

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 297

December 1997

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THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

THINGS WHICH ABIDE

THE NEW AND LIVING WAY

THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

1 John 3: 4-6; 2 Corinthians 5: 19-21; 1 Peter 2: 19-25

J.D.G. I was thinking about the statements with regard to Christ which come into these scriptures. The first says, "In Him sin is not", then in 2 Corinthians 5 "Him who knew not sin", and in 1 Peter, "who did no sin". I thought we might get some help as to the uniqueness of the humanity of Christ. I am sure that the brethren will be helpful in drawing out the first scripture, rather than being concerned with that scripture exactly in its setting. I was thinking of the uniqueness of the Lord Himself - "in Him, sin is not." In 2 Corinthians 5 we will see the blessedness of what flows out from Christ being made sin, "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us", and then in 1 Peter 3 we see that He did no sin; He is a model there.

But the first scripture "in Him sin is not" - it is an absolute statement, true of Him now, true of Him in His humanity in flesh and blood condition, the Lord Jesus was unique.

R.S.R. There is no one else of whom this could be said, showing the perfection and uniqueness of the Lord Jesus. It is a wonderful statement, "In him sin is not".

J.D.G. The passage shows that sin is lawlessness. It did not exist in Christ; it must point to the uniqueness of the humanity that was there, the order of humanity that was there. Reference has been made earlier today to "who shall declare his generation", Isa 53: 9.

There is no generation after Christ in flesh and blood condition; He is unique, He is alone! I do not think we contemplate enough the loneliness of the Lord Jesus as a Man in whom sin is not the midst of a sea of humanity in whom it says "sin dwells" (Rom 7: 17), whereas Christ was unique and alone. Loneliness was there. The scripture helps us to understand the loneliness of the Lord Jesus. In Genesis 2, Adam found not a helpmate his like, amid all the creation there was nothing like himself. The Lord was looking for that when He came in flesh and blood, but He did not find it in flesh and blood condition. He was unique and alone.

J.T.B. In the oblation and the burnt-offering, at least in one presentation of the oblation, it speaks about "in pieces". I wonder if "in him", refers to what He was intrinsically, inherently.

J.D.G. I was thinking of Luke's gospel, "the holy thing which shall be born shall be called son of God".

J T.B. I was thinking of the burnt-offering in Leviticus 1; it was cut up into pieces and then the oblation, which was baked in the oven, it was parted in pieces. Whatever aspect of His humanity you contemplate, inwardly there was purity, was there not?

J.D.G. That is right. Absolute purity, no lawlessness, no principle of lawlessness in Christ, whereas everything of Adam's race was contaminated with the principle of lawlessness. It says "the sin that dwells in me" but this is a Man of whom it can be said "in him sin is not". It is the present tense but it was also true of Him in His humanity in flesh and blood condition.

G.B. When it says "Jesus looking round on all things", do you think there is an expression of how He felt in a sinful world, Himself sinless?

J.D.G. There was no counterpart, there was nothing that ministered to Him in this scene, even His own did not understand Him, not even Peter understood Him after the revelation he received in Matthew 16. I think we need to contemplate the uniqueness of Christ and how He felt in this scene. It leads you in your thoughts to the Lord's real joy when He saw something that was His counterpart, because in flesh and blood there was nothing that was His counterpart. His counterpart came out of His death. The order of humanity to which He belonged was the same order of flesh and blood as He is now. The condition is different, but the order is the same. There is no other person of the order of humanity when Christ was in flesh and blood condition, there is no generation.

G.A.B. Your point is that the counterpart has to come out of Himself.

J.D.G. That is right. That is true, the rib has to be taken from his side, as the Scripture illustrates for us, but until that point he was

alone. The Lord in His flesh and blood condition was alone. He is not alone now, but it is still true of Him that in Him sin is not, but it was true of Him in flesh and blood condition.

D.S. Genesis underlines that too, "he found no helpmate his like", but what is His like now? The assembly is a vessel that is His like.

J.D.G. That scripture, in the context brings out what is kin to Christ, but I wanted to dwell firstly on the uniqueness of Himself in the flesh and blood condition. "In him sin is not"; there is no other being of whom that could be said.

D.S. This scripture is often misquoted; we say In him sin was not. This is the perfection "In him sin is not", always was and ever will be.

J.D.G. There is no other being at the present time of whom it can be said, In him sin is not. It cannot be said of us yet.

R.S.R. Did not the Lord say, "The ruler of the world comes, and in me he has nothing", (John 14: 30)?

