

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 15

June 2008

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THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

David J Hutson

John 1: 29-34;

Acts 2: 1-4; 10: 44-48; 13: 1-4; 15: 28, 29

DJH I have been pondering the truth to which we have been recovered relating to the Person of the Holy Spirit. There are not so many of us now who remember the time when that truth was brought forward in a distinctive way and I suppose it would be right to say that it is the latest *outstanding* feature of the truth to which the saints have been recovered. As having some impression of the impact it made at that time, I felt it good that we should consider the Holy Spirit in this way as to His own sovereign activities. We value His service to us, and the way in which we can speak to Him and call upon Him, but these scriptures give us something of His activities from His own side sovereignly. It is noticeable that the Scriptures begin with that, right at the beginning, “the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (Gen 1: 2), and then right at the end in the last chapter of the Bible, “the Spirit and the bride say, Come”, Rev 22: 17.

We can think of all the history that has gone through in between, but I was thinking of it particularly from the time of the Lord Jesus coming into the world, and the activity of the Holy Spirit in marking Him out distinctly. I thought we might get help as to the distinctive presentation of this in John's gospel; and then His coming at Pentecost; then as the testimony moves forward and the Gentiles are brought in; and then the distinctive separation of the apostle Paul in view of the light of the mystery being brought out, and then His activities. I thought of the distinctive reference, “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us”. I thought we might go over these things together, and maybe as a result more place would be given to the Holy Spirit and we would have greater regard for Him. We can so easily become accustomed to our addressing the Holy Spirit, and having Him with us. Those of us who can remember when this truth was brought forward have some impress of the impact that it made upon us. I can say simply it was almost like conversion. I can remember the first time I addressed the Spirit and the thrill it gave. We do not want to lose that.

RJC It says,

Our hearts have been awakened

To give Thee greater place, (Hymn 355)

I think that particular ministry opened the affections of the brethren to the Holy Spirit Himself. Here He is identifying Himself totally with the Lord Jesus. It has been said that there are no cloven tongues of fire here, "the Spirit descending ... and it abode upon him". There was nothing in Christ that hindered in any way the activities of the Spirit in relation to Him.

DJH I read in John's gospel. It is so distinctive there, it is apart from His baptism and apart from the voice from heaven. It is distinctively the movement sovereignly of the Holy Spirit Himself and I wondered if it is not something which the Holy Spirit had been looking for right from that early reference when the Spirit of God was hovering and there was no rest for Him. We speak typically as to the dove in Noah's time, "the dove found no resting-place for the sole of her foot" (Gen 8: 9), but what it must have meant, the feelings of the Holy Spirit. If we keep in mind the feelings of the Holy Spirit which enter into the scriptures that we have read, I think we shall be helped to give Him greater place.

CKR Could you say more as to the Person of the Holy Spirit? Does all of what you say enhance the uniqueness of the revelation of God in Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

DJH My attention was drawn this week to a remark of Mr Darby's, that he would have no difficulty in speaking of Him as Lord because of the authoritative way in which He speaks, Letters vol 2 p83. Mr Darby also has a very striking reference in which he lists a number of things which are attributed to the Holy Spirit, His distributing and other things which He does, and he makes a comment and says, 'this is somebody'. He says 'I get the personality of the Holy Ghost in Scripture very clearly' (Collected Writings vol 25 p247).

CKR It shows the importance of the fact that He is a divine Person.

GCMcK The Spirit came personally at this time.

DJH Yes, and it says, "for God gives not the Spirit by measure", John 3: 34 we cannot speak of that as to any other person, although He did come personally at Pentecost. In wondrous grace our vessels are temples of the Holy Spirit, but it was personal and absolute here on Jesus.

NJH John the writer is the one that tells us that John the Baptist was being prepared by the word of God for this amazing transaction.

DJH That is amazing too. There is so much that might come into our minds in this conversation, even as to the birth of Jesus Himself, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and power of the Highest overshadow thee” (Luke 1: 35); and then John the Baptist was “filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb”, Luke 1: 15.

NJH It says “he who sent me to baptise with water, *he* said to me”; this is in view of the Person of the Spirit coming in in this particular matter.

WL The Lord at this point was the sent One, at this point the Holy Spirit was not sent. It says, “for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified”, John 7: 39. Does that bring out the point you are making, that it is a sovereign action of One who is God Himself?

DJH That is what I was thinking. When we go on to Acts 10, there is a very full reference there; it speaks in three different aspects of the Holy Spirit being there. That is what was in mind as to what we have in these scriptures, the Holy Spirit acting of Himself, yet it is God who is acting.

JDG It is in relation to one Man and to one Man only. The time He comes upon the saints has been referred to, but here He comes down on one blessed Man and abides upon Him. No displacement could take place in Christ; He was full of the Holy Spirit.

DJH There are no cloven tongues of fire there. This is unique and distinctive. The Spirit came upon persons, as certain activities called for the power of the Spirit. Here it is something absolutely distinctive and unique. It speaks not only of the Spirit descending but, “and abiding”. It is not like when the Spirit came upon some persons for a particular purpose, but abiding on Him is distinctive.

GCMcK Immediately it says as to this One on whom the Spirit abode, “he it is who baptises with the Holy Spirit”. Does that open up the great scope of the operations of the economy, the Spirit having come? There is going to be an immense effect from this.

DJH There is to be an extension, Christ ever remaining unique in His humanity, but there is to be an extension. In that way He baptises with the Holy Spirit.

GCMcK I was impressed with the thought of the Lord “baptises with the Holy Spirit”; it would bring in a complete transformation, securing in the fullest way what is for God.

DJH What was for God was here in an absolute way in the Lord Jesus, but it is to be secured in men who are baptised by the Holy Spirit.

RG The fine flour was mingled with oil (Lev 2: 4), but then it was anointed with oil. Is this the anointing?

DJH We see that more in Luke's gospel, but it is that occasion. Say more as to the anointing.

RG Man had been created in God's image and likeness but failed, but here is a Man who is God Himself manifest in flesh upon whom the Spirit was pleased to come. The anointing of the Spirit was characteristically seen in every movement of His from here on.

DJH We have been reminded by Mr Raven, that everything that Jesus did He did by the Spirit, vol 8 p113. That is amazing when you think of, "who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God", Heb 9: 14. No other man is like that. We would seek, and avail ourselves of, the service of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit graciously helps us, but there is that which is absolutely distinctive and unique here.

NJH We need to protect the truth of the Spirit in our minds for the Spirit was not in the dove, but descended personally "as a dove". It conveys the momentous matter of that blessed Person coming on Christ.

DJH The word that comes from John is, "I beheld the Spirit descending as a dove from heaven, and it abode upon him" and then he says he was told, "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding on him, he it is". In Luke it says, "the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form as a dove upon him" (3: 22), and it seems to emphasise the distinctiveness of this, which must be guarded.

