

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

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Contents

STRENGTHENING

RESULTS INWARDLY

STRENGTHENING

Psalm 84: 5-7; Nehemiah 8: 1, 8-12; Luke 9: 28-36

J.McK. We feel very much the need for a divine strengthening at this time. I thought we could get comfort from these passages to see how it is that God strengthens: not simply that He does it, and blessed be His Name, we have seen the evidence of that today, but I wondered if we could see how He does it as considering these passages. “Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee”, not exactly the man whose strength is *from* thee, although that is always true, because we are creatures and our very breath is in His hand; but “whose strength is in thee” is a suggestion of relationship, of understanding and communion and enlarged knowledge. If anything is to come from the sorrowful exercises amongst us just now it is an enlargement in the knowledge of God, that we should know the God who has secured us for Himself and who has us on an immutable and unchanging basis for Himself. Our strength is not only to be *from* God, our strength is to be *in* Him. That means that nothing that comes against the believer can overpower him. If we have faith in the supremacy of God, then the position we are in, in spite of the sorrows, is victorious. The Psalmist is going through difficulty - “Passing through the valley of Baca, they make it a well-spring” - but I think the secret of his superiority is at the end of verse 5, “in whose heart are the highways”. There is the public side of testing, and that as to our position in the testimony is inescapable, but there is something in the heart of this man that is the secret of the way out, in his heart is the highway. It leads to Zion, as the Psalm shows.

I thought we could enquire about that beautiful expression in Nehemiah, “the joy of Jehovah is your strength”, not simply His power, not simply His ability to deliver, but “the joy of Jehovah”. I think there is a secret, if we can get help about this, in the heart of the believer and the direction of his affections that leads him right out of the scene of sorrow and finally brings him into an environment of unmixed joy in relation to God Himself.

That was the experience of the disciples on the mountain top. They entered the cloud and it was from the cloud that the voice came. The voice was not simply a statement of truth, but it was a declaration of divine joy, the Father's heart declaring itself as to the joy He found in the Person of the Lord Jesus in manhood. I wondered if the Lord might help in these things.

C.K.R. The immediate thought in verse 5 is "Blessed is the man". That would be an inward thing as well that would grow and increase but there is a side of divine pleasure in that for the man concerned.

J.McK. What a relief it is to have a resource that is unseen by the world! Mr Darby spoke of the enigma of the Christian. Publicly the believer is in obscurity, as to earthly inheritance he has none, he awaits a heavenly one, but there is something in his heart that is greater than the entire scene around and it is connected with his knowledge of God in His own supremacy. Our need is to be enlarged in our knowledge of God.

R.J.C. This Psalm is 'Of the sons of Korah'. I wondered whether as we appreciate mercy we are in direct relationship with God.

J.McK. We have all come that way. What our histories have been, God knows, the patience that has been proved, the unfailing grace. We sang:

Lord Jesus source of every grace (Hymn 114)

Every true believer, every true heart here is a witness to that grace. You have never been in a circumstance where the grace of Christ is not sufficient. Paul proved it and we have proved it too. A Psalm is the result of experience. The reality of exercise, feeling and affection that has been witnessed in this room today is a tribute to the quality of God's work in His people. There is immense encouragement in this.

N.J.H. Does the knowledge of God flow out from our experience with God?

J.McK. I think communion with God is the way that confidence in Him is increased. I would say simply to the brethren that I feel some lack in that respect. Communion with God is not just to know about Him, not simply to be well informed as to the scriptures and what He may have said in His word or through divinely given ministry, but to know Him. I think that the experience of being close to Him is what increases our confidence in Himself.

N.J.H. It says of David that he, “strengthened himself in Jehovah his God”, that was in the midst of a very testing experience.

J.McK. He strengthened himself. But it is interesting to note that although he strengthened himself, and to David is attributed the exercise that underlay that, it never reduced the spirit of dependence. It says immediately afterwards, “he enquired of Jehovah”. Divine strengthening never reduces our dependence upon God.

R.J.C. It says of David that he sat before Jehovah. Would that be in view of hearing God’s mind and also communion with God? I wonder whether we have to be patient in our own histories so that we arrive at something through experience. Sitting before Jehovah would give us some sense of the restfulness of him there and his confidence in God.

J.McK. What is described in verse 5 is not an active matter, “the man whose strength is in thee, - they, in whose heart are the highways”. As we go through pressure there is something in the secret affections of the true believer that is unassailable. It relates to another world. It is a world, as it says in Job, “which the vultures eye hath not seen”; there is something that is mysterious in the way of resource, and it does not necessarily involve activity. Some of us are always ready to be doing things - it is in our nature - but there is a great benefit in what you describe as sitting before Jehovah.