J.D.G. There was nothing in Christ to respond to any overtures of the devil. We cannot say that of ourselves. The work of God is in us, as the scripture brings out in this passage, that "whoever abides in him does not sin", but there never was a time when there was anything in the Lord Jesus that would respond to Satan. You could not say that of any other person.

T.C.M. Does this bring out His divinity as a Man?

J.D.G. His Person is divine.

T.C.M. I would like help as to this great matter, that as a Man there was no sin in Him, as the scripture says, but you cannot attach sin to a divine Person.

J.D.G. As coming into humanity, the holy thing is there. That would include His person, but "the holy thing which shall be born" included in the humanity. It is another order of humanity. When we come to the second scripture we will see that reconciliation brings us in in that order of humanity.

E.W.J. I was wondering about John's gospel. He Himself says, I do always the things that are pleasing to him (John 8: 29). You would feel that there is a sense of perfection there.

J.D.G. He is the only One who could say "I come to do thy will, O my God". Then, 'I do always the things that are pleasing to him'. That was true of Him, because of the uniqueness of His humanity "in him sin is not", whereas in us there is something that responds to Satan's overtures. We are kept by the Spirit of God, but we cannot say this of any other being at the present time. I suppose looking on to the body of glory there will be a condition then that is apart from sin in creatures.

E.J.J. Would you see this coming out in Matthew 4 as to the temptations as to what the devil did? He could not touch the Lord there at all.

J.D.G. That is right, "The ruler of this world cometh and in me he has nothing".

J.M. Is that why the Spirit of God could descend upon Him as a dove, because He was sinless?

J.D.G. That is absolutely true. It is on account of that that He receives the Spirit apart from death. That is a very helpful scripture; it brings out the uniqueness of Christ, the firstborn of all creation, coming in and the Spirit recognises Him. The Father could also say "Thou are my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight" (Luke 3: 2).

J.M. It is quite remarkable that the Father's voice is heard after the Spirit descends.

J.D.G. That is very interesting.

J.M. Would it be to indicate to us that that is the divine intention, that men should be filled with the Holy Spirit, for the Father's pleasure?

J.D.G. It shows you the uniqueness of Jesus, the unique complacency of the Spirit descending upon Him and the Father's voice affirming that - the Godhead's complacency in regard to Christ - so that it brings out His uniqueness.

E.W.J. It says here "that he has been manifested that he might take away our sins". I was thinking about the pleasure He was to the Father as well. It is the head and the fat and the burnt-offering and the sweet odour that rises to God. I was wondering how it was all in that Man.

J.D.G. It would be manifest in taking away our sins. What you have referred to as to the burnt offering brings out the purity of the offering; that washing of the inwards stresses the purity of the offering which touches on this scripture "in him sin is not".

I.H. It can be said of no one but the Lord and yet we are expected to attain a certain standard, are we not?

J.D.G. What surrounds the statement we are considering is that persons who are born of God, children of God, and having a new nature, should come into conformity with the thoughts, and that lawlessness should not exist in their actions.

I.H. Paul said "be ye imitators of me, even as I am of Christ".

J.D.G. The scripture is dealing with the fact that lawlessness is not to be amongst us. I thought just to concentrate on the perfection of Jesus.

A.B. I was thinking about Isaiah 53, "when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see a seed " (v 10). Is that the order out of His death?

J.D.G. That would be out of His death. In Isaiah 53: 8, "who shall declare his generation", is another line of things. There is no generation after Him in flesh and blood but "he shall see a seed" (v 10-11): there is something that comes out of His death that is like Himself, which we will come on to.

R.S.R. The next verse has a bearing on ourselves "whosoever abides in him does not sin". I suppose you could hardly think of abiding in Christ and sinning at the same time.

J.D.G. It is a moral impossibility to abide in Christ and to sin.

R.T. I was thinking what a wonderful preservative it is to us to lay hold of this truth and to hold to it. It is not everyone that is privileged to lay hold of this truth.

J.D.G. Men seek to imitate Christ philanthropically but they are not of the same order as Him. We are brought into His order through death. "Whoever abides in him", that would be a person who is born of God does not sin. That would be a test to us.

R.S.R. I would think that the Spirit of God is essential for this. If we are to abide in Christ, it must be by the power of the Spirit and not of ourselves.

J.D.G. I think what you touched on - does not sin - is being brought into conformity to Christ, but there still remains the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus.