WL John was very privileged. We know that this is the only reference, "I beheld". John saw the Spirit. A wonderful thing!

DJH This would be the only occasion that the Holy Spirit was seen? I wondered whether the reference to the "bodily form" was to emphasise that and would bring before us the reality of this glorious holy Person. It is the reality.

NJH You get the reference from a different aspect as to Christ, "For in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col 2: 9), which involves His present position. It can, in some sense, be taken in by us, the fact that it is bodily, where He is. Here it is, "as a dove"; I thought we

should protect the blessed Person, the greatness of the Person who is coming in.

DJH Certainly.

WMP It refers to “a glory as of an only-begotten with a father”, John 1: 14. Would you say more as to your thought of affection entering into this movement of the Spirit?

DJH There is the unique reference, “and by the love of the Spirit” (Rom 15: 30): because of who He is, and God is love, it is His nature. We do not get that side emphasised, but it is there and all these movements of the Spirit would be in love.

WMP The whole matter is marked by love, “the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father” (John 1: 18), and the Spirit identifying Himself with that Person.

DJH Again, Mr Raven said that the Father and the Son are one in the unity of one Spirit (Letters p140). This would bring in the side of affection.

DCB Is the descending related to that? It is a movement of affection. It is the characteristic of the Spirit, descending. You see the grace of His operations in falling upon others, but it is a movement of divine approval in descending, taking His place upon Christ.

DJH It is unique. There must be affection involved in it, being the divine nature coming into expression.

RJC “Descending ... from heaven”, that is the great source of divine operation and activity outside of this scene altogether. This is the Spirit coming from heaven, from that order of things, from that sphere of affection, to abide on Christ.

DJH He has come now from heaven, “having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which ye behold and hear” (Acts 2: 33), but in grace He is here now. I think that is what one would seek to impress us with and seek to be impressed with oneself that it is no less a Person, though here and so near to us, and though we may be so familiar with Him, yet nevertheless this is who He is.

WL What do you think is the reason that it was relatively late in the recovery that we came to this?

DJH I have pondered that, but do you not think that shows to us the wonderful grace of this glorious Person, that He should hold back until so much has been disclosed until He Himself should come forward in that way?

WL That is helpful. These distinctive features that came to us as to the Lord's Person and His sonship depending on His manhood, then the Person of the Spirit came relatively late. There is something in that for us to consider.

DJH It is nothing new, for some of these dear men who have helped us in the course of the recovery to the truth have said some remarkable things. Mr Stoney says twice, 'Do you ever consult the Holy Spirit?', vol 4 p 307; vol 8 p 219. We thought this was something new that we started around the 1950s, but that is what Mr Stoney said. By something that Mr Stoney has said elsewhere I would gather that he communicated with the Holy Spirit.

JTB In Genesis 24 Laban said, "Come in, blessed of Jehovah! why standest thou outside?" (v 31); that comes in after Rebecca had been identified as the spouse for Isaac.

DJH Why is that question raised?

JTB Does it draw attention to the patient, selfless activity of the Spirit, not seeking personal identification, but seeking to identify first the bride for Isaac?

DJH It is a selfless service of His, but let us hold in our minds what we have been saying that, nevertheless, that would in no way change the glory of the Person. I think that is something that the Lord would revive with us at this time, thinking of the distinctive impact that that feature in the recovery made upon some of us at the time. I think that should be maintained among us.

RG I remember being at three days meetings with Mr Percy Hardwick and there was a lot of controversy because this was uppermost in the minds of the saints, and I remember a respected brother stood up and he said, 'The Holy Spirit is God and that is good enough for me'.

DJH If we let our minds work on things we just get confusion. A brother, converted elsewhere about that time, was asked if he would be free to worship the Holy Spirit, and he said, 'He is God, is He not?' And

yet some of us have been slow coming to it. I think when regarded simply and excluding our reasoning minds it becomes simple.

DCB You will appreciate that for some of us who are younger it is very difficult for us to understand why the brethren did not worship the Spirit before. What was the light?

DJH There is a book 'The Spirit seen objectively in the Book of the Acts' (NS vol 53 p261) and that very much helped in this. Mr Darby spoke of the way in which he could see the distinctive personality of the Holy Spirit. I suppose remarks like this were in the minds of the brethren and evidently, we would have to say carefully, that it was of the Spirit Himself. He was holding back in view of the securing of the bride for Christ. That was His main objective, and that having been set out in ministry, He comes forward Himself in view of what was due to Him because of who He is. It bears on the last reference to the Spirit in the scripture, "the Spirit and the bride say, Come" (Rev 22: 17); that is, He has now reached His objective and He is then seen Himself sovereignly as linking with that objective which He has secured.

CKR The full coming of the Spirit awaited Christ's glorification. What is the full understanding of that? Is it the work of Christ and His resurrection and His glorification particularly "because Jesus had not yet been glorified" (John 7: 39); it anticipated the coming of the Spirit after a period when Christ was glorified, and then the Spirit came.

DJH We have been reminded of the results of the service of the Lord Jesus here on earth; you might say, 'why was He here labouring as anointed for three and a half years, what was the result?' But then you see it in the hundred and twenty, and then Christ having been glorified and having received of the Father the promise of the Spirit, there was the material with which the Holy Spirit could identify as the product of the work of Christ on earth.

CKR What is the bearing of the ten days? Christ is glorified and then there is the ten day period when Christ was in heaven before the Spirit came on the day of Pentecost.

DJH I think it was to bring out the value of what had been secured. Apart from the Spirit and apart from Christ being glorified - because He was in heaven, and the Spirit had not come - the work of God was such that they were able to act for themselves and that demonstrated the value of what was there with which the Holy Spirit could identify Himself.

GAB I was struck by a remark of Mr Raven's, that the Spirit could not come until He was in a position to bring a report of Christ glorified, vol 17 p 69. These ten days would involve that; the glorification of Christ so that the Spirit was fully able to bring a full report of all that was up there.

DJH "He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you" (John 16: 14); that is His normal service here. We can avail ourselves of His service when "we do not know what we should pray for as is fitting" (Rom 8: 26) and when we feel the need "to put to death the deeds of the body" (Rom 8: 13), and so on, but His normal service is to glorify Christ; that is to bring before us the glory of that blessed Man.

WL This thought was there all the time: much was made of, "Rise up, well! sing unto it", Num 21: 17. He has been there all the time.

DJH He has been there all the time and He has not changed. This magnifies the grace in which He has held back until this time at the end. I think what has been said helps as to waiting for the completion of the service in bringing forward the light as to the mystery and the bride of Christ in the recovery to the truth before coming forward Himself.

We could look on to Pentecost, we have touched on it, but there is the depth of feelings, the feelings of the Spirit enter into this, this "violent impetuous blowing" or as the note helps us, 'they heard blowing, as of hard breathing'. It seems to be something coming from the very inwards. I suppose it is akin to the Lord Jesus breathing into them in John 20: 22, but this is the realisation of it. It is coming from the very inwards.