R.T. Moses, in Psalm 90 says, “from eternity to eternity thou art God”, and he says, “thou hast been our dwelling place from all generations”.

J.McK. Moses is a good example of this. What is said about him is that he persevered, “seeing him who is invisible”. That is a very interesting scripture, not *was* invisible, but *is* invisible. We were reminded today of what is absolute in the word, and we should carry that. There is something in God that is far, far beyond our ken, not exactly what He has come into in the way of relationships in the economy, but the greatness and supremacy of God Himself and this in the heart of a man is strength.

W.L. The Psalms begin this way, “Blessed is the man” (Ps 1: 1), a man who could take up a certain public position, and then immediately what is inward, “his delight is in Jehovah’s law, and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (v 2). That man is fruitful.

J.McK. We need to be reminded of that because there is what is external and there is what is inward. What we need most help about is what is inward and that it will affect what is seen in us. I was looking, before the meeting, at Psalm 125; it says, “They that confide in Jehovah are as mount Zion, which cannot be moved” (v 1). Think of a mean mortal man being described in such a way; weak but he cannot be moved. All the floods of human experience and sorrow that come into our lives need this kind of stability and it results from the perception in the heart of the unchanging and abiding supremacy of the God of the universe.

C.K.R. Say a bit more in that connection as to faith. I was thinking of Abraham, he was strengthened in faith. It says, “inwardly strengthened by faith” (Rom 4). I was wondering whether it would help us as to the importance of a personal faith in these things and in divine Persons.

J.McK. We were reminded recently of Abraham that he found strength in faith; he did not reason naturally; had he done so the proposal that God made would not have been appropriated, but he found strength in faith. I think we need this and we need also the enlarging of our affections in relation to things that are outside this scene of pressure. The Lord through these experiences is weaning us away from what is earthly.

N.J.H. "In whose heart are the highways": is that set out when the Lord says to Paul, or Saul, of Tarsus, "both of what thou hast seen and of what I shall appear to thee in"? Is that the highways of the heart?

J.McK. Saul's affection was being drawn out by the way that the Lord appeared to him. I think what is in the heart is what is to lead us in the direction of what is pleasing to God. This passage goes on to say, they go from strength to strength, "each one will appear before God in Zion". I think the result of the direction of the heart is that the person begins to move in relation to what is pleasing to God and what answers, not simply to man's needs, but to God's desires. As to Zion, Psalm 132 says, "here will I dwell, for I have desired it" (v 14). When the heart of a man rises and moves in relation to what God desires, he is on a line that can rightly be described as a highway.

J.D.G. Paul says, "I have strength for all things in him who gives me power". That came out in the prison.

J.McK. He was entirely superior; he was a testimony to the indestructibility of Christianity. He had something in his soul that linked him with God and he saw that what he was committed to was going right through, in spite of prison conditions.

G.C.McK. It says in verse 6, "Passing through the valley of Baca, they make it a well-spring". Is that like the prison; they have such strength that they can do it?

J.McK. What a tribute that is to the character of God's work in the soul. It is somewhat like God Himself; what God has done in Jesus is to turn the greatest disaster in the history of time to account. What happened at Calvary was that public defeat was turned into wonderful victory, and God did it. What God has done in permitting the challenge of evil in the universe is to make way, as another has said, for greater good. Now, think of that related to the experience of a believer. As he comes into circumstances of pressure, you may say, How will he get through, and in result He turns it into a well-spring. Let us be encouraged, dear brethren that God can turn to

account the circumstances of sorrow that prevail amongst us currently. Only He can do it: let us be assured that He will do it, and He will do it for His glory.

J.C.G. God was really near to Paul and Silas in the prison. I was thinking of Psalm 46, which bears on the presence of God, "God is our refuge and strength, a help in distresses, very readily found" (v 1). The idea of being very readily found brings in the nearness of God in special circumstances.

J.McK. That helps us. It reminds us of the word earlier today that the Lord is near. He is not at a distance, but He is near. The distinctive character of the nation of Israel, according to another Psalm, was that they were near to Jehovah. The word is. "A people near unto Jehovah", Ps 148: 14. That is our point of commencement in relation to the whole realm that is for God's pleasure. But the background of sorrow here is very, very real and it is being passed through. It is, however, a short journey. We sang of that 'little while' - thank God for that - but as we pass through God would give us in our affections something that would lead us in our spirits to what is in another scene.