D.S. One of the errors of Christendom is that there is one who is without sin apart from the Lord. They try to make out that Mary the mother of the Lord is without sin; now that is error. The young people should know that, the uniqueness of Jesus.

J.D.G. Mary was of Adam's order. The Lord drew nothing morally from Mary. His conception was unique by the Holy Spirit, the Holy Thing was born. He did not derive from the line that Mary derived from; she was a vessel used to bring Him into this world.

G.A.B. It is something to be considered, before we leave this scripture, as to what the Lord went through sufferingly in His spirit, because of what He saw around Him, He Himself perfect.

J.D.G. How He felt in a world where there was a sea of humanity of whom it could be said, "sin dwells", and He was absolutely apart from that. I do not think that we contemplate enough the strangeness of the Lord Jesus, His loneliness. Even His own did not understand Him and they did not understand Him until after His death. The link with Him could be established only in the power of His Spirit. Christ was absolutely alone.

G.A.B. It has been said and often quoted that what the Lord took away in His power, He bore in His spirit. I wondered if that might

have a bearing on this setting as to what as Man He actually carried sufferingly. I think Mr Darby's teachings as to the sufferings of Christ ought to be read by us.

J.D.G. What He took away in His power was the effect of lawlessness. He took it away from humanity in His power and relieved them of every aspect of distress. All that distress derives its source in lawlessness and sin. He was relieving that situation, and He alone could do it because "in him sin is not". What a contemplation for our hearts to consider Christ alone. Genesis 2 helps us to understand a little bit. There was no response to Adam from the whole of the creation before Eve was brought in.

J.M. How far will you take the dying thief's statement, "this man has done nothing amiss"?

J.D.G. I would take it to the fact that 'He did no sin'.

J.M. I wondered how far he understood it; you feel that he understood that this Man had never sinned.

J.D.G. I would say that "this man has done nothing amiss" would relate to 'He did no sin'.

W.M.G. In John 8, the Lord being challenged by the Pharisees, says "ye are from beneath, I am from above, ye are of this world, I am not of this world"; then he says "altogether that which I say to you".

J.D.G. That is another statement along similar lines. I do not think that we understand Christ enough in His humanity, how He felt. Our brother has brought up as to His feelings, the sorrow He carried in His spirit as He saw the whole creation ruined by the fall, ruined by the inroads of sin into humanity. All God's thoughts in regard to man seemed to have been lost.

E.W.J. "The Lord Jehovah hath opened mine ear, I was not rebellious. I gave my back to smiters and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Isa: 50: 6). I was thinking, about the circumstances that He was in, "in him sin was not". Would that link with what you have in mind?

J.D.G. Yes. Lawlessness was not in Him, he was not rebellious. In 2 Corinthians 5 it is "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us". Reconciliation is in mind, "Be reconciled to God. Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him". He knew not sin, He had nothing to do with the principle of sin, then He is made sin for us.

D.S. This does not deal with sins exactly: this is 'sin', that which opposes God, for which there is not forgiveness: it has to be judged.

J.D.G. That is right. It is good to bring that up that the young people understand their sins are forgiven, but the principle of sin, that is lawlessness, is not forgiven. It cannot be forgiven. It has to be judged. It was judged on the cross in Jesus, "made sin". Who can fathom the statement? We know it relates to the hours of His forsaking on the cross.

E.W.J. I was thinking again of the burnt-offering as to the head and the fat, and the perfection of that offering. He knew not sin.

J.D.G. There is an appeal to be reconciled to God because there is One who has taken up the matter of enmity. Reconciliation is needed because enmity was there, and the whole matter was laid on the Lord Jesus. He knew not sin, He had nothing to do with that principle, He had nothing to do with lawlessness, He was not rebellious, it was not there in His nature.

J.M. Is that why His offering was suitable in regard to the sin question?

J.D.G. "By the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God". 'Knew not sin' is the negative way of stating it - spotless to God, spotless humanity, made sin for us. That is vicarious.

G.A.B. "Made sin" is an absolute statement; it had to be. The claims of God could not have been fully met were it not absolute in that sense.

J.D.G. The only One who was perfect could take on the matter of being made sin. It did not attach to Jesus personally, but it attached to the life that he laid down on the cross as made sin.

R.S.R. Psalm 22 gives us something of the feelings of the Lord Jesus beginning with "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (v 1), and then the word "thou art holy". That was the reason.

J.D.G. Yes. I have often thought of the Lord taking our place, taking the place of the lost. What a place the Lord was in, the only One who could address God from such a place. No other being could ever address God from such a place: Christ did, "My God, my God". But then He comes through by exhausting the judgment, He bore the judgment and exhausted it.