GCMcK There is a sense in it of deep feeling, and also power, "violent impetuous blowing". You could not think that the Spirit having come in in this way would ever be quiescent in this dispensation. He is still operating with the same feeling in power.

DJH We need to remember that that there is no change in His power. Things may be small, fragmented, we have seen much in the way of sorrowful history and so on; we see the clouds of apostasy all around us, and so much, but this is not diminished in any sense. We need to hold to that. Neither has it diminished the service of the Lord Jesus in the nourishing and cherishing of the assembly, Eph 5: 29. The great thing is that by the Spirit we want to put ourselves in the gain of that.

RJC Is this a distinctive movement of the blessed Holy Spirit coming

in and sitting on each one of them? There is a certain complacency there that the Spirit can identify Himself with. These persons were the handiwork of Christ and now they are available in view of the coming of the Spirit to sit on each one of them. Now the Spirit is given from within the assembly, but this was a very distinctive movement of the Spirit at this time.

DJH It says it was a sound out of heaven. The Spirit does not come out of heaven now, but we cannot limit Him to the place He has taken here. There is the reference in John, “but whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak”, John 16: 13. It is what He is hearing up there in converse between the Father and the Son, and He brings that to us so that we have the mind of heaven down here. We cannot limit divine Persons.

JDG Is this the baptism of the Spirit?

DJH I would like help as to the expression of the baptism of the Spirit.

JDG It seems to be the filling out of what John says about the Lord, “he it is who baptises with the Holy Spirit”, as sent from heaven. There is only one baptism of the Spirit; after this He comes from the assembly, and “in the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body”, 1 Cor 12: 13. This took place at that time.

DJH So that it would mean that they were a company set apart entirely from what had gone before. There would have been a Jewish background to this, but all that is cleared out of the way and the Holy Spirit coming upon them would set up now something which was entirely new.

I thought it was noticeable in chapter 10 that we get three distinct references. It says, “While Peter was yet speaking these words the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were hearing the word”. I do not know the Greek but the note says, ‘logos’ which is the word of God in testimony. They were evidently recognising it as such and because of that the Holy Spirit sovereignly came and identified Himself with them: “the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were hearing the word”. But then it says, “upon the nations also the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out”. That is not exactly His own action, but “poured out”; and then, “Can any one forbid water that these should not be baptised, who have received the Holy Spirit”. These are three distinct things, the one that the Holy Spirit fell upon them, a sovereign action; then there is the fact that Holy Spirit was poured out, which shows the liberality in which the Holy Spirit

is given; and then they received the Holy Spirit. I think we need to see that the reception of the Holy Spirit is an active matter. In Romans 8 it says, "but ye have received a spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father", v 15. In Galatians, they were not in the gain of sonship, although the position was there (as Paul says, "for ye are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus" (chap 3: 26)), and there Paul says, "God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father", chap 4: 6. It does not say that they had received Him. I think it shows that the recognition of the Spirit and the reception of Him involves that room is made for Him in His operations, whether it be in testimony or in the service of God in the enjoyment of sonship.

RJC There is a certain responsibility in that. There is God's side, the Spirit coming in on each one of them, but then we are to receive the Holy Spirit which is a very responsible thing and bears on us in a certain way at the moment, that we should receive the Holy Spirit and make room for Him, and He will shed the love of God abroad in our hearts. He is coming in to serve us if we make way for Him.

DJH There are the various ways. There is the sealing of the Spirit, which is God making His claim upon us and putting His mark on us as being His own, and then there is the anointing of the Spirit in view of service; but the receiving of the Spirit is something on our side in the way of responsibility and it is only as we make way for Him in that way that we should be able to enter into the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.

JDG "The Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were hearing the word"; does that bring in sovereignty and discernment on the part of the Spirit of God?

DJH Yes, I am sure it does, so that, "the Spirit searches all things" (1 Cor 2: 10), and that would involve His discernment. I know it is the matter of "even the depths of God", but He would discern, and that is something for us that we would "Be careful in His presence", as it says in Exodus 23: 21. We cannot hide anything, and of course it is shown very solemnly with Ananias and Sapphira: even Peter by the Spirit was able to discern what was there although it was completely hidden as far as men would see, Acts 5: 1-10.

GCMcK Would the first reference be to the Holy Spirit's own action? That preserves the divine prerogative as a divine Person does it?

DJH That is what I thought.

GCMcK As in John, not only is He sent, but He “goes forth from with the Father” (15: 26): that protects the glory of the Person, does it?

DJH We get the three different aspects of the Spirit's coming, which the Lord speaks of. He says, “I will send him to you” (John 16: 7); and He says, “the Father will send in my name” (John 14: 26); and then it says, “who goes forth” (John 15: 26), so that you get Him coming from the Father, from Christ, and coming Himself. It all preserves the infinite unity of the Godhead.

WL The Spirit is very active in this setting. He speaks very clearly, and as has been pointed out, Peter speaks to the Spirit, “And I heard also a voice saying to me” (Acts 11: 7); it does not specify who the voice was, but verse 5 suggests that it was the Spirit speaking. Then Peter says, “In no wise, Lord”, Peter recognises the lordship of the Spirit.

DJH It must be so because it relates to each of the divine Persons, the Father who is “Lord of the heaven and of the earth” (Matt 11: 25), as the Lord Jesus says Himself; and the Lord Jesus; and then the Holy Spirit here, “In no wise, Lord”. As I suggested earlier, Mr Darby appears to have had no difficulty in speaking of the Holy Spirit as Lord because He acts authoritatively.

CKR In each of the three references you refer to it is “the Holy Spirit”. I wondered if you could say a word on that? There is a holiness attached to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit as known in the believer and that has to be maintained and carried through into the assembly.

DJH That is right. I have been exercised that we should speak more in relation to that; we do have hymns, and because of the metres and so on they speak of Father, Son and Spirit, but I think we need, as far as possible, to speak of “the Holy Spirit”, because scripture speaks of Him as the Holy Spirit. I do not think we need to overlook the full title. In the baptism in Matthew 28, “to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (v 19), that brings in the full deity relating to each because it is one Name, but it is the Name which belongs to each.

RG Do you think that, when Peter says here, “who have received the Holy Spirit as we also did”, there is something very comforting for us? Here are we of the nations and we are brought into the knowledge and appreciation of the gift of the Holy Spirit who had come upon men,

and that takes us with them to have a direct link with the Lord in the glory.