R.J.C. "Yea, the early rain covereth it with blessings". Is that to keep things fresh in our experience that we do not wane: we are maintained in living joy in relation to divine Persons?

J.McK. The source of that is heaven; the rain is what descends from heaven. God has nothing else in His mind but that His people should be refreshed and strengthened. It says as to the inheritance "when it was weary, Thou strengthenedst it", Ps 68: 9. I think there is some touch of that today in our experience that God is strengthening His inheritance in the saints.

W.L. Men are doing tremendous things today, holding people in awe even, but do you think the greatest thing that is happening today is what God Himself is doing in human hearts?

J.McK. It is so. It must be, and the fact is that God wants to release us from pressure in view of the participation in His own joy. That is Nehemiah 8, "the joy of Jehovah is your strength". I would

like to ask what we know about this? The comfort that God can pour into our circumstances is infinite; we can trust Him for it and it will continue. What will there be in the way of response on our side to participate in divine joy?

R.G. Is that what Paul is bringing the saints in Philippi into when he says “but my God shall abundantly supply all your need”?

J.McK. The heart that is consciously fully provided for is ready to bless. The tendency is always that we enjoy the blessings and do not get back to the God who is the source. I am concerned that we should get back more to the God who gives things, and begin to participate in what gives Him joy. That is far greater than receiving blessing at His hand.

R.T. Practically is it very much bound up with our links with the Spirit and the liberty He has to lead us and strengthen us in these things?

J.McK. He is a source of inward power.

R.T. The Lord in leading the disciples, spoke much about the Spirit as the Comforter, “and in that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you”, John 14: 20. There is a living link with what is eternal and what is foundational in the liberty we have with the Spirit, or He has with us.

J.McK. So the Lord says, “it is profitable for you that I go away”, He says also, “sorrow has filled will fill your heart”, John 16: 6. How real that was! They companied with Him - how precious those days must have been to the disciples! But He says, it is profitable for you because greater things are in mind, and the greater things are what I think should engage our affections as we consider the reference in Nehemiah 8. The people had come a long way; these are days of recovery, and we have come a long way. Dear brethren, let us remember the way that God has brought us and the way that He has brought us together. The book begins with the exercise of a man who had in his heart the city of Jerusalem: he co-ordinated the people so that the work proceeded and the wall was built and

something was secured for God. All these things can be related to our experiences in recent history in the testimony.

J.T.B. Is it significant that it is the seventh month?

J.McK. Tell us why.

J.T.B. It is the climax of the agriculture year. It links with the feast of booths in Leviticus 23.

J.McK. It does and that is helpful because things are thus measured by growth.

J.T.B. The reference in James to the early and the latter rain says, "the labourer awaits the precious fruit of the earth, having patience for it" (chap 5: 7). Would that involve what you are saying, experience with God that there might be the climax in fruit for our and God's enjoyment.

J.McK. It is interesting that in Genesis what God says to Noah is that "seed time and harvest ... shall not cease", Gen 8: 22. That is the agricultural year and involves growth. I think what we are in the presence of today is something that has grown up among the saints: something has matured. In the seventh month "the people gathered together as one man to the open place that was before the water-gate". They were not asked to come, they were not commanded to come: this was the result of desire on the part of the people. I think it is due to the Spirit that we pay tribute to the quality of the work of God in the saints that desires what is of Him, and I think that is current amongst us today.

J.Sp. Would the open place before the water-gate be a reference to how the Lord has led to the great truth of the Spirit coming in and the liberty of the Spirit? That is all necessary for our growth, is it not?

J.McK. It is an interesting touch, so that there is room for it. The word in Genesis 24 was "there is also room to lodge" (v 25). The open place would mean that there is plenty of scope for what is coming in from the divine side that will refresh and build up what is of Himself in the saints. It is a good place to gather. I think it is a

tribute to what God has done that we saw the saints gathered as we did today. Let us be together in the acknowledgement of what God has done amongst His people and let it encourage us. Let our hearts be expanded in affection for those upon whom God has expended so much. God knows how to soften us. He reaches deep into the experiences of the saints in view of softened affections and in doing so He makes us pliable and more subject under His hand. If that is the great result of these experiences, let us thank God for it.

C.K.R. Would you say more on “the joy of Jehovah is your strength”? There must be a touch of victory in that.