G.A.B. It was only the One who was made sin who could have exhausted it, because it was the thing in its entirety, was it not?

J.D.G. Yes, and it was put on Him, whereas for you and me, sin is part of our being through the fall. So He took it on Himself and He was greater than it.

G.A.B. It could not be said of any other that they were made sin; it could only be one who was absolutely free of sin, who could be made the thing itself.

J.D.G. That is good. That is what the scripture is telling us. He knew not sin, it did not belong at all to Him in any iota; He was made sin, such that He took the matter on, but He was greater than what He took on.

E.W.J. You get deepening feelings as to what the Lord passed through. Our brother referred to Psalm 22, "My God, I cry by day, and thou answerest not, and by night, and there is no rest for me" (v 2), and then he goes on to say "And thou art holy". It seems to me that our affections need to be stirred and feelings deepened in regard to the Lord Jesus Himself.

J.D.G. I trust that through our conversation our love for Christ will increase - the appreciation of what He has taken on, the totality of sin, but He was greater than that, greater than what He took on, and He exhausted the wrath of God, so that He comes out in triumph.

G.B. Would it be right to think that even the anticipation of what was before Him caused Him to be in conflict in the garden?

J.D.G. I think that is right. The anticipation of it, "the cup which the Father has given me, shall I not drink it". The anticipation of that did show in the effect in His body, His sweat because as great drops of blood falling down upon the earth" in Luke's gospel (chap 46). The angel strengthening Him showing the reality of His humanity that felt the enormity of what He was to take on. We cannot fathom it; we can only in some perhaps small way by the Spirit's help appreciate it.

D.C.B. I was just thinking of Gethsemane. There is really on the Lord's part in holiness a revulsion against what He was to be made, yet the perfection of Manhood that goes forward accepting it from the Father's hand.

J.D.G. That is right. There is a revulsion. You can understand a little of that in the sense that He knew not sin. It had never entered into His being at all; it was a foreign matter to Christ, and yet He was going forward to take on the whole sin question, sin and sins.

J.T.B. Is there a suggestion, when it says "he knew not sin" and then "being made sin for us", that as man He was brought into the perception of God's abhorrence of sin?

J.D.G. I think that is right. You can understand his statement "why hast thou forsaken me". There is nothing in Him personally that would call for the forsaking; it is what He was made. He was in the place of knowing the revulsion of God in regard to sin as One who is holy.

J.T.B. Forsaking would involve that; it would bring out in the blessed Sufferer, the totality of God's abhorrence of sin.

J.D.G. What a triumph, exhausting the judgment! He is triumphant in coming out of it having borne it on the cross in those hours and then committing His spirit to the Father, going into death in triumph. Then the 'us' - made "sin for us that we might become God's righteousness in him". God is going to have that evidence, that will be His righteousness to all eternity: the saints will be that, it is what the saints become in Him. That is another order of humanity, and the saints become God's righteousness. He is going to display that in His saints.

J.T.B. There has been reference to the censers full of burning coals, taken into the holiest. Do we carry with us what it meant for Christ to be made sin as bearing the judgment of God, the censers are full of burning coals taken from the altar?

J.D.G. I think that is right, something carried in there, the fragrance that arose out of the sufferings of Christ. We carry that forward with us, the fragrance of the thing. There is a certain fragrance there in the midst of the forsaking, according to the great day of atonement.

J.M. The way the scripture presents this matter to us is calculated to affect us in a very deep way, "who himself bore our sins". It does not say on the tree - "In His own body on the tree."

J.D.G. That is right, but 2 Corinthians 5 brings out the wonderful triumph, "we become God's righteousness in him". It is going to be displayed in eternity fully, seen now but displayed then.

G.A.B. How great the achievement, if you can put it that way, that we become God's righteousness in Him. It is just as absolute as the fact that Christ was made sin.

J.D.G. Because it is founded on a work completed, "he made sin for us", and then the results of that "we might become". What a comfort to Christ, when He sees the fruit of His death.

G.A.B. It is unchallengeable.

J.D.G. That is right. There is nothing that can stand in the way of its being brought about, "we might become God's righteousness". It is not a "might" of doubt: it is consequence. We go to Peter's epistle "who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree".

J.M. This One had the capacity to bear such a matter in His own body on the tree.

J.D.G. "Who Himself."