DJH It is wonderful. Peter's word in this setting also (not in relation to the Spirit) is, "it came even to me", Acts 11: 5. I think it is good for us to keep in that attitude, "it came even to me". Who am I? Why should He come to me? Why should I have the Holy Spirit? And that again goes right back to His operations in new birth, which is sovereign, "The wind blows where it will, and thou hearest its voice, but knowest not whence it comes and where it goes: thus is every one that is born of the Spirit", John 3: 8. These sovereign operations which we are speaking of have acted in relation to each one of us. I remember a brother saying, 'I was thankful that it blew in my direction!' This is something that we need to keep before us, that each one of us has been the subject of divine operations. It is a wonderful thing.

NJH The Holy Spirit is the power for unity and for union. It affects our relations together as well as our link with Christ. This was a tremendous matter; it required a divine Person to accomplish this.

DJH That remains, the unity of the Spirit remains. We need diligence to keep it and it bears on our relations together, "bearing with one another in love", Eph 4: 2. The Spirit is faithful, and every believer who has the Spirit is in the unity of the Spirit.

TDB Would there be certain conditions in which He would be free? I was thinking about your reference to Cornelius: he is referred to as a pious man, the kind of household he had and so on, Acts 10: 2.

DJH It seems so, and it was through His acting sovereignly in this vision that came to Peter; and then the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men seek thee; but rise up, go down, and go with them, nothing doubting", Acts 10: 19, 20. The Holy Spirit was taking notice. We have referred to discernment, and He had discerned what was there, the conditions in which He could be free in view of operating. He knew that there would be a receptiveness there for the word of God in testimony.

WL It says, "who have received the Holy Spirit as we also did", and immediately it adds, "And he commanded them to be baptised in the name of the Lord". That is not exactly the baptism of the Spirit, but then in the next chapter (v 16) Peter refers to the Lord's own words. There would be a close connection between baptism and the baptism of the Spirit. We know that baptism with water does not bring about an

internal change in the person, and yet we remember that the holy anointing oil had not to come on man's flesh, Ex 30: 31, 32. The Holy Spirit would link on with baptism.

DJH Baptism in this setting, "in the name of the Lord", would show recognition of the Lord's authority and therefore there would be conditions to which the Holy Spirit could identify Himself.

DCB In chapter 2, what Peter tells them is, "Repent, and be baptised, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins, and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit", v 38. Here the Spirit is acting in a matter of His affections being drawn out so that He would act in this way towards these Gentile believers.

DJH This is in reverse, the Holy Spirit was so discerning as to what was there that He was able to identify with them, but then they needed to be brought into the Christian position by way of baptism. That is the public matter. The Holy Spirit coming upon them would be His own sovereign action. But the public identification with the testimony involves baptism and therefore they are baptised in the name of the Lord.

DCB The Spirit would necessarily discern their repentance if He was to come upon them.

GAB Does the fact that He "fell" involve feeling as well? The father "fell upon his neck" with the younger son, Luke 15: 20. There would be holy sentiment involved in that.

DJH That is what I was seeking to get through to, the feelings that are involved. We have had it in His coming upon the Lord Jesus and coming at Pentecost, but we get it again here, the feelings that would enter into that. There was no reserve; there is full identification with what was there, which really was His own work.

TDB In Galatians the Spirit "crying, Abba Father" (chap 4: 6) would also bring out the feeling side.

DJH Even though we may fail, the Holy Spirit will maintain that which is due to the Father. In Romans they received the Spirit and they were crying (chap 8: 15), but in Galatians the Spirit is crying; it is His feelings in relation to it. He would be feeling the fact that the Galatians had not, in that sense, received Him as taking up their responsibility in relation to the place that they had in divine purpose.

RJC How wonderful it is that we can respond by the Spirit to divine Persons, “whereby we cry, Abba, Father”, Rom 8: 15. What a wonderful triumph of the Spirit's service it is that there is something in the believer that responds affectionately to the Father.

DJH That is a very affectionate term, “Abba, Father”.

I was thinking of the order of this. We have the Spirit coming at Pentecost, the baptism by the Holy Spirit; and then there is the eunuch where you have the sovereign activity of the Holy Spirit in chapter 8; “the Spirit said to Philip, Approach and join this chariot”, v 29. You have the Spirit speaking there just to one man, but then there is a household secured in Cornelius, and now the next thing is the assembly. Now we have the Holy Spirit's action in this, “the Holy Spirit said, Separate me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” and then it says, “They therefore, having been sent forth by the Holy Spirit”. You can see the order of it.

NJH Before Barnabas and Saul are sent they are separated to the Spirit, “Separate me now Barnabas and Saul”. It is as if to be sent they are to be separated to the Spirit in view of this great work that they were sent for.

DJH That is good. That shows His discernment, the discernment of what there was in these men. We have had something of their history given to us, we know as to Saul, and about Barnabas, the way he was surnamed by the apostles, chap 4: 36. The Holy Spirit is discerning what was there and says, “Separate me”. He could take them on Himself and then send them forth.

NJH Not being an independent action it would not disturb the unity of the company.

DJH So, “They therefore, having been sent forth”, from the unity of the company. “Then, having fasted and prayed, and having laid their hands on them, they let them go”. There was no question of them breaking up the unity of the company; they might not be all together now, but the unity remains.

WL There is no racism.

DJH Nothing political either.

WL Men are struggling with that question, yet it was settled at Antioch so long ago.

DJH It is wonderful, everything is settled here. And far as the words go there is a black man, Niger, and the foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch: racism and politics are all set aside.

RG Is this the effect of chapter 10 where you read? In chapter 10, Peter is using the keys of the kingdom, He is letting us in. So there is no racism. You could not have racism after you come into the kingdom, one Lord and one Spirit, and now the Lord and the Spirit are acting together here. It says, "And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said ...". Divine Persons were in operation amongst those who knew what it was to be subject in the kingdom for the opening up of the great truth of the assembly.

DJH It is divine operations; it is very wide. The Holy Spirit is brought forward but it is God that is in the matter. Again, the Holy Spirit is God. We say so carefully because there is mystery in relation to it, but we can say that in the fullest sense. There is a hymn which said:

Thou hast Thy part in deity

But 'part' has been changed to 'place' (Hymn 425). We cannot speak of part in deity.

JAB Would this be an example of the Spirit speaking expressly, "Separate me now"? Could you say something about that because we have listened with interest to your own memory of the ministry as to responding to the Spirit coming in in a very distinctive way, but what would you say about the distinctiveness of the Spirit's speaking now? Sometimes we might wonder how the Spirit would do something like this now. Did these people actually hear a voice, what happened here?

DJH I have wondered about that, because Paul says that in Timothy, "the Spirit speaks expressly, that in latter times some shall apostatise from the faith", 1 Tim 4: 1. It does seem that we have to regard the possibility of the Spirit speaking. We would normally say, as has been said of Acts 13, that He would use somebody there, but I was looking before the meeting at what David says, "The Spirit of Jehovah spoke by me", 2 Sam 23: 2. We might think that a person speaks by the Spirit, but David says, "The Spirit of Jehovah spoke by me". Do you think it would be something along that line? It would be so clear that it was of the Spirit that we would see that it was not exactly a brother speaking by the Spirit but the Spirit was speaking by him.