J.McK. That is the word, “Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared” - there is an abundance here - “for the day is holy to our Lord; and be not grieved, for the joy of Jehovah is your strength”. That is that participation in what is pleasing to God is resulting in the building up of a constitution among the saints, “your strength”. Is it not so that our participation in what is for His joy is greater than simply enjoying our own blessings?

C.K.R. God getting His inheritance must be our aim and object particularly in the service of God.

J.McK. The joy of thy Lord is referred to in an interesting reference in Matthew. In the parable in Matthew 25 there were those who had been entrusted with what was the master’s property. They had gone out and had traded, and as they returned there was increase. That was good. But what the master says is very interesting. His word is, “enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (v 23). You might say the immediate application of that scripture is still future, and it is, but shall we defer it until then? Is there not something more than service, even effective and resultful service? There is the entrance into the joy of thy Lord. That is not simply to acknowledge Him as Lord, bow at His feet and enjoy the blessings He confers. I think it is more than that, I think it involves being drawn into the communion of His own heart, to begin to enjoy the things

that He enjoys. This is the proper of portion of those who know assembly experience.

Ques. Is this the filling out of “who for the joy that was lying before him endured the cross, despising the shame”?

J.McK. He knew public shame and defeat; who knew sorrow like Jesus did? Yet the joy was before Him. That joy was in His heart even in the circumstances of sorrow through which He passed.

Rem. I was wondering if the fact that He was enduring pressure like no other has ever endured involves that those that now endure pressure, but have the Spirit, bring forth that in their souls that the Lord has joy in, “who for the joy that was lying before him”.

J.McK. I think so, even as Christ had joy in the Father. It was at the time in Matthew when all the nations turned against Him, when there was little fruit from His service. At that moment Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven and rejoiced. He said to the Father as rejoicing in spirit, “Thou hast hid these things from wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes, for thus it has been well pleasing in thy sight”. Thus there was the public suffering and the inward outflow of joy in relation to the Father.

A.McK. Would Job set it out, he said, “the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away”, but he said, “blessed be the name of the Lord”.

J.McK. He was entirely superior and yet feeling. What we are saying would not make us unfeeling, but it would make us superior in the sense of knowing something that is beyond this scene of pressure, uncertainty, and struggle.

A.McK. I am quite sure. It is a great thing to get over to God’s side. We have been taken up for His service, that is the main thing.

J.McK. “The joy of Jehovah is your strength”, is something I have found most attractive to my heart and I would just like to enlarge the interest of the brethren in it. When the Lord Jesus was here He said to the disciples, “if ye loved me ye would rejoice that I go to the Father”. That meant that He was going to leave them, but

is it not a tribute to the quality of the work of God in them that He said, “if ye loved me ye would rejoice”? The Lord was going Himself into the place where His joy would be fulfilled. Psalm 16, “thy countenance is fulness of joy” (v 11). That is what Jesus knew, that is what He was anticipating, that was part at least of the joy that was set before Him. He says to the disciples, if ye loved me, you would rejoice in that. Surely they were being drawn into what constituted His joy.

C.K.R. He is drawing them all the time through these chapters and in John’s gospel generally. It is all in view of what is for His own pleasure and another realm altogether.

T.C.M. Could you say something as to the thought of understanding coming into what it says as to the reading and giving the sense, not just a cold reading of the law, but understanding coming in in regard to it.

J.McK. That might link with what has been said as to the Spirit in our experience. These persons did not have the Spirit, but there was a concern evidently with Ezra that they should understand, that they should not simply submit.

W.M.P. Ephesians 1 refers to “the spirit of revelation in the full knowledge of Him”, and goes on as we know in that section to the fact that Christ has been raised from among the dead and set down at His right hand and then the assembly is brought in. Is that your thought that really entering into the joy of the Lord must involve what is for His heart in the assembly?

J.McK. My thought is that the highway being in a man’s affections leads him in the direction of what is pleasing to God. The idea of understanding is very necessary for this because God has created men with affections, men with feelings and if He draws them aside from the whole current of the world and its affairs, He is leading them into an area where they are to be impressionable, and receptive to another order of things. Is this not delivering? The fact that there is a measure of understanding with us means that in some

sense we become intelligent as to the things in which God Himself rejoices.

G.C.McK. Does the heart relate not only to affections, but in some sense to understanding? “The eyes of our heart” – we speak about it and it does mean affection, but I think it involves inwardness of understanding, appreciation of divine things too.