J.M. Yes; I think that the way it is put should help us to have an understanding of the awfulness of sins.

J.D.G. We come into the practical side of things in 1 Peter 2. It says "who did no sin", "For to this have ye been called, for Christ also has

suffered for you, leaving you a model that ye should follow in his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth".

D.S.Jnr. There are two aspects, what He was in Himself, but, as has already been referred to, when He was here, the wicked one comes to Him and in Him finds nothing. There is always something in us which responds to what is of the wicked one. It is as appreciating the greatness of Christ in Him as a Model and by the power of the Spirit that we can withstand it.

J.D.G. I think that is right. I do not think the Spirit of God is referred to in this section, but it must be by the Spirit's power that we follow in His steps. It is futility for the man after the flesh to seek to follow in the steps of Christ, because he would not be able for it. It would be like the Egyptian trying to cross the Red Sea and being swamped by the waters that would be against him. The believer, in the path of faith, as strengthened by the power of the Spirit is made equal to following in His steps in some sense. But, the Lord Jesus did no sin.

R.T. Peter is speaking here from His experience. Like us all he faltered, but he had this firmly in his soul.

J.D.G. That is true. When we read it we let the scriptures speak to us: "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, when reviled, reviled not again, when suffering threatened not, but gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously". That is the perfection of Christ in His humanity. We would be helped in it by the Spirit's power, but it could not be said of us that we did no sin.

No other creature that ever crossed the face of the earth could that be said.

D.S. That extends over our whole life. Not our life before we are converted, our whole life. We tend to sin after we are converted.

J.D.G. That is true; in an absolute sense, it cannot be said of anyone else but the Lord Jesus, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth". James brings out the trials that our mouths are to us, the tongue can set things on fire, the same tongue with which we curse men, we bless God. But the Lord Jesus was unique - "Altogether that which I also say to you".

G.A.B. This is something that could be observed. Reference was made earlier to the thief; he was able to observe that this Man had done nothing amiss. "In him sin is not", is something that could have been appreciated fully only by God in its totality, but what we have here is something that men could take account of, that he did no sin.

J.D.G. That helps. "In him sin is not", was really on the principle of revelation, in John's epistle: it would be something that was revealed to John. That would be right would it?

G.A.B. That is right; it is revealed by God Himself, it is God who has that assessment of what was there in Christ in its absolute perfection.

J.D.G. I suppose in John we come into the understanding of the uniqueness of His humanity, which the Spirit of God would reveal to him.

T.C.M. There are so many spheres where persons could take account of this - when reviled, when suffering - but then there are the years of obscurity which they would draw from Mary.

J.D.G. Do you mean from Mary's knowledge of it?

T.C.M. I was thinking that in the upper room in the Acts, these men had their own experience of the thing, but they must have picked up and learned from others who were in close proximity to Christ.

J.D.G. I suppose Mary could disclose something of those years of obscurity. She would not be in the whole secret of what the Father's pleasure in Christ was, but she must have disclosed something with her contact and proximity to the Lord in those silent years. Then He comes on to the view of humanity in His ministry, and all His contacts with men, all He had to bear, the reproach, the shame and the resistance of men, and yet He did no sin.

T.C.M. The range of personnel that witnessed to that too - Pilate, the centurion. There was a tremendous range of humanity that witnessed to this.

J.D.G. That is good. Pilate knew that it was for envy that they delivered Him up; he could not convict Him of sin. The Lord says

"which of you convinces me of sin" (John 8: 40). And the centurion says "Truly this man was Son of God" (Matt 27: 54).

E.W.J. I think three times over Pilate says, I find no fault in Him whatever.

J.D.G. The last verse brings us back to a safe keeping "For ye were going astray as sheep, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls". I understand that it refers back to the last verse of Psalm 119, showing that if the Psalmist is going to be kept he has to be kept in relation to the shepherd and overseer of his soul. He had written a long Psalm, a good Psalm, but to be kept in the gain of it, he has to come back to the shepherd and overseer of his soul.

J.M. When the Lord says "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me", everybody is meant to hear it.

J.D.G. There is no doubt that Peter came into the gain of it, and also of what he says here, "he bore our sins". That is Peter's sins 'bore my sins', Peter would say, 'in his body on the tree'. We trust all here this afternoon can say that. Not everybody can say that but we trust that all can say it here this afternoon, and it is in mind that everybody should be able to say it "bore my sins in his body on the tree". If we know Him as our Saviour, we want to return to the shepherd and overseer of our souls; only then can we follow in His footsteps.