JAB Would that mean then that, as we have the Spirit, as we hear

ministry or whatever it might be, there is discernment in us to know that the Spirit is speaking? You have mentioned the Spirit having discernment, but these characteristics of the Spirit are transferred, speaking reverently, to those in whom He abides, leading to the fruit at the end of Galatians.

DJH Paul says that, “the spiritual discerns all things, and he is discerned of no one”, 1 Cor 2: 15. I think your speaking of that helps very much. We would discern if there was any distinctive speaking of the Spirit.

WL Hearing depends upon having an ear: “He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies”, Rev 2: 7. If you do not have an ear you will not discern what the Spirit is saying.

DJH That is another reference linking on, “let him hear what the Spirit says”, and there again we need to be careful as to that. We would not claim anything, but it does say, “If any one speak - as oracles of God” (1 Peter 4: 11); that would be the Spirit speaking.

WL It is very challenging. It is only the overcomer who has the gain of what the Spirit is saying. So the question arises, am I an overcomer, are you an overcomer?

DTP Is that what Agabus does? He “signified by the Spirit” (Acts 11: 28) when he prophesied. Is that something like the Spirit's speaking expressly? It is an unusual statement; it is in view of the famine that was to take place.

DJH Yes, “signified by the Spirit” - there again it brings in a very practical side of things.

In chapter 15 we have, “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden”; I was thinking that all these references that we have read are at critical points in the opening up of the divine ways: the Spirit coming upon the Lord, coming at Pentecost, the introduction of the Gentiles, and then the sending out of Paul. These are particular steps in the course of the testimony. Here we have another critical situation. The Judaising element was coming in, and again the Holy Spirit was active. It says, “it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us”, it was not exactly that they discerned it by the Spirit, but they discerned that the Holy Spirit had a mind as to this matter and that they were fully identified with it.

RJC I am sure that is right. The leadership is the Holy Spirit acting before we get, “and to us”. I suppose “to us” is apostolic, but the Holy Spirit gives a lead in this. They seem to sense that and take it on.

DJH It has been said that this is the only church council that we have, and it all arose through this matter of the Gentiles coming. They were to be set free, it was in order that the Gentiles might be liberated from these Judaizing influences to have their full part in the new thing which was coming through the ministry of the apostle now, under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

GCMcK In both these cases in chapter 13 and in 15 there is an assembly setting to the Spirit's activities.

DJH I suppose that would be so generally, would it? He is here; He is not in the world, but He is in the assembly. So there would be a certain setting and I suppose in view of what His service is here for securing the assembly it would always be in some way as having the assembly in view.

GCMcK I was wondering as to how we might touch it. I can see assembly conditions are necessary to touch anything of this at the present time. In 1 Corinthians 12, manifestations of the Spirit are given to one and another; so the Spirit is active in the assembly.

DJH Yes.

NJH Do we have to embrace the scope of what is presented? Both Peter and James spoke in the power of the Holy Spirit, but the company drew from James's address for the conditions and in relation to the way they should proceed.

DJH I wonder if this might be something of the nature of what we have been enquiring into. It is very distinctive, James's introduction, “after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Brethren, listen to me”, Acts 15: 13. It would almost seem to be that it was something more than just a man speaking.

NJH There is no other person before you if you have discernment. If you are looking and exercised to discern what the Spirit is saying you have to have the whole matter set before you.

DJH It is a matter that we know; through the current of the ministry at a certain time you find that there is a golden thread going through. That would be for us to discern and follow through, “what the Spirit says to

the assemblies”.

NMcK It is interesting in Revelation which has been referred to that you get what is from the Lord's mouth, and then the Spirit speaking to the assemblies as well. You get the two things, what is written in authority in the Scriptures and then the Spirit's guidance in relation to that.

DJH We certainly need help. The Holy Spirit has indited the Scriptures: who greater to open up the Scriptures to us? Even in secular things, if someone were to write a book, it would be special if the person who wrote the book was able to sit alongside you and explain what he had in mind in writing it; but to think that we have that with this precious book here. The Holy Spirit has indited it, and it speaks of men having spoken by the Spirit and they themselves not knowing exactly what they were saying, but the Holy Spirit is searching it out for us and as dependent upon Him we can know something of the depths that there are in what is inscribed.

NMcK It is interesting how the word of God is used, and then the Spirit's authority; and both are used to bring the matter to bear rightly. The scripture is viewed in the power of the Holy Spirit to make the matter bear. While we have the word, it is good to seek the Spirit's mind and the Spirit's guidance when speaking and in whatever is said.

DJH We need wisdom and guidance in the application of the scripture and also in the application of ministry which is of the Spirit.

WL It is not just speaking. It speaks of “Barnabas and Paul, men who have given up their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”. The Holy Spirit would be quick to link on with that.

DJH So that they were able to bring in this letter, “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us”. The Holy Spirit was identified with them fully in what was proceeding.

Glasgow
23 February 2008

Key to Initials:

T D Beveridge, Kirkcaldy; G A Brown, Edinburgh; D C Brown, Edinburgh; J A Brown, Grangemouth; J T Brown, Edinburgh; R J Campbell, Glasgow; R Gardiner, Kirkcaldy; J D Gray, Edinburgh; N J Henry, Glasgow; D J Hutson, London; W Lamont, Cumnock; G C McKay, Glasgow; N McKay, Glasgow; W M Patterson, Glasgow; D T Pye, Kirkcaldy; C K Robinson, Glasgow

'I COULD NOT DO WITHOUT THEE'

David A Smith

John 5: 1-9

John 7: 37-39

Colossians 1: 14-18

It is wonderful to be able to stand up and speak today of the glad tidings of this glorious Person, our Lord Jesus Christ. The glad tidings, as it says in the scriptures are, "glad tidings ... concerning His Son", Rom 1: 3. What glad tidings they are that we have to speak of concerning this glorious Person! I wonder if you have noticed in this present day in which we live, how increasingly persons are beginning to think they can get by without Him. I hope you are not like that, thinking that you can get by without Christ. I notice it is so politically, that people do not want anything to do with the influence of Christianity, or God, in their affairs whatsoever. 'We can do quite well, thank you', they say, 'without His intervention; we will manage quite well by ourselves'. Do you not judge that is so? I think it is becoming evident, sorrowfully, that even those who profess the name of Christ will introduce something else apart from Him. God has no other man before Him but Jesus, and He has no other person for you, but Him. One thing that has greatly impressed me, in recent times, has been the line of that hymn 220 - 'I could not do without Thee'. I suppose it would become quite evident if the preacher said that to you and had not proved it for himself. One thing I can say to you, and my life has not been that long, is that I cannot do without Him. I have found that to be true and I think in the glad tidings God would have you to prove it too, that you cannot do without Him. The hymn writer says 'Why will you?'. Why would you do without Him? - because everything, my friend, for your salvation and your eternal blessing, as well as your present happiness, rests in coming to Jesus.

