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ONE NEW MAN AND ONE BODY

Ephesians 2: 11-22; 4: 1-6

D.A.B. I have in mind that we might use this opportunity to enquire together about these two thoughts in chapter 2, the “one new man” and the “one body”. I do not wish to go beyond my measure in speaking of such great things, but I wondered if we might gain something from that enquiry that would strengthen the fellowship in which we are, and give us some greater insight into its nature, value and function.

I did not have in mind in these opening remarks to say very much that would unfold the subjects I have in mind, but I thought it might help in order to bring everyone with us in this enquiry if we might just have a look first at the setting in which these two thoughts come in. The letter we have read from is written as if all its readers were uncircumcised, as if they were all Gentiles. I am not sure that the meeting in Ephesus was all Gentile, because Paul worked in the synagogue in Ephesus as well. The section which we have read draws attention to the distinctions that existed naturally and historically between the Jew and the Gentile. The Jew had a lot of advantages because He was the recipient of God’s covenant which was sealed in circumcision, and He belonged to God’s chosen people on earth. Those privileges were in a sense exclusive: you could become a Jew but never wholly so because you could never trace your genealogy in the way that a Jew could. On the other hand there were the Gentiles who were, as Paul says here, “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise”. We did not belong in that covenant and these privileges are not ours. Those to whom they belong have coined this name for us, ‘the uncircumcised’, which captures in one word their view that we are outside the covenant. God has been pleased to extend the scope of His blessing to all men in the time in which we are. He is not now dealing with nations, but He enjoins all men everywhere to repent (see Acts 17: 30). Alongside that He has unfolded His purpose in a way that He had never done before. That purpose

applies to all men, to Jew and Gentile alike, but there is this division which Paul refers to as a wall. The Jew is jealous of what is on his side of the wall. God could have met that situation simply by extending the blessings of Israel to those of the nations. He could have moved us round to the same side of the wall as they are on.

But, according to Galatians, He could not in doing that extend the covenant to include things that were not part of it. However, God has kept secrets for the present time which relate to His purpose.

These cannot simply be added on to the covenant that was given to Israel. God has met this by knocking the wall down, and He has done that at the cross.

We might speak at first about the cross and about the blood, because they are the foundation of everything that God has brought in in the unfolding of His purpose. The cross spells judgment for the old man whoever he is; whatever his privilege is, whatever his national status, whatever advantage he may think he has (including the Jew and including us too), the cross spells judgment to all that.

God has finished with it. The shedding of blood at the cross means that God is establishing life on a new basis, establishing it in Christ; and because every distinction that belongs to the old man has come under the sentence of death and is therefore gone before God, what remains is not only new, but one. It is "one new man", and it takes its character from Christ. So there is a wonderful unity that is traceable to the cross and to the blood. We ought to consider how far that unity is expressed in our fellowship together: how much is there a unity among us that we can trace to the blood and the cross. Then Paul adds, "and might reconcile both in one body to God", so that we not only all have the same character but are perfectly united together and that for God – not just for us, but for God. I might just add to that that it has been shown to me in ministry that these two thoughts are the cardinal points in Paul's ministry (F E Raven, Vol. 1 p.338). Everything else that we attribute to Paul's ministry can be traced back to these two principles. I read in the beginning of chapter 4 because it is important for us to remember in any enquiry into the truth that it is intended to affect our walk, "I ... exhort you

therefore to walk worth of the calling". Paul reverts to this question of the one body and brings in the power of the one Spirit, so that while things are traceable in their foundation to the cross and the One who suffered there, they are maintained now in living power by the Spirit come from Christ exalted.

D.J.H. I am sure what you say is important as to the basis of our being together in unity. I have often been struck that, whereas it speaks of, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father", verse 4 begins with, "There is one body". I think what you have said helps me to understand that more as to why the body should be put before the Spirit.

D.A.B. I have heard you say that if the Spirit is to be here there has to be a vessel for Him, so the vessel comes first. There is somewhere for the Spirit to dwell, which brings out that these things are intended to be a substantial reality. The Spirit does not dwell in an abstraction. It has struck me that these precious things, the "one new man" and the "one body" are as real as the cross and the blood. I ask myself, where can I find them? Where can I locate them? Where can we experience what belongs there? Where is this fellow citizenship?

D.J.H. That is so, and what you are saying adds to the impression I had before, to which you refer, as to the greatness and glory of the body and the way it has been secured; and therefore the way it should govern us in our walk and ways, but to govern us in worship together.

E.C.B. Is not the original thought of one body and then one Spirit found in Genesis 2: God formed man and then He breathed into him the breath of life, and man became a living soul (v 7)? If the "one new man" and the "one body" are parallel ideas I think it goes right back to God's original thought. What would one body be without becoming a living soul by the Spirit?

D.A.B. You are suggesting that we can see in the creation in which we are naturally how God does things. He makes a vessel and puts His Spirit there? I thought it was interesting that He has formed the

“new man” as well. That is encouraging, in a way, because, although it derives from a work that is complete and finished, the emergence of the features of the new man are progressive. As we can see from God’s work, He has a definite pattern and objective in His mind. We have that later on in Ephesians, “until we all arrive ... at the full-grown man” (4: 13). It is not intended simply to begin in us but it is to come into full expression.

E.C.B. I think we are helped to see that there was more in God’s mind in the first creation than that there should just be man on the earth and the animals and the crops. It was a foreshadowing of what God was going to do. It is very interesting in Ephesians that it refers to “one new man”. That is what God started with, a man. I wondered whether there is not in this presentation in Ephesians 2 the character of a special privilege given to the Gentiles? Paul does not exactly say that the Jews had this, He says, “ye who once were afar off”. I wondered whether that ought to influence us somewhat as Gentiles that we have been the subject of God’s special work.

D.A.B. Especially as we begin with nothing. The Jews call us uncircumcised to convey brutally that we are outside the covenant, and as far as that is concerned they think we have nothing; but they overlook the cross and the blood, and that through that mighty precious work and the One that did it God has now what He never did before. He has gone on with His purpose and He is bringing believers in the gospel into that purpose. He is bringing them into it together, and not only so that we have the light but so that the One upon whom that whole matter centres should come into expression among us.