EDINBURGH

15 June 1997

Key to initials

(local unless indicated)

G.Bailey; D.C.Brown; G.A.Brown; J.T.Brown; A.Buchan (Peterhead); J.D.Gray; W.M.Grosse; I Henderson (Cumnock); E.W.Johnston;

E.J.Judd; J.Marshall; T.C.Munro (Grangemouth); R.S.Renton;
D.Scougal; D.Scougal Jnr; R.Trotter

THINGS WHICH ABIDE

Alex A. Brown

1 Corinthians 13: 13; Hebrews 11: 1; 12: 1-3; 1 John 3: 2-3; 14-16; 2 Peter 1: 3-4

I would like to say something, with the Lord's help, about things which abide. We read that certain things abide, "And now abide faith, hope, love". These things will abide right up to the rapture, and I would like to ask myself and everyone here the question, how far am I abiding in these things? It says, "these three things; and the greater of these is love". Faith and hope will cease and love will abide. In this time period, faith and hope would be the distinct portion of the believer in view of the testimony and of endurance.

But, "the greater of these is love" might mean that love does not cease. Love is something which is known now, and yet which will never cease, which will go into eternity which is greater in that sense, being formed through the exercise of faith and hope. These exercises are formative as they are worked out in affection, but I believe that all three go together. They cannot be separated. If they are separated there may be a deficiency, but they are all to abide.

I read in Hebrews because there are certain Old Testament persons who are marked out by the strength of their faith. We can read in detail of the different experiences of these different persons, and what they did through faith in God. It would be one of the links we would have with the patriarchs. Abraham was the father of those who believe, one to whom righteousness was counted as believing.

What a place faith has in Christianity, and not only in Christianity but in these other families too. Faith will go through this time scene.

Well, what about your faith? What about mine? God has given us faith, it is His sovereign gift. The question would be whether it is active with each one of us. The disciples asked the Lord to increase their faith. He says, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed", one of the smallest seeds. It is not a matter exactly of the amount of faith, but the exercise of it. That, of course, would be by the Spirit,

not by man's will or determination of mind, but by the Spirit, and, as we know, the Spirit operates within that very realm of faith in the believer.

Now, another question would arise about the glory of this present dispensation which is in faith. It is spoken of as "God's dispensation, which is in faith" (1 Tim 1: 4). What line are we on? If we are pursuing faith, we are furthering God's dispensation which is in faith. This period of time is marked by faith; it is a time when things are not seen. The things that are seen are for a time; the things that are not seen are eternal. This is the distinctiveness of the dispensation in which we are. So we would be encouraged by considering these persons referred to in the great faith chapter. It is a chapter I like reading periodically, and the children should take a great interest in the history of these personalities. They were great personalities, but not of the world, for they eclipsed the world.

Abraham was superior to the world and its system. He would not take anything from a thread to a shoe-latchet from the king of Sodom. The superiority of the believer in faith to the world and its system is to be known by us. So the cloud of witnesses are for our encouragement. The truth is exemplified in such persons. The Lord could say of the woman, "Seest thou this woman? " (Luke 7: 44).

Something was manifested in her; the truth was demonstrated in her. The Lord did not outline the doctrine exactly, but He said, 'Simon, seest thou this woman?' So we can say, 'Seest thou these elders through whom witness was obtained. Take account of them, this cloud of witnesses'. "Let us also therefore, having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us". They are not only in Hebrews 11. I am sure you can think, no matter how young you are, of persons who represent to you something of this, of the truth which has been brought out in this city where we are. How thankful we are for those who have gone before. So this cloud of witnesses comes right down to our own day. There are still witnesses to this great matter of faith. We can look back on older brethren in this city with affection, how they watched over those who were younger. We can regard their example, and the path of faith and piety that marked

them; there was no surrender to the world or its system. These are real things, beloved brethren. This is not a matter of any sentimental consideration, but the truth has been exemplified in persons, and will continue to be so as faith is maintained. I would like to be numbered among them, and I am sure every one here would be too, among the "great cloud of witnesses".

So I would exhort everyone, including myself, to lay aside every weight which so easily entangles us. It may be that the weight that holds you down is different to the weight that holds me down. It may not in itself be anything sinful, it may be legitimate. I believe that, in the world through which we have to pass nowadays, it is very easy, almost unconsciously, to become weighed down. It may even be responsibilities which we take on that weigh us down. It may be business, it may be in the home, it may be one thing or another, but it can become a weight. Faith enables the believer to lay aside the weight. He might not be able to remove it, but he is enabled to lay it aside. Oh, the weight that is on this poor world! the excitement of mind mingled with despair in the world's system! They try to pass it off with humour and the like, but what depression there is in the hearts and minds of men. Now, the believer is not to be weighed down; he has got to lay the weight aside and he is enabled to do this by faith, and the result is endurance.