J.McK. The capacity to discern positively. We often limit discernment to the discrimination between good and evil, and of course it is needed there, but discernment in regard to what is positive and pleasing to God is something that the Spirit of God would help us in, to become connoisseurs of spiritual things is to know affections and relationships that nothing in this world can intrude on. I think it is tremendous that God has brought us in Christianity to such superiority to the whole world system around and our outlet is in relation to what is eternal. These things will not be taken from us.

W.M.G. I was wondering as to the two choirs; they go round the wall. You speak of the service of God and the thought of the strength: they go from strength to strength in that sense and the choirs go round the wall, triumphant.

J.McK. I did not have that in mind, but it is all part of the instruction of the book, that the people had reached a certain point in their experience, and so have we. Let us not underestimate what God has done amongst His people. We have reached this point and the word is “the joy of Jehovah is your strength”.

J.D.G. Would you allow for the fact that “the joy of Jehovah is your strength” must involve what is down here in the saints? Paul found that, I think we have all found that, the joy of Jehovah. The Lord’s joy in the assemblies must bring out that this strength is drawn from this distinctive knowledge of God.

J.McK. So that the privilege and the experience of the Lord’s Day would confirm that. Why does the Lord come to us? It is because the saints are there. What does He lead us into? He leads

us to where there are persons who are able and free to participate in the things that give Him joy.

J.D.G. It enters into another realm beyond the sphere of responsibility altogether. That must be primarily where the joy of Jehovah is known.

J.McK. That would take us on to Luke. This is a well-known passage; the background is not to be forgotten, involving reproach. The Lord was being rejected by men, and He is speaking of those who follow, and He is saying that they need to deny themselves. There is no real Christian testimony apart from some knowledge of reproach publicly. That needs to be accepted by all those who are followers of Jesus. But then what He does in this passage in Luke 9 is to lead them into another sphere altogether. It says, "he went up into a mountain to pray". That is in keeping with the teaching of the gospel that He was the dependent Man, but as He prayed it says, "the fashion of his countenance became different". The same men who had seen Him on the level of the desert now saw Him another place altogether and this moves on to the point where they enter the cloud. It is somewhat like the reference in Matthew, "enter into the joy of thy lord". They actually entered the cloud and it was from the cloud that the voice came. It did not come from a distance, it came from the environment into which they entered and I think, in some sense, these men participate in divine joy and they were all included in it, Peter and James and John.

J.D.G. There is the distinctive joy the Lord has in the assembly. It is resident here, it is on the earth in a sense, but we can find our strength in the joy of the Lord in that area.

C.K.R. Is it suggestive then that Peter brings this into his second epistle against the background perhaps of discouragement and concern amongst the dispersion. He elevates it to such a level as though he had gained personally from it, "When we were with Him on the holy mountain", and "eye-witnesses of his majesty", and "such a voice being uttered", does that show the strength and expansion that would come in as a result.

J.McK. He refers to the excellent glory; he taxes the power of language to describe the greatness of what His experience had been.

T.D.B. Would the cloud speak of the divine presence?

J.McK. It did not darken; it links with the cloud in relation to the tabernacle system, the glory of Jehovah covered it. These persons were brought into the presence of the glory, and this in an elevated place. Moses and Elias had been seen; they have their place, God has used the law and the prophets, but the scripture says they were until John. Their period of effective service was limited and at this point the fact that they are dismissed is significant, their service was over. Jesus remained alone, and He Himself was going down and was going to be crucified. Publicly that is the situation, and yet in the presence of that these men are drawn right into the presence of the Father's voice when He says, "*This* is my beloved Son: hear him". He is not making a recommendation that they should find their joy in Him; what the Father is doing is disclosing His own heart. I think this relates to what we have been saying, "the joy of Jehovah is your strength".

J.Sp. While the great matter of redemption still had to be accomplished, do you think in this God was anticipating final conditions? You referred to the glory filling the tabernacle, in Solomon's time after the ark was brought in, the glory of Jehovah filled the temple.

J.McK. No doubt suggesting final conditions, and they could not be improved on. The Lord brought these men into a condition far above their expectations. It is very interesting that the voice does not come to Moses and Elias. They had spoken with the Lord and their communion with Him needs a lot of pondering - they spoke of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. I think they were drawn very close and the confidence which that implies is not in any sense to be reduced in our minds. But it was to actual men on the earth that the Father's voice came, it was to Peter, James and John. I think that links with what we have been saying

that there is something in the saints that must form part of divine joy. We belong to that sphere.

J.C.G. It says, “having fully awoke up”. Does that enter into this matter of our spiritual sensibilities being exercised? We spoke of our hearts and our inward feelings entering into things: we would really need to be fully awake to understand what the Father is saying in this cloud.