E.C.B. One thing that the presentation in Ephesians 2 shows, and your reference to the cross and the blood might be a hint to us, is that there is much more to the preaching of the gospel than the forgiveness of sins. That could come out tomorrow afternoon everywhere.

D.A.B. I wish I had the power to bring people to the cross in preaching and perhaps to be there myself more. We speak

necessarily and rightly about the need to judge and put off the features of the old man, but we cling to them because we have not had a clear view of the cross. The sentence of death fell upon everything there and it was executed. God has condemned sin in the flesh and He has condemned the flesh in which that sin is. He is not going on with it any more. It is needful to be exercised by that great truth, but He has done it in order to bring something new into expression. It has found its full expression in Jesus. Now it is to be formed so as to come into expression among believers.

D.J.H. It is “in Christ Jesus”, and that reflects back on His purpose. It is all in that blessed One: “now in Christ Jesus”, reflects back on His purpose; “now in Christ Jesus ye who once were afar off are become nigh by the blood of the Christ”, that is that glorious Man where He is. Everything is established there.

D.A.B. Mr A.J.Gardiner said as to that Name that it would generally be found, but not always, that when Paul uses that Name He has in mind that there should be a moral answer to that Man in the people of God. We can see that clearly here. Perhaps the best example is in Philippians, “For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”, (Phil 2: 5).

D.J.H. So the answer to it is in the “one new man”?

D.A.B. Yes, and there is something unmixed there because all the things that make us naturally different have gone. It does not mean to say that there is not variety, because God loves variety and that variety is important. None of us alone is able to express in fulness what the new man is. There is one new man, but the features of that One are to come into expression among us.

P.J.W. So in Genesis when God said, “Let us make man in our image” (1: 26) it was Christ He had before Him, not Adam?

D.A.B. Yes, Adam was a figure of him that is to come. What you say is very fine. If it was God’s purpose to create man in His image, how wonderful that the cross, and the work that that one Man did, has enabled Him to bring to light the features of that Man in others.

E.C.B. It would be something special to be understood in the reference, “the blood of the Christ”. Is that not to distinguish it from the blood in the tabernacle system? It is a new sort of blood.

D.A.B. The writer in Hebrews says that, “For blood of bulls and goats is incapable of taking away sin”, Heb 10: 4.

E.C.B. Nor could it make a new man.

D.A.B. Exactly, it could not make a new man. It could not bring God’s purpose to pass. God’s purpose comes to pass in another Man altogether. It was necessary that that Man should be the Person He is because it is divine perfection that we see there.

D.E.B. Would you say a little in relation to the word, “in himself”?

D.A.B. I think it shows how much everything is bound up with Him. It is very easy for us to say the old man is judged, and to try again and form something in ourselves. It would very soon become apparent that it was very similar, if not worse, than what God had already judged; but to form it “in himself”, preserves the integrity of what comes to light. It is, as it were, enclosed by that expression so that nothing foreign to God’s thought or alien to the pattern of what has been seen in Christ enters into this formation.

P.M. Is that consequent upon and in contrast to “having annulled the enmity in his flesh”? That was done at the cross, it was in His flesh.

It makes it very personal that what had to be removed of man was removed and annulled in “his flesh”; but when you come to the new man it is established “in himself” as a glorious and living Man where He is.

D.A.B. I am very anxious that, while we should not claim more than we have, we should not dismiss these things as abstractions. The cross is not a place for abstractions; “who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree” (1 Peter 2: 24). This reference you make to “having annulled the enmity”, is not just some abstraction. I was speaking to a man once who did not like the idea of a ‘transaction’ at the cross; he said it made the whole thing sound rather abstract. It was “annulled ... in his flesh”. It is very real.

P.M. And it would deepen with us as we come to appreciate the One who has done it: it would deepen with us the cost at which it was met in His flesh.

D.A.B. And alive on the cross, and feeling what He was doing with an intensity that only a divine Person could bring to the matter.

D.J.W. Does this expression “in himself”, have in mind the second man the first man is out of the earth, but the second man is out of heaven.

D.A.B. You are linking the second man with the new man? I think that reference to the second man is to show to us that the first man is finished with altogether. Jesus is out of heaven. It shows the character of the new man, it takes character from Christ, but where He is. Although it is worked out on the earth and is seen here, there is something here that is worked out by the Spirit that belongs to heaven and has a heavenly character.

D.J.W. I was trying to put in its setting what has been said as to what we get in Genesis. But God has begun again in the second man, a man of a different order altogether, the heavenly man. There will be no third man, there will be no need for it.

D.A.B. That is conveyed in the idea of the last Adam. That is where God finds finality and it is a very precious thought that this formation that is referred to here stands related to what is in God’s purpose.

A.K.T. It has been said that the new man is collective.

D.A.B. There is only one, there are not myriads of new men, so in that sense it has to be collective. The beauty and glory of what is seen in Christ is too much to reproduce in its fulness in any other individual; but in all His people together there is a wonderful unity that consists in their conformity to Him. I think that is a very blessed idea. It comes out in Philippians, “each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves” (ch 2: 3). We see features of the new man in others that perhaps we are not allowed, or the Spirit has not chosen, to develop so much in us.

A.K.T. I think what has been said as to the character being Christ would help. If the old is gone it must be that Christ is expressed in all that have come to that.

D.A.B. If we speak of the old, we speak of Adam, but the old has spawned a tremendous diversity, Jews, Greeks, bondman, freeman, Sithian, barbarian, and all these things. There are racial and ethnic differences that people agonise about now. All those are features of the old man, but that diversity will never generate from the new man. Variety, yes, but there will not be all those kinds of differences and divergences in the new man, because such is not the nature of Christ Himself. We “set froth the excellencies of him who has called you”, 1 Peter 2: 9.

E.C.B. In regard to what has been said, does it not help again to go back to Adam? In regard to Adam, God did not say let us make a race. He said, “let us make man”. He made one man, but that one man really embraces the whole posterity down to the present day that has come from him.

D.A.B. Paul brings that out in Romans. It is no good saying, I did not do what Adam did and therefore I am not a sinner. We belong to that line. If you want the proof that you belong to that line, then you have only to look at what you do. We have not all sinned in the likeness of Adam’s transgression, but sinned we have, and that proves our derivation from that man. But then, we should be exercised together that there should be equally good proofs of our derivation from the heavenly Man.

