

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

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JDG I thought we might consider together the matter of life and light as it bears on the life of a believer. It came in in Christ, available for men, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men". It has an effect on all of us as we come into an understanding of it and are affected by it.

In the first scripture it secures those who receive Him, persons affected by the light, and the life is affected by the light, they are 'born of God', are children of God. Then in Romans there is the side of responsibility. A challenge comes up as to how we are going to live our lives in the light of John 1. I would like to take it up from that point of view. There are persons here who have had a transaction. We belong to the children of God, but then we find ourselves in responsibility here in this world, but grace overabounds, and we prove the blessing of overabounding grace and how that affects our lives. Light affects the life of the believer. So light and life are correlative in that sense in relation to the life of the believer so that he comes into the understanding of the light, and his pathway is a separate pathway. He is walking "in newness of life" (Rom 6: 4), and it also says, "reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus", Rom 6: 11. So he then takes account of his members and he is rejoicing that he is abstaining from sin and becoming a bondman to righteousness. Then Paul takes it up again at the end of the chapter, and he emphasises, "But *now*, having got your freedom from sin, and having become bondmen to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end eternal life."

It is easy to see the connection with Exodus. They "had light in their dwellings". The children of Israel were against the state of things in the world, which Romans considers. I suppose it follows on from the aspect of, "reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus". As we have been taught, it relates to the land of Goshen where the saints are. They are in the midst, with Egypt around them, but there is light in their dwellings. I would like to raise the matter with us further. We are living in relation to the light we have, and I linked that in my mind with the households; "light in their dwellings" is light in the Christian

households. That is why I suggested the passage in 1 Peter, especially that statement “fellow-heirs of the grace of life”. I might dwell on that when we come round to it. That suggests the household in Goshen. Here in this epistle the background is suffering, the Lord's suffering and then the saints' suffering, but here is the place in the midst of suffering where there is another kind of life in evidence.

Lastly, in Romans, what I thought of was being led in relation to the Spirit. It is still in the wilderness but He is leading in relation to the inheritance; so that we might consider what that might be in our pathway.

These are the thoughts I had in mind that we might consider together. I am counting on the brethren to fill it out a bit.

RJC Does 'born of God' mean that we have a certain capacity to absorb these things? We are not born of any other means, 'born of God'. There is the thought of derivation here, is there, and we are able to absorb the light and life that there is in Christ? These are transposable, are they not, light and life? They are seen in Christ, but we have to be affected by them, have we?

JDG Yes. According to this passage in John 1, “In him was life, and the life was the light of men”. The only persons that got the gain of it were those who were born of God. I thought we should see the divine intent. It says, “All things received being through him, and without him not one thing received being which has received being”, (v 3), and that is the completion of the creation, but then Scripture goes on to bring out that God is coming in in Christ in relation to men.

CKR What a significant development this was, Christ coming in and light coming in, appearing in darkness. Something had come into manifestation that had its source in God Himself.

JDG Yes, this is the light that came in but the darkness did not apprehend it. There were persons who apprehended it, but it is life, life in relation to humanity, “In him was life, and the life was the light of men”. He has come in in relation to humanity, and it is humanity that has fallen.

CKR The perfect demonstration of it was in Him, “In him was life, and the life was the light of men”. There is something that has come into perfect and full manifestation in Christ personally in sonship in manhood.

JDG That is right. There is no imperfection in the Lord Jesus. The

thing was fully displayed in Him and communicated to where it found exercise to receive it. There were those that received it. It says that, "He came to his own, and his own received him not; but as many as received him ...". There is a state there that is able to receive Him in this way. How we can be thankful, dear brethren, for the light that has come in in Christ! How we can be thankful that we belong to a company that has received that light! There is a darkness around us that we will speak about later too. Some were not able to apprehend it, being in moral darkness. How dark it was! It typifies this in the setting in Egypt, but the light shone. I think it has been said already, it was not that the company that received it had any less perverse will than those who had refused it, but it was how God had worked.

JTB Does the reception of the light create in us a desire to follow, and create instincts after Christ? "He that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life", John 8: 12.

JDG Yes, that epitomises what I had in mind. The light was received and brings about formation and substance in us. So there was a desire to follow. In Romans there was a desire to follow Christ amidst all the exercises that come up in that chapter.

