in the Acts, the morning lamb and the morning oblation, a wonderful tribute.

Now we come in at the time of the lamb in the evening. Ezra says there is a little time, a little opportunity, a little reviving and he speaks of a wall: "to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem". That would be in line with what was to be preserved. If this cleansed city area, where the house of God was built, was to be maintained and the people in it, and the function is to be maintained it would need to be preserved. He looked on to the time when there would be a wall. I often say to our own family and others, do we really value the truth of separation? It is nothing to be afraid of. Supposing we had given up the truth of separation, where would our young people be now? If we had not been helped in our earlier days by the elder brethren who were present in the place where I was to maintain separation, where would they have been? Where would any one of us have been? Do I love the truth of separation? It is not about always saying 'No'. It is about preserving the truth, preserving what is for God. He says "to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem". This was the place of privilege. This was the place of God's own privilege, Judah. It is where the Lord Jesus walked in Jerusalem. It was the place where David reigned and God said it would have a king reigning in righteousness there. In that privileged position they were to be given a wall or preserve what was within it. I would like to encourage all of us that this is part of what really belongs to the evening oblation in the time of which we live.

In Daniel, Daniel is confessing his sin and the sin of his people Israel, going far back as he did, he was speaking at the end of the captivity. The captivity ended in the first year of Cyrus. God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to send those out with Ezra to build the temple. Daniel was speaking right at the end of that captivity and he was going over the history, why were the people of God in such bondage? Why were they in captivity? He did not say, they, they, they: it is we, we, we. More than that it is my, my, my. It is not that they did what was wrong, not even, what we did was wrong, I think it is that before God, as Job says "I am nought" (ch 40: 4). "In me, that

is in my flesh, good does not dwell". It is no good looking for it, it is no good trying to excuse it or explain it or anything like that, it is just not there. Man has fallen, he has a fallen nature. We have a nature, as we know, however pleasant or successful or clever or adventurous, it is a nature which is sinful. It responds to sin, it is fallen. Daniel was speaking, praying and confessing his sin. It is very full. I do not think Daniel's sin is ever recorded in the scripture for us. Perhaps he was looking into his heart and finding that it was deceitful "our hearts are deceitful above all things and incurable" (Jer 17: 9). Daniel would be looking into his heart and finding these things. Nevertheless he is presenting his supplication before Jehovah his God, for the holy mountain of his God. It was while he was going over these things that Gabriel appears to him and talks with him and said "Daniel, I am now come forth to make thee skilful of understanding". That was at the time of the evening oblation, although it clearly would never have been celebrated in his time. There would be some there that could remember seventy years ago, Daniel would be one, he could have remembered it because he came as a young man into Babylon. At the time of the evening oblation this man Gabriel appeared and he says "thou art one greatly beloved". Fancy God speaking to such a one like that! Is it not a feature of Christ, the Father's love, the Spirit's love, the love of the Lord Jesus, "thou art one greatly beloved", loved by God. What a thing it was! There was Daniel in all his loneliness, and yet he was a busy man, he had a big realm of responsibility, he was effective in running the country, he had a certain section of the country to administer, and he would be very busy and occupied, but he found time to stand before God and Gabriel says "I am now come forth to make thee skilful of understanding". That was God's prerogative. I greatly desire that. The Lord opened their understanding in Luke, to understand the Scriptures. There is scarcely anything that one desires more than to be able to understand the Scriptures. Daniel is given understanding, and Gabriel goes on to say "thou art one greatly beloved". What a commendation to have the sense in a fresh way that God is looking upon us, not only in His purpose because he is love, but looking upon us because of what He sees as

features of Christ in the saints, calling out his love, "one greatly beloved".

I would like to close with that thought that it is available to us all. Children, do not pass it by, the time may come when you will be attracted to things in the world and tempted by them; do not get drawn into that. Daniel was maintained as being one who was greatly beloved because he determined in his heart that he would not pollute himself with the king's delicate meat. He was preserved in relation to the purpose of God and the pleasure of God at the present time.

In the name of the Lord Jesus.

EDINBURGH

25 November 1995