D.J.H. I was thinking of the reference in Corinthians, “For as in the Adam all die, thus also in the Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Cor 15: 22); that is “the Adam” includes all as after the first order, but then there is that which has come in “in the Christ”, which is the new man.

D.A.B. The old man corrupts itself (see Eph 4: 22) and one of the consequences of that is that he becomes lawless. The principle of lawlessness is that I have a mind of my own, which brings a lot of division and diversity into the race and a lot of enmity. We might

ask, where did this enmity come from? It was not in the covenant, but it is the fallen condition in those to whom the covenant was given. That is all taken away and something is brought in to which all that kind of fragmentation will never attach.

E.C.B. Is it not helpful to see the connection you made at the beginning, “one new man” and “one body”, and each embraces a whole sphere of things?

D.A.B. I would like to enquire more about the distinction between the two, but I think it is very attractive to see that, among the people of God and as the fruit of the gospel, the features of that One whose work lays the foundation for everything, and whose present position gives character to everything, should come into expression among us all. There must be a unity among those in whom the features of that man are seen because we have that single foundation. It must be so and if it is not so then it is because the old man is allowed.

A.G.S. Could you say something as to peace, “For *he* is our peace” and then, “making peace” and “glad tidings of peace”? Jew and Gentile will never achieve it despite their attempts.

D.A.B. It is helpful to see that the immediate point Paul is making here is that the Jew and the uncircumcised are at enmity with one another. The Jew regarded the law in commandments as a basis for enmity; it became a reason to hate people, which is a very sad thing. The law was never given to give Israel a reason to hate people but that is what came about. All that has gone, because the source of the enmity has been dealt with at the cross. It is a product of God’s judgment of the old. Peace can never have any security in the old condition, but “the glad tidings of peace” are that everything for God and for us rests in another Man.

D.E.R. Is the apostle seeking to bring out the greatness of the privilege of access to God and of being in nearness to God? He has effected that through the complete removal of everything which was old and the bringing in of what was new, Christ characteristically?

D.A.B. Yes, and that begins to have a profound impact on our walk: that is the purpose of it. It is not just to make us feel privileged, but

to make us walk differently. I like the different ways in which the truth is presented here. We have the cross which is a reality, we have the precious blood. Then we have the veil, and that is a very wonderful thought too: “for through him we have both access”. I think it is one of the marvellous privileges that we possess that the One who means everything to God, but whose perfection excludes totally man after the flesh, is the very One through whom we draw near. I think that is a very precious thing. Then he refers to us being “fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God”, he refers to Jesus as the “corner-stone”. These are all precious things and we find every one of them in Himself.

D.J.W. Is it true to say that the new man is not subject to breakdown because you can never take him back beyond the source from which it was made, the cross?

D.A.B. That is part of its character. Paul refers to “his workmanship”. I know the first man was God’s formation as well, but he was left to his responsibility. We do not exclude responsibility: the responsibility now of the believer is to “walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye have been called”. In other words, to be true practically to what God has done incorruptibly in him.

D.E.R. So the old man has been removed completely for God, but that raises the question whether that man has gone for us in our minds and then that would work out practically.

D.A.B. He came under the sentence of death in all his myriad manifestations: whether people might think they were virtues or vices, the old man came under divine judgment at the cross. We see at the cross that the most refined people of the day were exposed to moral light in all its perfection, and all that came out in them was evil. God is morally vindicated at the cross in passing the sentence of death on those who put His Son on the cross, but blood was shed at the cross so that God has the righteous basis on which to establish life in a new way altogether. As you say, it carries over nothing. That is important. If we think it carries over any virtue we will bring the vices with it and then we lose the whole thing.

B.H.C. I was thinking of the joy of the Lord, “the joy lying before him” (Heb 12: 2), that He would establish everything in Himself. Nothing would be taken over but everything of that first order of man condemned. I was thinking of the joy that would be in the heart of the Lord in regard to what would be established in Himself beyond the cross.

D.A.B. God could go on with His purpose. Mr Raven says that the only hope that remains for man is in the accomplishment of God’s purpose (Vol 1, p 184). That is something to think about: “not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace”, 2 Tim 1: 9. I think what you say about the joy of the Lord in relation to the purpose of God is something to think about.

E.C.B. That would be a very full expression, “the joy lying before him”. We tend to limit it to the church, that He “loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it” (Eph. 5: 25), all of which is true, but the ultimate joy that He had before Him was that there should be the sons of God, that is man in a new condition.

D.A.B. If I could suggest an exercise for the brethren, we could keep a little basket in our mind and, when brothers or sisters suggest explanations for the joy of the Lord, put them there and see what a variety you end up with – different things that the Lord looked forward to for which he *endured* the cross. Look at this truth that Paul wrote here: he had in mind that this should come into practical expression in a meeting in Ephesus. If it could have come into expression there, it could come into expression here. I say to myself, do I doubt whether that is possible? I remember a brother who used to maintain that this epistle was abstract, and the other brothers would have long discussions with him about whether there was anything concrete in this epistle or was it just, as he said, a painting on the wall? They would say, no of course it is not, but then the gatherings of the saints are the places where the proof that this is a reality should come into expression.

D.J.W. Is the objective of the new man access to the Father (v 8)?

D.A.B. Yes, He goes where Christ has gone. Is that God’s purpose?

D.J.W. I was thinking the body may be the vessel by which Christ expresses Himself, but the one new man in that body has in view a response to the Father and access to Him and His pleasure.

D.A.B. It certainly does. I do not rule out the idea of testimony either. I do not think we will speak about the new man in heaven because the old man has never been there and would not be comfortable there either; but it is something to be worked out here.

The service of God proceeds here as well, but this is something we are to work out in our exercises together.

G.C.B. What you have said as to Jew and Gentile is to be worked out amongst companies of believers.

D.A.B. Yes, and it is easy to say, we do not have any distinctions like that. There are a few brethren among us who have had Jewish claims, but there are a lot of other distinctions among us that hinder the expression of the one new man, if we only looked at them. We ought to bring them to the cross and see what it makes of them.