DBR It has been said that from verses 4-13 is an epitome of Christ's history here on earth with the consequences that either "the darkness apprehended it not" or those that were born of God did apprehend it and receive it. So these verses are very important as covering the whole period of Christ's life, do you think?

JDG Yes, it is very helpful to bring that in. I like your word, 'the epitome of His life here' because that is what it was. The light was available to all. Responsibility enters into it too. "He came to his own, and his own received him not". They regarded Him really as a carpenter. Those who received Him not just thought He was a carpenter. The Lord says in John 3, if you recall, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except any one be born of water and of Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God", v 5. That is Nicodemus. That is the beginning of the work of God. Nicodemus saw more than a carpenter or a carpenter's son in the Lord. So he comes to Him, by night. It is the first movement, drawn to Christ, and he comes out into the light eventually. What has come up is interesting, to see the effects of Christ coming into the scene, but what an opportunity for all that this Person of the Godhead, known as "the Word", the Son of God, comes in to convey to men life that was the light of men. There was no light like this before.

In contradistinction to what God did in Genesis 1, this is a new movement to bring to light, you might say, a new race.

JCG In John 12: 46 the Lord repeats in His own testimony, “I am come into the world as light, that every one that believes on me may not abide in darkness”, the testimony that there was no need to stay there as long as Christ was there as the shining Light.

JDG Yes, it says there in John 12: 36, “While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may become sons of light”. That conveys the thought of formation. Then it says there - it is an interesting scripture - “Jesus said these things, and going away hid himself from them”. I remember it being said, 'Did they miss Him?'. Would we miss the Lord if He hid Himself from us? Here they were - they did not miss Him. They were against Him, some in that chapter. Jesus went away and hid Himself from them. That was because of their refusal. But here in this chapter 1 He is coming in, He is available to all.

WL I was just wondering if there was a connection with verse 18 and verse 4, “No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, *he* hath declared him”. I was wondering if light and life were related to Him in manhood from the standpoint of “the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father”.

JDG Yes, I think that verse is quite helpful because it shows that there is movement with the Lord. It is really a condensed statement that we have in verse 4, “In him was life, and the life was the light of men”. But then as you move into the Gospel, what you have brought out is helpful. This is one aspect of it, “No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, *he* hath declared him”. That is making the light available to us, is it not? “The life was the light of men” involves the unfolding of the Trinity, the economy, does it not, and that would be part of what is in mind in verse 18? So the Lord brings to light the economy as known in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

WL So the Lord brought in with Him in manhood these features that were unique to Him. This is an absolute statement, is it not? We reach things as we come to Romans through moral exercise, but He never needed that.

JDG “In him was life, and the life was the light of men” is a condensed statement, but then, as you get into the Gospel, you find it unfolding. That is why I quoted John 3. He is reaching out to help a soul that is

enquiring, is He not? So the Lord never turns us away. Even although we come to Jesus by night, the Lord discerned that there was something working in that man that was of God.

RG In the woman in John 4, there is darkness, but He introduces interestingly the Father and the Spirit, and then she says, "Come, see a man" - the light had shone in her heart - "who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?", v 29.

JDG Yes, that is movement out from this position He took up as coming in, is it not? "In him was life, and the life was the light of men". There by Sychar's well He begins to unfold to that woman the truth of the worship of God: "the Father seeks such as his worshippers", v 23. And what you have brought out introduces the thought of the Spirit. Then she grasps hold of a Man, and that is the Man who came in. She belonged to the family that was born of God, did she not? Light brings responsibility, man will be held to account for rejecting the light, but it brings responsibility also to those who receive it. It says, "to them gave he the right to be children of God". It is a very blessed matter which I would like us to take home to ourselves before we enter into the body of the reading that if we are persons who have come to Christ, and belong to this company who are children of God, we have a right to take that place. It carries with it responsibility as well as blessing.

JAG The Lord leads Nicodemus along the moral road, referring to the serpent of brass (John 3: 14), and then, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal", v 16.