I believe, beloved, that faith enables us to endure. Moses saw "him who is invisible". Think of the history of Moses, a man who became great. He did not give up the world because the world had no place to offer him. Rather, the world of Egypt had a great place to offer Moses in the administration of Egypt, but there came a time when he gave it all up. Why? He chose "rather to suffer affliction along with the people of God than to have the temporary pleasure of sin". So he deliberately made a choice, and he did it in faith; he laid aside the weight, he refused the world, and he chose to suffer affliction along with the people of God. Faith enables you to do that. I would appeal to the young people because it may be when you are at school, that certain things appeal. They may not be sinful in themselves, but particular men and their systems of thought may

have a certain appeal. Moses, I suppose, was brought up in the court of Pharaoh and would have the finest education that Egypt could give him, but a time came when he said that he would suffer affliction along with the people of God. It has been said that we get enough education to make our way through, and that is so, beloved brethren. I believe that Moses represents one who came to a judgment of the world, to suffer along with the people of God. What a decision! Faith enabled him to take it.

So these weights have to be laid aside, and we have to "run with endurance the race that lies before us". Moses was forty years in the desert, all by himself, tending the flock. He learned endurance. He went through in faith. And so we have to run this race and look to the One who is the Leader and Completer of faith.

"Looking stedfastly on Jesus" - the idea is that you must take your eye off everything here and have it fixed on the Man in the glory. It is deliberate. Christ then becomes the absorbing Object of the soul. And what an advantage the believer has in this dispensation, because we have the One who "endured the cross, having despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God".

Oh, what power is there, what resource is there in Jesus. We feel weak, and it is right that we should feel weak, but all our strength is in Him, the One who is at the right hand of the throne of God. And we have to consider Him well, attentively, "who endured so great contradiction from sinners against himself, that ye be not weary, fainting in your minds". It is a thing we may be prone to. It is all right for the body to be weary, but beware lest we be weary in our minds.

It would call for fresh committal according to Romans 12, "transformed by the renewing of your mind". I would make an appeal now, especially to those carrying responsibility to some degree, young persons leaving school and starting work. Fresh responsibilities are taken up, but you have to be careful that you do not become weary in your mind as to the Lord's things. So you need to read the Scriptures and the ministry, and pray about them; pray more and then read more. The infallibility and authority of the Scriptures and the authority of the ministry are not to be let go,

because they are distinctive and altogether different from man's world. So we should be careful not to be fainting in our minds. What is the answer? Active faith, faith which abides. Am I abiding in faith? Am I abiding in the Lord, having the Lord before me? I have to see that faith is active in me, and you have to see that it is active in you.

Now faith is one living, basic and fundamental truth in the Christian's experience, but what of hope? I read in 1 John because this too is a living thing. It says, "what we shall be has not yet been manifested; we know that if it is manifested we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is". What is the hope of the Christian? Oh, the hope of the Christian is to be with the Saviour, to be with the Lord Jesus. Mr Darby has a pamphlet on the hope of the Church. What a hope the Church has! That blessed One, its Head, is the One who is going to appear in glory, to take the assembly to Himself all glorious, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing. What a hope! Oh, think of this, in a world which is marked by hopelessness. Man have no hope. The more you come in contact with men the more you realise how hopeless they are; you see the despair that marks them if they are honest. But the Christian, one of the things that abides is hope.

What about your hope? Is it burning as brightly as the night you were converted? We used to be asked these questions by the older brethren in the early days. Do you recall when the first shining of that light was in your soul, when the Lord meant everything to you? What a hope it was! Now, this hope deepens in those who are older, to be like Him, "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is".

Bereavement comes in. How much transpires in the history of localities, but there are those who are maintained in this way through hope, to see Him as He is! And the hope of the Church is not exactly the event but the Person Himself. How sweet that is, how precious it is.