J.McK. I think that is a very good word for us. We need to awaken spiritually. I would say that to my own heart as I would say it to the hearts of the brethren that the privileges of the present time are unmatched in their quality. The Lord’s word here is that there are some of those standing here, “who shall not taste death until they shall have seen the kingdom of God”. There is a hint there that some things are to be experienced now. Let us apply the scripture that way. Let us not in any way allow time to drift past without the reality of the spiritual experiences that this suggests being part of our lives. It is not only that we are to get through the scene of testimony, it is that God is to have something from the hearts of those that He is sustaining above the pressure, something that ministers to His own heart in an active sense.

G.A.B. This is not for public testimony exactly. It says “*they* kept silence, and told no one”. No doubt the testimony would be enriched by this, but in itself it is the secret that the believer enjoys.

J.McK. Can we say simply that it is part of what God’s objective has been? Why has God intervened in blessing, why has He delivered us from the power of the enemy? Why has He provided for us that we should be justified before Him? Why has He proposed sonship to those whom He has brought into blessing? In order that there should be an answer to His own heart. Only the Father could have spoken such words. This is a direct word from the heart of the Father Himself, and it is heard by those who were in this place. I think it is wonderful to realise the height of privilege that God has called us to. Surely other times must diminish in our minds. What is man’s puny activity, what are the things that we spend our energies

on? I challenge my own heart in saying that, but other things begin to be diminished as you see that God is reaching for His own heart in the saints what provides joy to Him, “the joy of Jehovah is your strength”.

R.J.C. Do we get the divine communication in the Father’s appreciation of Christ? Does He intend that we should have an appreciation of Him? It says, “And as the voice was heard Jesus was found alone”. Is that where we find our solace, our communion and in some sense have a sense of the Lord’s joy?

J.McK. All others had been eclipsed. He was about to be rejected by the world, but He was not to be rejected by these men; they had a glimpse of His glory in the presence of the Father and that would hold them in their affections.

W.L. “*This* is my beloved Son: hear him”. Is there is a secret in that?

J.McK. He is the great speaker, His word is final, complete, unchanging. We have been reminded of what is unchanging, let us hold to that, and we are in the presence of what is unchanging in the relation between Christ and the saints and between the Father and the saints, and if God’s joy is to be realised, if what He has had in His mind from the beginning is to be reached, persons need to be available for it. Let us be among them. I would like to attract the brethren today, I think that is my mission, “the joy of Jehovah is your strength”. It is not the measure of your courage, it is not the measure of your understanding of the truth or even of the scriptures, but “the joy of Jehovah”. How close are you? That will be the measure of our strength.

GLASGOW

April 2001

Key to Initials

T.D.Beveridge, Kirkcaldy; G.A.Brown, Edinburgh; J.T.Brown, Edinburgh; R.J.Campbell, Glasgow; R.Gardiner, Kirkcaldy; J.C.Gray, Dundee; J.D.Gray, Edinburgh; W.Gross, Edinburgh; N.J.Henry, Glasgow; W.Lamont, Cumnock; A.McK, Brechin; G.C.McKay, Glasgow; J.McKay, Witney; T.C.Munro, Grangemouth; W.M.Patterson, Glasgow; C.K.Robinson, Glasgow; J.Spinks, Grangemouth; R.Taylor, Kirkaldy;

RESULTS INWARDLY

John McKay

Luke 12: 15; Genesis 16: 6-10, 13,14; 1 Peter 2: 9,10; Acts 26: 12, 13, 19;

1 Corinthians 2: 9,10

We have spoken today a little of what is outward and what is inward. I want to extend that further in these passages but first to refer to the great fact that the Lord Jesus was here as a Man of sorrows. Why should it be that He in whom the full light of God was (for He was God), He in whom the unmixed and full disposition of God towards men was disclosed, why should it be that Jesus was here as a Man of sorrows? What a question that is in Luke 12, "I have a baptism to be baptised with and how am I straitened until it shall have been accomplished!" How was it for Jesus when He was here amongst men? He was rejected, He was misunderstood and in spite of the light that was in His soul as to God's thoughts, not only in compassion for men, but in rich blessing for humanity - in spite of all that He was straitened. We feel it when we are frustrated, when we are prevented in certain things, when we are limited. Let us remind ourselves that He knew limitation in a way that we shall never know it. "I have a baptism to be baptised with" - He was going on to death, the path of Jesus was to end at Calvary, it 'led only to the cross'. He was going out as despised and rejected of men and, as Isaiah says, He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. There has been grief amongst us, we are acquainted in some measure with it, the Lord Jesus knew it fully. Scripture speaks of "the sufferings which belonged to Christ", 1 Peter 1: 11. They were His, they were not another's, the Man whom we love, the Man who was here in complete devotion to the will of His God and Father, He was here sufferingly. I believe one of the things that the Lord is saying to us at the moment is that we are not to settle down in the scene where Christ has been rejected. Is there not a danger that we should settle here? Is there not a danger that we should live in relation to seen things in a disproportionate sense, even though we have the light