JDG I used to think that the Lord stopped speaking to Nicodemus at verse 12, "if I say the heavenly things to you, will ye believe?" but He does not. It dawned on me not too long ago that the whole section was addressed to Nicodemus. What a fullness there was as He brings him to the idea of the brazen serpent, and judgment of sin in the flesh in Christ. But then, "For God has not sent his Son into the world that he may judge the world, but that the world may be saved through him", v 17. And, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son". I came across a remark by Mr Pellatt, who said, 'One can hardly think of the world, especially in the light of John, being an object of complacency, or even those who composed the world being objects of divine complacency or delight, but it is the love of omnipotent pity, of infinite compassion', Selected Ministry vol 1 p115. He loved because of His great desire to have man recovered to Himself, so He gives His

only-begotten Son “that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal”.

DBR To be brought into this life, redemption and the Holy Spirit is necessary. Does that link on with what has been said?

JDG Yes, we have to bear that in mind. It is a condensed statement, as you said earlier on, verses 4-13, the epitome of the Lord's life but for us to be brought into it involves redemption. It involves what we have been speaking about in John 3 that God gave His Son. It involves the blood of Christ; it involves the suffering of Christ.

DBR Is the idea of being 'born of God' like a divine root in the person? I mean, Christ was His own root in manhood, and nothing could be added to that, and He needed no development in that sense; but I wondered if being born of God is the establishment of a divine root in men, and it is only on the basis of that that we can understand this, do you think?

JDG Yes, I was wondering in my own mind whether it might link on a bit with what Paul calls the new man. There is something substantial which takes place in the believer when He comes to Christ. It is a divine work so we are all furnished with the same blessing. There has been an impartation to us by God's operations through new birth coming to a climax where there is something in us that is born of God and has its root in Him. It involves a new nature.

DBR So the new man is really a creation of God in that way, is it not? The creative power of God comes into that in a moral sense in the new man.

JDG Yes. What is in my mind is that, as born of God, there is something imparted to us that is of God. We partake of what belongs to Him. Just as a family partakes of the father's features, so in the divine family we partake of what belongs to God, and that expresses itself, just as the new man expresses itself. So this feature, 'born of God', expresses itself,. Paul is appealing to that side of things in Romans that is in the believer, “grace has overabounded”. Grace belongs to what has been born of God. It is one of the characteristics of the divine nature.

JAG The new man “is created in truthful righteousness and holiness”, Eph 4: 24. That is from God's side, and yet we have to come to that. The boards stand in two bases of silver, Exod 26: 19.

JDG Yes, and your “fruit unto holiness” at the end of Romans 6, “ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end eternal life”. There is a capacity in me of God that can take on these features and express them because they have been imparted to me. We ask for grace, and that is right. We ask for grace in the sense that we want to express it, but it belongs to me as having the work of God in me. It is not something I have to ask to be given exactly, it is something I have to ask to use - at least that is how it appeals to me.

Life is worked out in the believer. Growth takes place in the life of a believer, but each one has been given the essence of the work of God that carries all these features with it and are developed.

WL Some confuse “born anew” and 'born of God'. It would be helpful if you say something.

JDG Well, all I know about that is that “born anew” in John 3 is the beginning of the work of God, and “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”, v 3, 6. There has been a change in your spirit and my spirit, when it might not have been discernible to others, by the Spirit of God. It is completed fully in the work of God maturing and developing from an embryonic condition to full maturity. Is that right?

WL Yes, that is helpful. Some confuse the two. 'Born of God' would involve the gift of the Spirit, the indwelling power of the Spirit; born anew, not necessarily.

JDG “Born anew” is the beginning of the work of God, but it would be difficult to say about a soul that he had been born anew. You may consider he may be born anew. If you consider it in your own history, you can trace back to when you could say, 'Yes, God was working there before I confessed Christ as my Saviour'. Confessing Christ as my Saviour was like a completion on the way, one of the completions. Is that right?

WL Yes. It is a very solemn consideration. Unless a person is born anew he has no part in Christianity at all.

JDG But it does say, “It is needful that ye should be born anew”, John 3: 7. Now, that may be a verse to me in the gospel in the sense that I be exercised to be born anew, but it is the sovereign operation of God.

CKR Romans 3, 4 and 5 are light coming out then in righteousness, power, and the love of God. Then it says, “What then shall we say?”, Rom 6: 1. So there is a responsible life being fulfilled now on a new

principle.