P.M. Could we come back to the reference "in himself"? Does that bear on the activity of the one new man, that it is fully in keeping with all that Christ does and is personally, so that every activity of His is answered in the one new man?

D.A.B. That is a very interesting dimension; it is not simply that it takes character from Him, but it acts in concert with Him. We are talking about something living we are not talking about an image, but something substantial and living, that is expressed in the circle of the household of God.

P.M. It derives nothing other than what it has in Himself. I was thinking of your reference to testimony and access, it is fully in keeping with all that He is doing and where He is moving, is it not?

D.A.B. And although it is in the world, is unworldly. It is something that we should think about in the life of Jesus. He was very close to humanity but absolutely and utterly unworldly. Even when people appealed to Him to do things in line with the principles of equity, He would not touch them because His outlook was completely detached

from the present order of things which has come under divine judgment.

R.W.F. Does the use of the word 'man' imply maturity in context with what we have been saying, maturity of understanding of the words and ways of Christ? I wondered if it underlies the expression, "we have the mind of Christ", 1 Cor 2: 16.

D.A.B. There is the idea of growth; "grow up to him in all things", (Eph 4: 15), but we are not speaking now about the boyhood of Jesus coming into expression. It is His glorified manhood. Children for a time have the ways of a child, but after a time they aspire to be grown up. Something grown up becomes their model and their aspiration. It is a full revelation of the Lord Jesus that should be before us in what we are exercised to have formed in us.

E.C.B. Are you, in that, suggesting that experimentally we grow into the new man?

D.A.B. Yes, but not in the way of natural growth, it is not that there are immature features which gradually mature, but it is a formation, a development. We cannot leave the flesh behind either, but we have to be concerned progressively and constantly that something that we have found in Christ comes into expression in us.

E.C.B. I was thinking of the earlier remark as to the old man being finished with, but who finds that to be true; but then who finds the new man to be true? It is a question of what we are giving way to in our lives and apprehending more of both the value of the work of the cross and of the present service of the Spirit – it says, "by one Spirit".

D.A.B. One of the advantages we have from practical fellowship is that we are able to meet together. Our lives are punctuated by frequent occasions when we can be occupied with these things to the exclusion of the old man. The old man intrudes more into our outside lives than he does into the meeting, so that in this circle we are able to touch something that is less mixed. I think we ought to fasten on it.

D.E.R. We need to remember that the one new man is a universal thought, while administration is carried out normally in a locality it must be in the light of the one body universally. That preserves us from independency and the importance of having the assembly in the fulness of it in our hearts.

D.A.B. Yes, so that when you go to another place and you link on with believers there what you find you have in common is the enquiry into and the development of these features. We may share other interests as well, but when we are together it is an interest in the Lord's things that manifests the link we have together.

E.F.W. Is the end of chapter 2 which – “increases to a holy temple” (v 21) – dependent on their being “fitted together”? It is not exactly an individual growing, though it must include that. There is something that the increase comes about through the togetherness.

D.A.B. I am glad you point that out, “increases to a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are built together”. It is a bit difficult to conceptualise stones getting bigger. What we have here is the temple, the structure, the habitation of God grows through believers being more and more together – and more and more believers together, because that is important as well.

D.H. It did not take long for the man in Luke 8 who dwelt in the tombs to become a new man did it?

D.A.B. You can see how completely transformed his life was. He did not revert to what he had previously known. I do not know whether he had been possessed all his life, but there may have been people who could remember him before he fell into that sad way. He did not go back to being like he had been but there was something that they could immediately trace to the One whom he had to do with.

D.H. So it says, “And they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting, clothed and sensible, at the feet of Jesus”, Luke 8: 35.

D.A.B. There was testimony from him to what God had done in him.

R.M.B. The reference to the one new man in chapter 2 is to what God has done once and for all, but the second reference to the new man in chapter 4 would be more the experimental side which goes on all the time, that is the putting off of the old and the putting on of the new?

D.A.B. That is helpful to see. This is something that God has done and may be that links with the cross. The cross was a once and for all matter and its judgmental side was once and for all as well. God has not put the old man under a suspended sentence, but death has actually come in. I think it is helpful to be reminded that there is another reference to the new man and there are also references in Colossians to him as well (see Col. 3: 10), where we are given guidance about the features of the new man that should come into expression. The reference in chapter 4 is to the things that we have to put off and we might wonder why those were still a problem in Ephesus: “be to one another kind, compassionate, forgiving one another, so as God also in Christ has forgiven you” (v 32). In other words there are features there do not belong to the old man. They are not versions of what is seen in the old man, but they are new features and if they are to be developed it must be the product of exercise.

D.J.H. Has it not been said that we are not actually told to put off the old man and put on the new? That is something which has been done by God. So it says, “having put on the new man” (ch 4: 24): that is real. The position that we have taken up as having come into the position of being in Christ. That is the position that we have taken up, but then “Wherefore, having put off falsehood”: having taken up that position, there are certain things which we have to discard and certain features which we have to take on.

D.A.B. Yes, and according to Colossians certain things which we have to put to death (see Col 3: 5). God has put them to death at the cross, but they still manifest themselves in me so I have to put them to death as well. Paul refers to many features of the old man, and we have to put him off with his deeds. That brings in the practical side, and then “Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy

and beloved, bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any should have a complaint against any” (ch.3: 12,13). Those are down to earth things. Things that arise among the brethren remind us that there are opportunities to manifest these features of the new man. Forbearance may be needed where you might say a little impatience is justified, but that is not a feature of the new man.

D.J.H. So there again in Colossians it is, “Do not lie to one another, having put off the old ... and having put on the new” (vv 9,10), that is the position we have taken up, but then we are to be acting in accord with that which comes back to the beginning of Ephesians 4.

D.A.B. My overriding exercise is that if we have an occasion for ministry and fellowship, the Lord would use the ministry to strengthen the fellowship. The fellowship is strengthened by the advocacy of the features of the new man among us.

D.J.H. I was thinking as to that about what was referred to earlier as to growing up, “grow up to him in all things”, there is that side, but then that follows the references to the gifts and the ministry, and ministry has all this in view.

D.A.B. It connects with what has been said, the gifts or the source of ministry is Christ exalted. Ministry comes from the highest point in the universe, He is ascended up above all the heavens.