that our inheritance is elsewhere? The Lord is seeing to it that we do not settle for less than His thoughts in blessing for us and that involves, not what is earthly, but what is heavenly. So in spite of the fact that the full light of heaven was here in the heart of Jesus – ‘Thy law’ He says, “is within my heart”, Ps 40: 8 - He was here in a pathway of suffering and restriction. “How am I straitened”, that straitening was characteristic of the whole of His life. It was not only at the cross, it was not only at the moment of His final rejection, but there was a straitening known through the whole of His life here. He was misunderstood by the world and the believer in some sense finds himself as a follower of Christ treading in the same steps. Let us then not have expectations of great things in man’s world. We are to be here in the light of what is revealed of God to us. It is most important to know that we have received things from God, but let us be here as treading in the steps of Jesus, He who was ‘the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief’. Our hearts would be drawn out to Him in the circumstances of this present time as the One who knows every sorrow. He felt in His spirit everything that He took away in His power.

I want to come on to Genesis because Hagar is a very interesting person in scripture. What had preceded this in the household of Abram was the introduction of human expediency, a degree of human energy introduced in view of reaching divine objectives, so the background is a mixed one, and we know what that means. We are measured like those persons in Nehemiah 8 when the word of the law was read among them. I suppose we all, if we are honest, are measured by the divine standard as it is brought in amongst us. But there is wonderful grace in this passage, it says, “And the Angel of Jehovah found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur”. I trust that we are all available to be found today. God is not dealing with humanity in the mass. He is working with persons, and if the truth is to rightly affect us it is to have an effect on me personally and on you personally. If in some sense the circumstances of recent days have made us realise that we are having to do with God, let us surrender to it. I am

going to make an appeal today as to how the light of God has found a response in your life, how the way God has made Himself known to you is finding an answer currently, or will find an answer in the days that lie ahead.

So, as the Angel addresses this woman, he says, "Hagar", he knows her name, "Sarai's maidservant", he knows her position. Another has said that the power of rebuke lies in relationship and it is very interesting that this woman is addressed as Sarai's maidservant. That is the relation in which she stood publicly and God knows what relations you stand in publicly and every relationship is to be rightly filled out in persons who stand related to God. Righteousness is a very wonderful thing, it means that we are rightly adjusted in every sphere of life. Business life, social life, life amongst the saints, family life, every relationship is to have its own place in persons who stand related to the God who Himself has brought all these relationships into being. So this question comes to this woman, "whence comest thou? And whither art thou going?" I have been impressed by this because I think God would halt us in our tracks in regard of the whole circumstance of this present time. This question has a penetration all of its own, "whence comest thou?" What is your background? How has God been active towards you? "And whither art thou going?" What is the future? What is the course on which you now are and where is it leading? God has a right to introduce these questions, particularly where He Himself has been active. All here have been in an environment like that. God has acted towards the saints and we are among them. He has acted towards us in abundant blessing, but we are very responsible in view of how we shall now respond to the way that God has made Himself known. The principle of revelation is a divine one. God reveals Himself. This woman comes on to that. She says, "Thou art the God who reveals himself" – it may be that through the sorrowful circumstances of this time God is revealing Himself to someone. That is a very blessed thing. You cannot in any way by human means discover what God's mind is, but it is very blessed when He discloses it to you. The principle of revelation is something

that is very beautiful in scripture and in particular in the Christian dispensation, the principle of what is revealed.

I want to refer to that principle as seen in these passages. Man's world runs on other principles. Man's world runs on the principle of what may be investigated. What may be discovered through investigation can at best be tentative because it is the result of human activity and thus it is limited by human ability. By contrast what is divinely revealed is immutable in its character, is unchanging in its nature and can be fully and totally trusted. Oh that we should realise, dear brethren, that God would reveal Himself to us, even in the testing circumstances of the present time, God would reveal Himself to us in a way that is compelling and a way that would have abiding results.