Now, in the scripture in John, there is a reference to the time when the Lord Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Jerusalem at that time was the centre of the religious world, and you might have thought that there would not have been such a company in Jerusalem as is depicted in this scripture. It is interesting that in Jerusalem there was a sheep gate. It reminds me of that word in scripture that "all we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way", Isa 53: 6. But God is mindful of His sheep; He is mindful of his creatures. How wonderful that God is so mindful of His creatures! He has been mindful of me. I

have been thankful for that, but I can tell you that He is mindful of you. God desires that *all* men should be saved. (A brother I knew said that it was interesting to note the 'alls' in scripture.) It is only a little word but it is very, very embracing. All men have sinned (Rom 3: 23) - *all* men have sinned, that is one thing that does not leave any of us out, does it? I do not suppose, actually, we need the word of scripture for that, but we are thankful for it. I suppose man's conscience tells him that he is a sinner and it is evident in practice. I do not suppose anybody, would they, if you were to speak to them, would ever say they had done nothing wrong? I have never asked an atheist if he thought he had done anything wrong, but God has given man a conscience, and apart from that we have the word of scripture, the divine authority of the word of God: *all men have sinned*. I wonder if you are conscious that you are a sinner? Of course, it would not be much glad tidings if all I had to say to you was that; but God would bring to you the conviction of your sins. If He does, it is in His mercy and goodness that He brings any of us to the conviction that we are sinners and that we need a Saviour. The world around us is a witness to sin and here they were at this sheep gate; God is so mindful of His people. It reminds me of that scripture in John that speaks of the good Shepherd, John 10: 14. I know that scripture speaks of His sheep, but He is desirous of securing you as one of His sheep. How blessed that He has you in mind for blessing, my friend. There is a multitude of persons here at this pool but the Lord Jesus is the One who has come in, and He speaks of that in John, that He is the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd is the One who has laid down His life for the sheep. All others who come before me, he said, were thieves and robbers and he says they mount up elsewhere, John 10: 1. These persons, the multitude of "sick, blind, lame, withered", have perhaps become victims of those who have mounted up elsewhere. I suppose that is a picture of the effects of sin on men, is it not? I do not suppose they would be a very happy company, but here was a multitude of them, sick, blind, lame and withered. What an unhappy company. Such is man in his sins away from God, and he can do nothing to help himself. That is why, my friend, the sinner needs Jesus. That is why he needs the Saviour; that is why he cannot do without Him because he can do nothing for himself.

Well, an angel descended at a certain season in the pool and troubled the water. I have been wondering about it. I suppose it was a divine intervention in mercy for men. God is very merciful in relation to His creature but here there was no universal blessing available for

men. One came into blessing and got healed through the mercy of God (what a God He is!) - an angel disturbed the water at a season and one man could get the blessing. My friend, has it ever dawned on you that God has one Man who has come into this scene, who has given His life and shed His precious blood for guilty sinners that *whoever* believes on Him will be saved. How wonderful, what a Man He must be! How great this glorious Person must be! He could take up the whole question of what sin was before God, the whole question of man's guilt and need and glorify God as to it by offering Himself as a perfect sacrifice for sins, that "every one whosoever, who shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved", Rom 10: 13. What a multitude there are who need it! I do not know the size of the multitude in this chapter but what a multitude there are in this world who need Jesus. So it says 'there was a certain man there who had been suffering under his infirmity thirty and eight years'. I wonder if you have been suffering that long - thirty eight years? "Jesus seeing this man lying there, and knowing that he was in that state now a great length of time". I suppose He looked round; in a company like this, He sees us. I do not know the detailed history of everybody here, far from it, but He does, and He sees, and He is moved with compassion knowing this man had been in that state a great length of time. How God feels for persons bowed down under the bondage of sin; how He feels for them. Do you think He feels like that for you? I can tell you, my friend, He does. Do you think He is any different now to what He was then? There is no change with Jesus. "Jesus seeing this man lying there, and knowing that he was in that state now a great length of time, says to him, 'Wouldest thou become well?'". Well, that is a question, is it not? If there is anybody here labouring under the burden of their sins, I would ask you, 'Would you become well?' Would you? Well, this man does not exactly answer this question, he does not say 'I would like to become well'. He says, "I have not a man"; that is what he said. 'I have not a man who is able to undertake for me'. There are others who would use whatever natural advantage they had to get down first, but this man knew he could do nothing for himself. He knew that if ever he was to get well he needed somebody to help him, somebody to come in and take up his cause, someone to look upon him with compassion and see the need that he had: someone who would come in and undertake for him, and take an interest in him. Well, he found that man in Jesus. He said "I have not a man". My friend, we present to you Jesus, this glorious Person, and He is able to undertake for you. Jesus says, "Wouldest thou become well? The infirm man

answered him, Sir, I have not a man, in order, when the water has been troubled, to cast me into the pool; but while I am coming another descends before me. Jesus says to him, Arise, take up thy couch and walk."

In Mark's gospel the Lord Jesus says, "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy couch and walk?" chap 2: 9. My friend, I would entreat anyone here who is still labouring under the guilt of their sins and its burdens to come to Jesus. What a work has been done at Calvary, what a precious work has been done, all the guilt of my sins borne by Jesus on Calvary. He has shed His precious blood that my redemption and yours might be secured. What a work He has done, how much it cost Him! It was no light matter for Him; how much it cost Jesus!. We read of His agony in that garden - "My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; but not as I will, but as *thou* wilt", Matt 26: 39. What it cost Him! How much He felt it! to undertake the whole question of sin and sins for a holy and righteous God. The judgement that was due to them, and to me as a guilty sinner, was taken on by Jesus in those three hours of darkness on Calvary. God is fully satisfied in the work that He has done. That has been attested to and is witnessed to in the fact that He is raised from among the dead, having taken up the whole question and exhausted the righteous judgement of God against sin. So as the hymn writer says -

The sinner who believes is free,
Can say, The Saviour died for me;
Can point to the atoning blood,
And say, This made my peace with God. (Hymn 357)

Well, do you have your peace with God? "Wouldest thou become well?" Will you do without Him? Why would you do without Him? You cannot do without Him. Your eternal salvation, your present salvation, and your present blessing depend on coming to Jesus. Why not come to Him? What is holding you? What should hold any of us? How approachable He is. He asks a simple question - "Wouldest thou become well?" He has done everything for you; according to the gospel all you have to do is come. How simple! Is it too simple for you? I suppose some people may think that nothing so great as this can possibly be so simple. You see, that is the gospel - everything has been done. How thankful I am that He has done it, because I am quite conscious that I could do nothing. There was nothing that this man

could do that would affect his salvation, there is nothing I can do and nothing you can do, but I would like to assure you of His willingness - "Wouldest thou become well?" Well, would you? I just leave that simple question. Come to Jesus. You cannot do without Him.