E.C.B. While we are necessarily humble about the processes of putting off and putting on you would agree that you have been at meetings where the new man and the one body have actually been experienced.

D.A.B. I would say that if there has been any occasion where I have missed it then it is my fault. I can think of occasions when the Spirit seemed to help to draw something out of the brethren, and I was simply surprised it was there, but why should I be surprised that it is there because occasions of fellowship are an opportunity to bring this into expression.

E.C.B. Mr Darby says in his poem:

Till blessed fruit of deep emotion
Voice by voice in silence fails

That is that you are touching something that is quite outside everything that belongs to the old man.

R.W.F. You have referred quite a bit to fellowship, does the truth of the one body underlie all that?

D.A.B. Yes, that is why I brought it in, it is opened up in the bracket about the joint body and “joint partakers of his promise in Christ Jesus” (3: 6). I like the idea of “fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God”; all these things refer to fellowship. Perhaps we think of fellowship as an ecclesiastical thing or even sometimes as a social thing, but it is an essentially real thing that has its derivation from the cross and from what the Spirit is working in the body of Christ.

D.E.R. Where the new man is in expression there will be a holy temple and an habitation of God, in other words it is the area in which the service of God is to proceed.

D.A.B. And where God likes to come. We speak about the house of God as if it is something that we are brought into. This is a fine view of the habitation of God. In Moses' tabernacle, the holiest of all was a very private place, and yet it was comprised of the boards. There was a habitation for God in the saints. I think you would agree that if our exercise is to provide something like that then we would certainly not want there to be anything there that disturbed God's peace of mind or His enjoyment.

D.E.R. That is what is involved in keeping the unity of the Spirit.

D.A.B. Exactly, and that is again something that He has established. There is one Spirit, there must be a unity of the Spirit. The Spirit is not producing diversity, it is not in His nature to do it, but we have to keep the unity. We will not keep it if we allow what He cannot work with to come into expression.

E.C.B. Would you say a little more as to your bringing together the one new man and the one body? Do they amount to the same

thing? Are they distinguishable?

D.A.B. I remarked that these two things are the cardinal points of Paul's ministry. Where does that leave the mystery, the assembly or sonship? If we see that those things come back to these two great principles I think we will see perhaps how much they are joined together. The mystery relates to the glad tidings. Paul says that he was an ambassador for the "mystery of the glad tidings" (ch 4: 19); now what has come out in the glad tidings is the purpose of God, and the purpose of God has been to secure everything for His pleasure in Christ. The new man is the expression of that. It is not only in Christ but it is united to Christ. It has to be one to be the other. Paul brings out the truth of the assembly which is His body, which I think connects with this point here. I suppose the connection between the one new man and sonship is easier to see because if there is something in character that is like Christ then it must have its place before God.

E.C.B. I wonder whether the expression in chapter 2 as to "one body" is distinguishable from "his body". We know these are the same thing, if you look at them in that way, but the point of the expression "one body" is not so much that it is part of Christ but it is in Him and therefore distinguishable from the church as His body, although it is in the church that it is found.

D.A.B. I follow that, if I can draw on a type. When God called Israel out of Egypt the footnote there says the assembly was viewed as a corporate whole before God. They had a single point of origin, they were the children of Israel, and they had a common derivation. I could not say how much moral correspondence or similarity there was among them or between them and Jacob. If we transfer that to the present time the new man, as we have been seeing, has that common origin in Christ. The features of the new man that come into expression in each one of us are traceable to Him. Paul says there is "one body to God", that is how he sees it. He sees it as a moral whole and it must be because its character is all the same.

E.C.B. That is right. "Reconciled both in one body to God by the cross" is not exactly the church as the body of Christ, but one thing these readings bring out is how many facets there are to the consequences of the work of the cross.

D.A.B. Paul speaks in this epistle about the relationship of the body to Christ, but this reference is in its relationship to God. It is what it is for God, "one body to God". That is the divine view of it, that what has previously been so diverse and so discordant in the eye of God that He has had to bring under His judgment is replaced by something that has this common glorious character that He is able to view as one body.

E.C.B. What God has in mind now is not something represented in one particular part of humanity but, the work of the cross having a universal bearing, what God has before Him now is the consequences in men of the work of Christ. It produces what may be looked at as one new man, one body and in another sense may be looked at as the church, which is His body. I am just impressed, as I trust we all often are, with how many different facets to the truth there are in the scriptures.

D.A.B. If these things are collective, we need one another to experience them, but they are for experience. They are not just something that is a divine view which we might one day realise that He has had. They are something to be worked out in our local gatherings.

A.K.T. I was wondering as to the matter of standard, should we be exercised that the standard is maintained in our localities? That should be one.

D.A.B. We do not find that easy because none of our gatherings are large. We did not choose each other. As far as a lot of us are concerned, our company was chosen for us through a division. We were left in God's wisdom and He has left us with that to work out. I find certain comfort in the reference to the cross because we may feel weak and rather isolated, but there is nowhere so austere as the cross where one Man worked all this out for God. He set a standard,

somewhere we can come back to as a datum from which everything else can be worked out.

E.F.W. Was the standard seen at the very outset? To refer again to Genesis, the word was, "Let us make man in our image", nothing less than God's purpose can be accepted so the standard must be eventually in His image.

D.A.B. The idea of likeness there is even greater. Image has the idea of representation and it is simple to say that an image does not have to be a likeness. Likeness is what God was looking for. It was not simply to be a rough approximation, God's pattern was Christ.

Of course you cannot think of the Lord Jesus being *like* God because He *is* God, and that is a wonderful standard, but it is a standard for divine workmanship. It is for us to make way for that and as we do it the remarkable truth is that something that is like Christ will be developed in our hearts.

E.C. It is very important to remember that this was the exhortation of the apostle – "remember"; and he emphasises, "ye", that is to the Gentiles. Then at the end of the paragraph he says, "in whom ye also are built together" (v 22). I was reading that we ought to pray for Jews: the assembly at the present moment is being formed not only by Gentiles but Jews also. These things are very wonderful.

You prayed at the beginning that there might be something for God in it. Are you thinking that remembering this would bring about a greater appreciation of the wonderful things into which God has brought us and it would enhance our worship and thanksgiving towards Him?