So this question is very telling, "whence comest thou?", "whither art thou going?" – where is your course leading to? Does it need changing? We are having to do with God, let us fear Him, in whose hand our breath is. Hagar says, "Thou art the God who reveals himself, for she said, Also here have I seen after he has revealed himself". God speaks in His grace, it may be in an occasion like this. What happens after that? This woman was affected. The word was, "Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands", that is get back rightly into the relationship in which you are set. Let us realise that every relationship needs to be rightly adjusted according to God's will to fulfil righteousness. She does that, but sadly gets little further benefit from the God who revealed Himself. Let it be that from this day we make progress in our knowledge of God. In chapter 21 we are told that she comes to another well and she takes a flask, fills it with water, and gives it to her son, but she does not partake of it herself. She never became characterised by the way God disclosed Himself to her. I would appeal today that if God is having to say to us we should surrender and allow Him to operate to secure the results according to His pleasure.

These other scriptures refer to two men, Peter and Paul, whose lives were radically changed by divine revelation. Peter uses

the expression, “wonderful light” - “the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness to his wonderful light”. I wonder if that finds an echo in the heart of every person here, God’s wonderful light. What is of man fades: what is seen, we are told is for a time, what is unseen is eternal. Can I attract you to God’s wonderful light? It involves what is eternal, it involves what reaches you in your present circumstances, but takes you out of them. God has power to do that. I suppose the first touch this man got of light was when his brother came and found him. In the beginning of John’s gospel we are told that his brother Andrew came and found him. What an experience that was, “and he led him to Jesus”. That was the beginning of a brotherly relationship that was not going to deteriorate. These two men, one leading the other into the presence of Jesus. That is the place where relationships are maintained at their true level. He began that way, soon to become attached himself to the Person from whom the light was shining. The Lord had come into the world and according to John’s gospel, “the life was the light of men”. But then there were some who were getting the benefit of it, and Peter was among them. He was soon to be regarded as a man who was attached to Jesus, when asked the question, “Will ye also go away?” he says, “To whom shall we go? Thou hast words of life eternal and we have believed and known that thou art the holy One of God”. Peter became a person who was attached in an irrevocable and complete sense to Jesus. What had been revealed of God in Christ actually possessed him, it took him over completely so that at the end of his life the word was “when thou shalt be old ... another shall gird thee, and bring thee where thou dost not desire. But he said this signifying by what death he should glorify God” (John 21: 18,19). This man became a martyr, he was taken over completely by the light of revelation, not a general thing, but something specific to himself. The Lord said at one point to Peter, “flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in the heavens”. There was something in Peter that came from the Father. We pay tribute today, and I think we should, to the quality of the work of God in the saints, there is something here that came from God. The character of it will take over a person’s life. I

appeal to you to surrender to what is of God in your soul; you will never regret that. Peter was taken over by it fully and following in the steps of his Master he gave his life publicly in the testimony in devotion to the One whom he once denied. He was not perfect, he made some serious mistakes and they are written large in the scripture for our instruction, for our comfort and for our consolation, but this man responded to the light of God. I ask, have we all responded? We are looking for results from the scene of sorrow through which we pass, and it may be in this that persons will respond to the way God has made Himself known to them.

We have also read the words of Paul in Acts 26, “a light above the brightness of the sun”. He says I have never seen anything like it. Paul was a man of great energy. Mr Darby said, God allowed him to use that energy to separate him from what was in Jerusalem so that he got him entirely on his own and then the light from heaven brought him down. What an intervention of grace it was, but what God had in His mind was to secure a vessel, the product of what had been revealed to him. It says in Galatians, “God was pleased to reveal his Son in me”. That means, not only did the light come to Paul, but it was formative, it transformed the vessel, he was an elect vessel to Christ and he was secured totally and completely for God’s testimony. These things are very great. We are in the presence of what God is able to do. The principle of what is revealed continues, the passage in Corinthians confirms it, “Things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard ... but God has revealed to us by his Spirit”. Let us complete the course as those who respond to what is revealed to us. Let us not hold back, but rather go forward in the assurance of divine confirmation as to all that we have been brought into, the whole wealth of Christianity is available to us. Are we spending our energies on things that will fail, or are we committed fully and completely, as these men were? Paul says, “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision”. He had never seen anything like it but he submitted to it, he went along with it, he was obedient to it, there is authority in everything that God discloses. May we prove that that authority is for our blessing. For His Name’s sake.

GLASGOW

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These meetings followed the burial of a young sister who, with a young brother, died in a boating incident.