JDG Yes, that is right. That is why I began there at the end of chapter 5, “grace has overabounded”. Paul says, “What then shall we say? Should we continue in sin that grace may abound?”, but grace has overabounded. I would like us to approach this scripture, today anyway, from the point of view of persons who have received Christ, persons who have been born of God. This chapter is not written to unbelievers. That does not mean we cannot preach the gospel from it; we can, but it is written to believers. So the question comes up, grace has been shown to me, I have been born of God and I take account of myself as that. Now light comes into my soul.

ASH Do you think that when Paul says, “But by God's grace I am what I am; and his grace, which was towards me, has not been vain” (1 Cor 15: 10), that the working out of the introduction of the way Christ would operate in his soul as light shone in that soul?

JDG Yes. It says here in verse 14, “for ye are not under law but under grace”. Grace becomes a motive power in the believer, does it not? He is affected by what has been shown to him, what has been secured in Christ. Grace becomes the power. It is not law that becomes the power. Law will never help me in the exercises of chapter 6 of Romans. It will never help me in my Christian life because I will not be able to fulfil it any more than the Israelites were prepared to fulfil it in the Old Testament. But grace is the power within the believer, the power of gathering. It draws us to Christ.

RG I was thinking about all those to whom the Lord had appeared that Paul speaks about, and then he says, “But by God's grace I am what I am”, 1 Cor 15: 10. “And last of all ... he appeared to *me* also”, v 8. So that is how He has appeared to us, do you think?

JDG Well, I think we really could take ground like that, “But by God's grace I am what I am”. We know what we were. The old man is what I was, is what you were, after the flesh. All it desired was to sin. That is the desire of the old man. To be crucified with Christ, God has shown publicly the crucifixion of Christ, and He has ended that man. In the death and burial of Christ the old man is out of sight from the divine viewpoint. Now I have to learn that the resurrection of Christ, the baptism and resurrection of Christ, the death and resurrection of Christ has affected me; so I walk in newness of life. I suppose that is just walking as a Christian, walking true to the work of God in me apart from

the world. What we find in this section is that it is Christ or the world.

WMP That expression “of his resurrection”, it is not only that we appreciate it or are identified with it. What do you see in it?

JDG Well, it says there in verse 5, “For if we are become identified with him in the likeness of his death, so also we shall be of his resurrection”. It seems to me that we are suited then to be associated with Christ in resurrection. We take on the features of Christ in resurrection, but it says, “For if we are become identified with him in the likeness of his death”. The note says, 'grown up with' Him. Another has said that it does not happen in a moment, growing up with Christ in the likeness of His death. It is something that is worked out in the believer's life. So we are not all taken to heaven when we come to Christ as Saviour but we are left here to go through this world and be true to what God has wrought in us.

WMP We were looking at Psalm 139, “Thine eyes did see my unformed substance ... during many days were they fashioned, when as yet there was none of them”, v 16. That is how the work of God develops in the believer and how things develop too in our local meetings. It is on that principle.

JDG Yes, that is very helpful. It is a secret thing, secret to you and me. The brethren see the evidences of growth in me, growth in you. They see the evidence of that, but the secret of growth is with the believer and with the Lord and helped by the Spirit. What was brought out, that being born of God involves the reception of the Spirit, is important. So we develop in the features that belong to that state. Growth takes place. 'Born of God' is arrived at as something mature and we have everything in essence there, but it is developed in the believer in capacity in the time of his life by his searching out, and being with God, and enquiring of God to acquire substance in the truth. We need to acquire substance and capacity. There needs to be a desire with us to follow this line. We are not going to continue in sin but we are going to continue so that grace does abound to us and help us in the pathway.

RJC So it is intended to lay hold of us in our lives here apart from the world. It is completely apart from the world and apart from the domination of sin. You are apart from that. So Paul says, “Far be the thought”. Why should we continue in sin? We have a life in Christ which forms us so we should be here pleasurable to God apart from sin.

JDG This is individual. We all individually here have to come through these exercises and then arrive at, “reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus”, v 11. Gradually as you go in for the things of the Lord, the truth begins to open up to you. “In Christ Jesus” is another sphere of life over against the world, linked with a Man in heaven. He is looking forward to divine purpose in that. This is all to encourage us to take up the pathway of identification with Christ in reproach, a pathway with Christ as “raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father” (v 4), to see that that blessed Man has been raised by the glory of the Father, a definite matter taken up by the Father to raise Him from among the dead.