D.A.B. Yes, paradoxically these things become so familiar with us that we forget them. We can almost recite this passage without looking at our Bibles, and the meaning drains out of it. That is why I read one main scripture. I thought it was helpful to focus on one scripture because I think it will be easier for brethren to carry something away in their minds from a single passage. The truth comes out all over the scripture, but it does help us just to focus on one place where it comes out, for the very reason you said.

E.C.B. As you implied in reference to the small numbers in which we meet, these are consequences from the demands of the principles of the fellowship. But we bear in mind that the one new man and the one body includes every believer having the Spirit and thus should keep our view wider and not become narrow?

D.A.B. That must be true because God has not a pattern for certain brethren and another pattern for those they do not walk with. That is not one new man. But at the same time we should be abundantly thankful that we do have those with whom we can work this out, and they are exercised about the principles of fellowship and to create an environment in which we can be free to work these things out. That is an abundant privilege which we ought to exploit, to focus on the things that God has brought into the household of God.

D.J.H. Does that involve the feature of the new man in Ephesians 4, "lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, bearing with one another in love"? It is as the features of the new man are coming into expression so we are helped in using diligence, and the unity of the Spirit comes into expression.

D.A.B. There are some things in that list that have natural counterparts although their spiritual versions are much more attractive; but there are others, and I think meekness especially, that does not have a natural counterpart. It is an entirely spiritual feature. It is the hallmark of the new man. It came out in Jesus here and I think we can be thankful for the extent to which it governs our occasions together. There is never an argument in a reading. I have talked to someone else who went to another company where they had to stop having readings because they could not keep the peace. We are in a place where we have the privilege, an environment is created for us, by the Spirit, in which we can work these things out.

A.McS. Does the privilege you are referring to link with the calling? It seems to underlie the other things you have mentioned.

D.A.B. So it is not just a meeting exercise, the calling is for all the time. This is not something you can hop in and out of. But what you

are drawing attention to is intended to mark us all together, and then when we are together there is an opportunity for it to be released and come into expression.

A.McS. I thought there might be a link with sonship there and it drew my mind to Matthew 17. At the end of the chapter, the Lord was not duty bound to pay the tribute, but He says, "But that we may not be an offence the them" (v 27), we will pay it anyway. Can you see that working out practically in the way things work out in chapter 18?

D.A.B. Yes, "Then are the sons free" (v 26), but where was that liberty enjoyed? It was not enjoyed in the tax office, it was enjoyed in the company of Jesus.

London

20 November 2004

Key to initials

R.M.Brown, East Finchley; D.A.Burr, London; D.E.Burr, Colchester, E.C.Burr, London; G.C.Bywater, Buckhurst Hill; B.H.Clark, London; E.Croot, Dorking; R.W.Flowerdew, Sunbury; D.Hawgood, Bexley; D.J.Hutson, London; A. McSeveney, Twickenham; P.Martin, Colchester; D.E.Remmington, St. Albans; A.K.Turner, Rotherham; P.J.Walkinshaw, Gillingham; D.J.Willetts, Birmingham; E.F.Woodford, Dorking

THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY

Andrew Burr

Ephesians 3: 14-21; Colossians 3: 12-17

I would like to begin what I have to say by sharing with you all an impression that I was given in the interval as to the hymn we ended the reading with:

All things new our eyes look upward (Hymn 37)

A sister remarked to me that we should also look around us, not just upward, but around us. Things are new around us, that is among the fellow citizens of the saints; there is something new around us and it is in that that our fellowship together subsists. Paul says, "the old things have passed away; behold all things have become new: and all things are of the God who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ", 2 Cor 5: 17,18. It is not just that heaven seems like a new place to people who have grown up on earth but there is something here among the people of God that has that new and heavenly character.

I am reminded of a brother, who is now with the Lord, who in the sorrows and divisions we have passed through was left for a time as the only brother in the meeting. In the Lord's grace and through our brother's faithfulness others were added to the meeting.

Temperamentally he found it very difficult to get on with them and eventually he left. When he had come back he passed the comment to me that it does not really matter that there are only a few of us, the blessed thing is that we have *anybody* to walk with. What a triumph the Lord had won in that brother, there was a triumph over the old man in him. It was not the vices but the infirmities of the old man and the triumph was won, not only by an impression, but an experience of fellow-citizenship of the saints.

Things like this make me wonder, and I ask you to wonder as well, whether we truly value Christian fellowship as we should, and whether it really is among our principal objectives to enrich our experience of Christian fellowship, with those who are available and

with others. Of course we have to be true to the principles of Christian fellowship or we shall impoverish our experience of it, but what a wonderful thing it would be if some of these things the holy scriptures say about Christian fellowship were to be fulfilled among us. In saying this I do not make any claim for a particular company; I say very simply, we cannot afford to make claims, and there are several reasons for that. If anyone heard us making claims they would be entitled to ask us about some of the problems and difficulties that we have. They would be entitled to ask us also why it is that we seem to become preoccupied with these difficulties, why we become diverted by them. Why do they dominate our conversation and our correspondence to the extent that they do when we have before us in the holy scriptures that we are “no longer strangers and foreigners, but ye are fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God”, Eph 2: 19? I do not feel that I can give any kind of lead in relation to a fuller experience of these things, but I would like to share an exercise that the enrichment of the experience of fellowship should become one of our principal occupations and exercises.

I did not intend to have another meeting about fellowship because, as was remarked in the reading, there is something else that fellowship leads on to. Along with an exercise that we should be concerned about how fulfilling our fellowship is, both for us and for God, there is another question about whether we might apply ourselves, with the Spirit’s help, to the enrichment of the service of praise. We might feel that the service of praise is a very exalted thing and all of us are very small in the presence of God. We say what we can and we give out the hymns we can remember and so on, and we are thankful for the way that something fresh and moving always seems to come in to the service of praise. But, is it not something about which we should be in sustained exercise before God that that occasion should be richer and fuller for Him?