I refer to that scripture in John 7 because the Lord Jesus is speaking to persons that are thirsty. "In the last, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried saying, If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink." Thirst generally speaks of the desire for satisfaction and refreshment, and it is wonderful to be able to be here as a believer, satisfied and refreshed and happy. It is wonderful to be satisfied. The gospel is preached that persons may be happy, happy in the liberty of knowing that their sins are forgiven. They are forgiven, and refreshed in their spirits and joyful: that is the path of the Christian. God wants to bring you into the best, you know, where there is satisfaction, and where peace and joy can be found. God would bring His people out of Egypt and deliver them through the Red Sea, but His purpose was to bring them into the land, the land of Canaan where they would find satisfaction and peace and joy and rest. His desire was not exactly to bring them into the wilderness. He passed them through that, but His mind was that they should come into the land. That was the purpose of God for them, that they should enjoy all the blessed fruits and fulness of it. They had to learn God in the wilderness, and they had to find out what He was to them and what their hearts were too. God's desire is that persons should come into blessing and find peace and joy, rest and satisfaction. I think there are many believers who are conscious that their sins are forgiven and that they will go to heaven finally. But in the meantime, what are their lives? Sometimes life is short and sometimes longer, but what is it to be? What is *your* life, I would ask you? Where is your present life, even if you are a believer? How are you finding it, my friend? How am I finding it?

You may seek after many things but you will never find peace and satisfaction in them. You may think you will find some joy and happiness in them. The world appeals to our natural hearts and I would be the first to acknowledge it. One thing I can tell you is that you will not find satisfaction in it; you will only find it in coming to Jesus and receiving blessing from Him. Now the Lord says here "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink ... But this he said concerning the Spirit, which they that believed on him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet"; and I judge from that scripture that it means that the Spirit was

not yet dwelling here. The Lord Jesus was here, but the Spirit, He says, "was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified". The Holy Spirit came from a glorified Christ, which is very wonderful, but where is He? He is indwelling believers, how wonderful that is! Have you ever thought about that, that God would not only give you the gift of the forgiveness of your sins but the gift of the Holy Spirit? Now, I say, will He give that to me? Would He give that to you? To receive the gift of the Spirit - wonderful blessing. Well, how am I going to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit? You come to Jesus to be cleansed from your sins, and you can receive too the gift of the Holy Spirit from His hand. It is given to those who obey the glad tidings, those who receive Christ. We have to receive gifts, do we not? That would be evident. God offers this priceless gift but then you have to receive it. Presented in the gospel are wonderful gifts for men but it is that you might receive. So He says, "He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water". That is the man satisfied. The Holy Spirit has come here to occupy us with Christ. He has come here from a glorified Christ and He has come here to glorify Him. What He does is that He magnifies Christ in the heart of the believer and that, my friend, I can tell you, is where you will find satisfaction. I can tell you simply that you will not find it anywhere else. I wonder if you have found that? Certain things may gratify, but if they gratify anything they tend to gratify the flesh, but to be *satisfied* my friend is, a question of your heart. Well, the Holy Spirit has come to magnify Jesus. What a glorious person He is! So if you want satisfaction you must come to Jesus, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now, you say, will He be willing to give it? How willing God is to give! Have you ever thought that God is far more ready to give than you are to receive? The Lord Jesus says elsewhere that "what man is there of you who, if his son shall ask of him a loaf of bread, will give him a stone", Matt 7: 9. Would he? What kind of father would that be? It says, "If therefore ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much rather shall the Father who is of heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?", Luke 11: 13. That would encourage you to ask, would it not? Ask liberally, ask of God and He will give to you. Come to Him, receive the blessings at His hand. How ready He is to give. What a God He is that we might be satisfied in our souls.

Now I read that scripture in Colossians because it speaks to me of the glorious greatness of Christ. It says, "giving thanks to the Father, who has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light, who has

delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love", v 12, 13. What a thing it is to be delivered from the authority of darkness! I wonder whose authority you are under, my friend. It does not seem from this scripture that there are more than two authorities. It says "who has delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love". I wonder if it has dawned upon you that Christ has a kingdom. He is the centre of another world altogether. There are two worlds, there is this world and that world. "That world," of which scripture speaks, "and the resurrection", Luke 20: 35. Christ is the head and centre of it. This world is under the authority of the enemy of our souls. But coming to Christ, and receiving the forgiveness of our sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit, He would deliver us from the authority of darkness. We have to walk our way in this world, that is perfectly plain, but we are "delivered ... from the authority of darkness" as we come under the Lord's sway. It is a very blessed thing to be delivered from your own will; do you not think so? I suppose naturally we do not because if there is one thing we like more than anything else it is our own will. Mr Raven taught us that man does not know how to cater for his own happiness, vol 12 p 32. It is a blessed thing to come under the divine will. Now, you say, 'is that going to be onerous?' No, not if you love Jesus, not if you love Him, not if you have received the gift of the Holy Spirit who has made Christ precious to your heart: the One who has done so much for you, the One who has not only died for you but lives for you. His will is the will of blessing. He would give you His Spirit so that you would desire to do the things that please Him, so that His will does not become hard, His will does not become difficult. You learn that His will for you is blessing. God would bring us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. How great this Person is! Could I just refer to these verses so that the Spirit of God might give you some impression of it? It speaks first that it is in *Him* that we have redemption, so you know it is in this glorious Person. You know it is in this One who has loved you, and died for you and secured your redemption at the cost of His life. It is in this person who is image of the invisible God. It is He who is the Firstborn of all creation because by Him were created all things. This is Jesus. The things in heaven and the things upon the earth - we may know a few of the things upon the earth, I do not know much about the heavens, but He created them all anyway. The visible - things you can see - not one thing that has received being has received being without Him - this is Jesus; and the invisible things - you cannot see them. I suppose we