So hope is intended to have a present effect on us. It is not hope as men speak of it, something that all lies in the future, a hope that everything will work out all right in the end. That is not hope, that is fatalism. The hope of the believer has a present moral influence on his life. "And every one that has this hope in him

purifies himself, even as he is pure". This hope has a present moral effect. What does the world mean, its blandishments, when compared with this? "Your charms are spread in vain", There are those who have gone before who have known something of this burning in their hearts, and it brings about a present effect in purification. Oh, we want to be kept from the corruption that is in the world. It is all around us as we go out, but this living hope has a purifying effect. It is not a dead thing, it is not exactly a tenet of doctrine or anything of that kind, it is a living hope, which lives and turns in the heart of the believer.

Now, we come to love. John speaks of hope, and also of love. "The greater of these is love". We think of all that has come about in the world in these latter days through sin; even the matter of natural affection has been cast off. "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren". So the practical demonstration of love becomes a proof to the believer. Do you want to know that you have passed from death to life? You may say, 'How would I know? Passed from death to life - it sounds a bit complex. But I can ask a young believer, a child, do you love the brethren? It is as simple as that. If you love the brethren, you have passed from death to life. We love because we have been first loved. Who gives you that love for the brethren? It is God who gives you that love for the brethren, God operating in your soul God operating in my soul.

That is what enables us to love one another in this way and to go on. It has been said that the brother in Australia is no test to us, but we can love the brethren in our own place, and go on together.

What is the bond? What is it that produces that? Faith? Yes, it would be because you all walk in faith. Hope? Yes, although hope might be burning more brightly, perhaps, in some than in others. But love is operating *horizontally*. Because we have been first loved, love finds expression in love for the brethren. And there is something even greater, because Peter says "to brotherly love add love". That is greater still. That love is something which will go on into eternity.

"Hereby we have known love, because *he*", that is the Lord Jesus "has laid down his life for us; and we ought for the brethren to lay

down our lives". That is the test, to lay down our lives for the brethren.

So love is greater, it is greater than faith and hope, this kind of love, which Peter speaks of as involving our being "partakers of the divine nature". I believe localities go through where the truth is cherished and where nothing is allowed in of the world; we are enabled to lay down our lives for the brethren. This is not a sentimental, emotional idea, laying down our lives for the brethren. It may mean being faithful with one another. Love would enable us to be faithful with one another. As partakers of the divine nature we are enabled to do that. We have known persons who, thinking that they were making way for one another in love, were diluting the truth; it was not love, it was sentiment. I believe that this kind of love is the basis for the truth going through in persons. So Peter is writing to the dispersion, at a time when those he was writing to were under pressure. He says that, "his divine power has given to us all things which relate to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us by glory and virtue, through which he has given to us the greatest and precious promises, that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature," - which is love - "having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust". May it find a place in every one of our hearts so there may be a greater answer to Him, for His Name's sake.

Edinburgh

1 January 1987 (*Our beloved brother is now laid aside*)

THE NEW AND LIVING WAY

G.Allan Brown

Hebrews 10: 19-22

Can I approach this holy place,
My offering in hand,
My sins upon me heavy laid
Before the priest to stand?

Tremblingly I lay my hand
Upon the offering's head -
Will this, Jehovah's justice true
Accept, in my poor stead?

Yes! Yes! that offering, flawless, pure,
Perfect in every way
Ensures acceptance fixed for me
However I may stray.

'Tis Christ I plead; I have nought else
To offer, He alone
Must be my plea; His precious blood
Has virtue to atone.

In Him I trust, 'tis in His worth
Boldly I now draw near,
Count on a love more strong than death
Which casts out every fear.

* * * * *

Can such as I now enter in?
(Oh miracle of grace!)
Behold the candlestick whose light
Illumes this holy place?

Can even I look on the loaves
Upon the table laid,
See there God's people, work divine
Which His own hand hath made?

No earthly light can penetrate

This holy, tranquil sphere;
From the pure candlestick alone
Is shed its lustre clear.

God's people there in type I see
Without one fault or taint;
Each of Christ's travail, precious fruit,
Each one declared a saint!

Perfect each one! Perfect the work
That suits us for this place -
See Dan and Judah equal shine,
Products of equal grace!

* * * * *

Within the Holiest of all
The ark of God is found;
Acacia wood and purest gold
Its covering around.

It speaks to me of Christ, blest Man
In Whom perfection shines -
Divine perfection! Centre He
Of all God's great designs.

God's righteousness with glory bright
Irradiates this sphere -
His glory is the only light
That shines so brightly here.

Wonder of wonders, can it be
That I can enter in?
Behold such glory in this place
Where never entered sin?

Yes! precious blood has made the way

Living and new for me.
I know a joy beyond all bound
And will eternally!

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