I would like to say a simple word that I trust would further that end. One of the things that would enrich the service of praise is a greater appreciation of the wonder of what God has done. We

should not be confined in our thoughts by what God has done, but all those things should lead us to the God who did them and especially that we might be more sustained in worship. I was arrested by Paul's prayer that we read from. He shares his prayers with the saints in Ephesus in this chapter and there are a number of things which he goes over, some of which we have had before us, as to the union of believers in the one body. He dwells upon the mystery and upon the glad tidings and he makes what he has to say rest upon the glad tidings perhaps to an extent that we have not noticed. What he calls "the glad tidings of the unsearchable riches of the Christ" (v 8) goes beyond meeting our need but links with what we said in the reading that the gospel has allowed God to go on with His purpose. He speaks about the assembly and he speaks about the families and so on, and then he says, "I bow my knees to the Father". You might say, what is Paul going to ask for? Paul might measure his prayer by his own capacity and his own sense of limitation, whatever it might be; he might measure his prayer by what he thought the saints were able for. He might say to God, I think we ought to look for something incremental among the brethren, some gradual advance and progression in divine things. That is, after all, the way we tend to approach things, that we are looking for something incremental; we are trying to build by little bits, word upon word, line upon line, precept upon precept, gradually to increase our knowledge and appreciation of divine things. That is how we have to approach them, because they are so great. Paul gets down on his knees in the cell in Rome and he asks God that He would give the Ephesians, "according to the riches of his glory". Think of that! I have to say to myself, I have never prayed for my local brethren like that; perhaps I do not have the measure to do it, but God does, that they might receive from God "according to the riches of his glory". It takes us back to the gospels and the way the gospel is presented in Romans. We all, "have sinned and come short of the glory of God". That is the first man that we have been speaking of, he comes short. We spoke of man as intended to be in God's image and likeness: if he had been God's glory would have been seen. After all, without seeking to make a comparison, if we look at the life of Jesus, what

was of God was fully seen, in fact there was a revelation of God in the Person and life of Jesus. He was, “the image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation” (Col 1: 15). God’s glory was seen, “I have glorified *thee* on the earth, I have completed the work which thou gavest me that I should do it”, John 17: 4. When God has to look at everybody else, when He looks at me, when He looks at us, He looks at sinners who come short of the glory of God. It is not a position that we can recover because it is a consequence of what we are and we come short of God’s glory. He is not well represented in the old man. The world system is a testimony to what man away from God is, a whole creation groans under a man who is falling short of the glory of God. God has come in to answer all that in the glad tidings. The glad tidings are not seeking to reinstate or improve, not seeking to make good or repair; but as we have been speaking of in the reading, to announce something entirely new that can replace what is old, because what is old has been removed in divine judgment. God has created something new, and by faith in the glad tidings He has given us to have part in it, wonderful that that is! It says of Abraham, he “believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness”, Romans 4: 3. Abraham was justified in the presence of God. People all around would not have known that Abraham was reckoned righteous in the presence of God, it did not appear in relation to Abraham’s position in the world that God had justified him. That lies behind what has been said in ministry that he was justified for another world, but he had believed God and “it was reckoned to him as righteousness”. It pleased God to regard Abraham as a righteous person because he believed Him.

So it is with us, the gospel is presented for the obedience of faith and God is pleased to reckon those who believe in the glad tidings to be righteous. Then He has found in the work and the death of the Lord Jesus a way to confer unsearchable riches. Where His glory has been dishonoured in the lives of men and women, it is possible to pray that He will give you according to the riches of His glory. I am not going to attempt to amplify that or put it in other words or in a different way, but just think about that. There is Paul in

a damp draughty Roman prison cell thinking about brethren he has not seen for several years and knows he will never see again, and he is exercised to pray about them. So he asks God in those unpropitious surroundings that He would give them “according to the riches of his glory”. I think that is a very wonderful thing: if God is making gifts like that are we receptive? There are two sides to a gift. A lot of things have been given to us but could we necessarily say we have received them, and the gift of the Spirit is like that. The emphasis in references to the possession of the Spirit in scripture is on His reception, “Did ye receive the Holy Spirit” (Acts 19: 2). The Spirit has been given, but has He been received? That requires that room is made for Him and the room is made in the heart, the Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts. He can shed it only into space that has been provided for Him. Could I have a clear-out to make room for the riches of God’s glory? How much would I be prepared to let go if I really had some impression of what it is to be a recipient of the riches of God’s glory?

I do not go into the detail of this passage but what it goes on to is that there is an answer that is according to God’s glory in the service of praise. I wonder about what God has done and what God has given and the things that we have received, to what extent do they bring us to the God whose things they are and to what extent is there, as the consummate expression of our fellowship together, “glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus”? I suppose the whole assembly needs to be engaged for that to be really realised, but is it something that marks the fellowship we have together? We say we walk in the light of the assembly, and maybe we think of that as almost an administrative thing, but if we really walked in the light of the assembly would there not be glory to God in the assembly in Christ Jesus?. All of us are limited and our companies are small and we would be very thankful if there were others with whom we could share these things together, but those who are available are those to whom the riches of God’s glory have been given; and it is from them that there is to be an answer in the service of praise.

I read in Colossians because it goes into a little more detail. It speaks of putting on the features of the new man, as we have been speaking of them, and it refers to the way that Christ has forgiven us. Think of the woman in Luke 7. It says, "for she loved much" (v 47), because she had been forgiven much, it made her responsive, it made her want to serve Him and to serve Him in a spirit of adoration and worship. These are features of the new man, and he says, "And to all these add love, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts ... and be thankful". My desire is that we should not just appreciate the blessedness of the things we are able to speak about together. We should not just be those who appreciate our privileges, but we should be moved in thankfulness by those privileges, however feebly they may be presented to us, to responsiveness in the service of praise. So he says, "Let the word of the Christ dwell in you richly", that means that the thing is possessed: it is not simply that it is in your ears but it dwells in you, and then he says, "in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God". I just had a simple word as to that. We think of a psalm, and there are a lot in the scripture. I do not think it is exactly right to say that the psalm is the fruit of experience because we have to be frank and say we have had a lot experiences that are not readily convertible into a psalm. In fact there are occasions in the Psalms where David admits that he had been complaining. The thing that turns an experience into a psalm is to take the experience into the presence of God and to see in the experience what God has done. You might say, that was just something that happened to me, I got upset. It was a sorrow, I seemed to have lost something or it seemed hard or difficult, but what was God doing? We take a meeting like this and the opportunity to be here and the privilege of fellowship with one another. In spite of so much discord that has come in even among brethren we remain sharers together of these precious things. It does not make anything of us whatsoever. God has done all these things and if we were to bring what God has done into His presence then I think we would emerge from His presence with a psalm. That is that there would be some outcome for His praise from what has