know the influence of some of them, magnetism and all those things scientists get to know about. Things that they cannot see, the invisible, well He created them all. Thrones, lordships, principalities, authorities, governments, rulers and nations - His hand is over it all. How great men sometimes think they are. Nobody is greater than Jesus, nobody is greater; and these things have all been created by Him and for Him and He is before all. What does that mean? He could say "Before Abraham was, I am", John 8: 58. What a glorious Person Jesus is, glorious Son of God; and He is before all and all things subsist together by Him; that is, they subsist. He is in control of everything: so do not be too afraid of global warming. I suppose man will wreck the earth as through his activities he wrecks so much. All things are in Christ's hands, all things subsist together by Him. Our very existence, our very life, our very breath we breathe, everything is in His hand. How great He is! "And *he* is head of the body, the assembly; who is the beginning, firstborn from among the dead, that *he* might have the first place in all things," v18. He is great enough, He is worthy to have the first place in all things. Are you not glad that He is going to have the first place in *all* things? Would you trust all things into the hands of anybody but Christ? I rejoice that I know that God is going to head up all things in Christ, everything. The things in the heavens and the things upon the earth. I am so thankful that they are in His hand because I can trust them there. The Person who has come in, in wonderful grace, to take up my lost condition, who has given Himself for me, given His life for me, secured me through the giving of His precious blood, manifested the love of God to me: that Person is the One who has been established heir of all things (Heb 1: 2), has been given "a name, that which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow", Phil 2: 9,10. How delightful it is to bow the knee to Him now, is it not? He is going to have the first place in all things. It is His right and He is worthy of it. That means that He wants the first place in your heart. My friend, I think, in the preaching He would have the first place in your heart because He would win it. It is His by right, by redemption, but I think He has the first place because He wins it, do you not think that? The first place in my heart, the first place in my life and every department of it, belongs to this glorious Person that we read of here in Colossians. Now, you say, is this to be *all* blessing? I tell you it is all blessing to come to know Jesus as your Saviour and Lord. It is absolute blessing. There is peace for your conscience through His precious work and He becomes a Man too for your heart. Now, one thing that scripture

speaks of is the love of the most growing cold, Matt 24: 12. The gospel is preached to revitalise us in our affections for Christ, for Himself personally. Christ, spoken of in Colossians, so glorious, so great, who has secured everything for God, is the same blessed Person who has secured everything for you and me. How wonderful that is! And He is going to be glorified. Publicly He is going to be glorified. What will be the effect in this world then as He takes up the reins of government? It will be a scene and time of blessing that this world has never ever known, and why will they know it? Because He will have dominion. This blessed Person who is so great and so glorious will have absolute dominion, and for man it will be a time of untold blessing. Now, that is to be known now. In a scene where we are in adversity, contrariety, sin and self will, evil and wickedness, these blessings are known as Christ is received and the Holy Spirit is received so that He has this supreme place in our hearts.

I leave this simple word. I trust that the Spirit of God would impress you that He has secured everything for God and that you will find, my friend, as you desire to receive a blessing at His hand, that He becomes absolutely indispensable to you. May it be so for His Name's sake.

West Norwood

10th February 2008

THE BOND OF FELLOWSHIP

Eric C Burr

2 Timothy 2: 22

I am encouraged to refer to this scripture which was in my mind as I came in, because of what the Lord has given us already. I do not go over the earlier part of the chapter, but some of what has been said already bears on the fact that we are formed into relationships with one another and into company with one another; and if we speak of the household of God and what relates to that, we very quickly would be moved in our spirits to the idea of what is collective.

What was in my mind was that Paul refers first in this section to the individual, but immediately moves to what is collective, “with those”. The idea of “with those” and what is collective has in my mind a good deal in the nature of those associated together by a common bond. I do not think you could think of it otherwise. That led me to think about what has already been referred to as the principles of the house of God, but it led me to look at them from a more natural point of view; that is to say, if there is a company formed ostensibly on the same principles, there is a mind that governs that company. You do not need a rule for everything, but what you find in that company is that there is a single mind about things that arise. The burden of what Paul says here gives some of the indications of what that climate of opinion might be because he speaks of “righteousness, faith, love, peace”, as if these are guiding principles of the house of God and of this company. I think it is a common experience that everywhere where people are gathered together ostensibly on the same ground, there is a climate of opinion that governs what is done. An every day expression is that ‘we do not do that kind of thing here’, showing that if people gather together in a particular way there are principles that govern them even subconsciously. I think that is true of the Christian company, gathered in spite of the divisions that have come about, gathered together. So that they come together and maintain things, perhaps even without always identifying what they are saying and doing. They demonstrate the same governing principles in their lives because they have come together on the same principles.

What was especially in my mind is that it is the responsibility of each one to maintain these principles. If ground has been taken up, it is up to everyone who takes up that ground to act on the governing

principles of that company. I venture to underline that every one of us has the responsibility of maintaining what is suitable to the company in which we are. Matters arise among us when you could wonder if the general climate of what is right, and believed in the company to be right, is what governs everybody. What I draw attention to in this is that every one of us has the obligation to follow "righteousness, faith, love, peace".

We speak about these things and perhaps have standard impressions about them, but maintaining the climate of common lines of thought and what commonly governs each one is something that is an exercise for us all and we do not always find it easy. In fact, it sometimes seems that it would be easier to look at these things the other way round. Matters arise and the first instincts of many would be let us have peace. It is easy to say, 'do not let us be bothered by this, do not go raising that because it only creates disturbance in the company'. Love - 'you could extend love in this case and we will let it go by'. Faith - 'we are all believers - are we not? - and it may be that we do not all do quite the same thing'. But, beloved the first thing is righteousness, and on such an approach it comes last. The Spirit intends us to be governed by these things in the order in which they are, and righteousness comes first and the obligation on each one of us is to maintain it. Mr Raven says it is "fidelity in every divinely appointed relationship", vol 3 p210, and everything that relates to this company formed by walking with those who have pure hearts, everything in that, is obligatory upon us as a matter of righteousness. We cannot just waive this or that because it suits us to do so. If we are governed by what should govern the company we will find that our consciences are pricked if we tend to go astray from them, so that what belongs to the company rightly and maintains it in integrity is kept alive among us. The Lord would help us in this and as we think of issues that arise - and it is very sorrowful how some issues arise again and again among us when you would think that the purity of the company would keep believers out of the mischief that arises by transgression.

I was impressed that what governs the company is not the letter of the law, but what each one finds to be the characteristics that should mark a company formed by walking "with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart". I was thinking about these things because there are exercises among us that test us as to whether in any degree we tend to stray from what is suitable to the company in which we have taken part. I have been encouraged by what has been said this

evening as to knowing the principles that govern the house of God and not holding them as the letter of the law, but holding them instinctively and each member of the company supporting the remainder of the company and encouraging them in it so that things are maintained in suitability to the presence of the Lord. Even little children can be brought up as soon as they can understand anything, with expressions such as, 'that is not suitable to those who call on the Name of the Lord Jesus'. These things work in principle and begin to work instinctively so that you know what is suitable to the company and the Lord would use issues that arise among us to lead us each one to check whether our conduct individually is that which is suitable to the whole company. We know only too well that if someone wanders a bit it is not too difficult for others to say, 'so and so' does that, but 'so and so' may be wrong in doing it. The Lord would have us marked, even unconsciously, by what is suitable to the company of one naming the Name of the Lord, and those who call on Him out of a pure heart. The Lord would help us in individual responsibility to maintain these things. I may even have to feel that, if somebody else has strayed in some way, it may be partly because I have not maintained things myself.

London

8th April 2008

Edited and Published by David Brown and Andrew Burr
81 Roxburgh Road West Norwood London SE27 0LE
Printed By ICP 18 Station Road Crayford Kent DA1 3QA