brought us into His presence. I was interested that in Ephesians, Paul makes passing references to things that God has done; he says, “to enlighten all with the knowledge of what is the administration of the mystery hidden throughout the ages in God, who has created all things” (ch. 3: 9). The creation is what God has done, He created all things. The same God who has created all things has, “shone in our hearts”, “the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts”, 2 Cor 4: 6. He has shone there that something should be formed substantially that should come into expression. Those expressions should not only be something that the brethren can share together and enjoy with one another, but it should be firstly for God. It is interesting that the psalms are followed by hymns. There is clearly a difference between a psalm and a hymn and I think we are entitled to think that the special focus of the hymn is in worship to God Himself. It is the soul taken up with an appreciation of a Person, God, and with the way that He has revealed Himself. There is a certain detachment from circumstance, and what we are, and from our blessings and from things we have received, and a focus, a concentration, almost an abstraction from everything else except the giver and the doer and the soul taken up with the worship of God.

We were speaking at Easter about the way that redemption is intended to lead to worship and we referred to a number of people.

The woman in John 4 spoke about her circumstances and all that entered into them. What a sorrowful dead end her life had become: the Lord says, “the Father seeks such as his worshippers”, John 4: 23. That would require that that woman be taken out of her circumstances altogether. That woman had three needs and we tend to be occupied with two of them; she needed a man, and she needed some water, but the greatest lack in her life was that she worshipped she knew not what. What a sad state to be in. How can you worship what you do not know? All the things that we pass through are intended to make us knowledgeable of God, intended to impart what He has imparted in the revelation of Himself so that we become worshippers. I recall that when Israel was given the news

about the Exodus from Egypt it says they worshipped (see Exod 4: 31). For a moment they found respite from the bricks and from the bondage and for a moment their hearts were filled with the God who had come down to deliver and it says, when they heard that God had come down to deliver His people they worshipped. In the time of recovery it says about Israel that they gathered to hear the reading of the law and when they had heard it they worshipped (see Neh. 8: 6), they found that God from whom they had departed had remained always the same, His word had not changed, He had not changed, and they had been recovered to God, and their hearts went out in worship. I was thinking too of the occasion before the Lord Jesus was betrayed. It says in relation to Him and His own that they sang a hymn (see Matt. 26: 30). I have heard it said that that was a psalm, but it cannot have been because there is obviously a difference between a psalm and a hymn. I like what Mr. Taylor said that the Lord composed it for the occasion. How did they know how to sing it? The thing about worship is that the impression that God would give of Himself itself imports the capacity to respond to it. So in a sense there is nothing particularly surprising that His own have the liberty to participate in answer to it.

Then it says, “spiritual songs” – I think they are more contemplative. We have some compositions in our hymnbook that I would call spiritual songs. They are not exactly addressed to God but they are about Him. We sing some of them on Lord’s Day morning, they enter into the service of praise, spiritual songs, singing about the arrangements that God has secured for His own pleasure and the place we have in them. We need to enter into those things if we are going to sing about them. They are not things you can sing about unless you know about them. I was impressed that in whatever way we look at things we look firstly at the way we have come to know God in what He has done and then we come to Him as to what He is, and then we think about the arrangements that He has made and the things that we enter into in the way of spiritual blessings. Paul says, “who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ”, Eph 1: 3. Does every spiritual

blessing we have *received* have its counterpart in a spiritual song?

A spiritual blessing and a spiritual song, these are things that I believe the Lord Jesus by the Spirit would promote among us, “singing with grace in your hearts to God ... do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him”.

I feel exercised by this. We have the opportunity on occasions like this to speak of wonderful privileges. We have the opportunity in small measure to introduce ourselves to some very great and eternal things. When I say eternal I mean they were conceived before the ages of time and they will never end, and they relate to God Himself. They relate to a purpose that could be fulfilled only in Christ but they include us and we are brought in as an integral part of God’s purpose. God’s purpose would not be complete if we were not there. In order that we might be there He would give us, “according to the riches of his glory”. What He is creating, what He is building for His pleasure, is a sphere in which the service of praise will be conducted; and to the extent to which we enter into those things now I believe His service should be enriched. The connection I make with what we already had is that that service of praise is something for which we need one another to enter into.

It is, I think, such a precious aspect of our fellowship together. Not only is it expressed publicly in the taking of the Lord’s Supper but also it is in our liberty to continue, from the Lord’s Supper into the service of praise. I like the word in Romans, “that we may with one accord, with one mouth, glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”. You might say naturally that we are together by accident, we did not choose each other’s company. From a natural point of view, it is a bit of a coincidence. But we have been called into something in which there is to be one heart and one mouth glorifying the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I do not say any of this correctively: because the service of God, in my experience, is something that is fulfilling and something that I anticipate, but surely God would have it enriched. Surely there should be more for God through all that He has done and all that He has given to us, and especially some answer to the revelation of Himself.

May He bless the word.

London

20 November 2004

THE GOD OF JACOB IS OUR HIGH FORTRESS

Psalm 46: 7

“Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils;
For what account of him is to be made?” Isa 2: 22

Do not put confidence, even in nobles;
They’ll pass away, and in the earth be laid. Ps 146: 3

Blessèd the man whose hope is in Jehovah;
He who hath made the heav’ns, the earth, the sea;
Who executeth judgment for th’oppressed ones: Ps 146: 5-7
Confide in Him, He will take care of thee.

Of chariots, some people will make mention; Ps 20: 7
Others on horses think they can rely:
Be we will trust alone upon Jehovah;
His faithfulness He never will belie. Ps 89: 33

Firm in the sky His witness e’er remaineth. Ps 89: 37
On Him alone my soul rests peacefully. Ps 62: 1
Our refuge, strength, and Helper in distresses;
We will not fear, though earth removèd be. Ps 46: 1,2

C.S. Eastwood