JAG If you go back to John 4, you can see newness of life very distinctly, arriving quickly at the fact that He was the Christ. John is writing that believers might believe that.

JDG That is right, and how effective it was. What a name He received there by the Samaritans, “Saviour of the world”, John 4: 42.

DBR Why do you think the idea of crucifixion comes in? It says, “knowing this, that our old man has been crucified” (Rom 6: 6); not only death, but He was crucified. Have you some thought about that?

JDG We were speaking a week or two ago about circumcision in Joshua, circumcised with stone-knives (chap 5: 3), which is the secret side of things in the believer's history. The crucifixion, it seems to me, is how God publicly regards this old man. It says, “our old man has been crucified with him”. What I have derived from Adam, the whole stock of Adam, God has crucified in the death of Christ. He has made it a public, shameful thing to be identified with the old man so that we do not want to be any more identified with the old man. He has been annulled “that we should no longer serve sin”.

DTP The footnote helps when it speaks of being 'discharged' from sin. “Free” is ambiguous. It is justified, cleared, discharged. From sin... It is complete in the divine purpose of God and the believer lays hold on it.

JDG It says, “For he that has died is justified from sin”, v 7. That means he can no longer be charged with it. “We have died”, v 8. It is a statement by itself there. “Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him, knowing that Christ having been raised up from among the dead dies no more” and so on. But it says, “that the body of sin”, the totality of it, “might be annulled”. The result of God

viewing the old man as crucified should exercise me that he has no power any longer over me, and power is given in the Spirit to secure that, an answer in me.

DBR The idea of “the body of sin” is the whole totality of the thing. God has dealt with that and there has been a public demonstration that it has been dealt with. That is clearing the way for us to come into this newness of life.

JDG So if I express, or you express, or anyone expresses features of the old man, God finds no pleasure in that and I think, as judging ourselves, we take no pleasure in it either. At times when I may fail in expressing something of the features of the Christ, then I have to judge myself and in doing so learn to see what God has done with that old man He has crucified in the death of Christ.

CKR How thankful we should be for the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the glory of the Father involved in it in Romans 6, and the believer living now in the new principle of “alive to God in Christ Jesus”, a glorified Man. It opens up a whole new world, but also a whole new principle for living in the world in which we are.

JDG Yes, so 'born of God' has been reckoned to be like a new race. This chapter brings out the new world and I begin to walk in the light of it. I am not in it yet but I am in the light of it. So then it says in verses 13 and 14, “Neither yield your members instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but yield yourselves to God as alive from among the dead, and your members instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over *you*, for ye are not under law but under grace.” How thankful we are that we are under grace, and it draws us to follow this blessed Man because what a wonderful deliverance we have received through Him! What a way He has gone to secure that deliverance!

JTB Does the widow in 2 Kings 4 illustrate this? “Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt”, every liability was discharged, “and live thou and thy sons on the rest”, v 7. Do you think she was living now in the sphere of life, this newness of life was the scene in which she was walking?

JDG Yes, so we might say, “Now, having got your freedom from sin, ye have become bondmen to righteousness”, and in the next part of the chapter, “But *now*, having got your freedom from sin, and having become bondmen to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end eternal life”. That was the principle of her life now, over against being under law and in debt, God given riches. What a challenge to us! Are

we prepared for “having got your freedom from sin, ye have become bondmen to righteousness” and for “having got your freedom from sin, and having become bondmen to God”? How wonderful it is to address God and acknowledge Him as the Master!

DCB Is this chapter helping us that sin is not to have dominion, as distinct from chapter 7 in which sin dwells in us. So can we see this as something that is completed because of the work of Christ? The dominion of sin over the believer has been broken.

JDG Yes, I am glad you bring that out, because what is in mind as discussing this chapter is that we are alive in the world in which all these things apply where sin is, and all that is surrounding us. We are living there, but it is not to have dominion over us. We have to come to a judgment of our eyes and our tastes that belong after the flesh, but which is part of the old man which has been crucified, and make way for what is spiritual, what is of God. I say again, we have been given something from God, that is born of God, that would be true to itself if we make way for it. You do not ask it to be true to itself, it will be true to itself if we make way for it. It belongs to each one of us. All we have to do is ask God for help, the Spirit for help, to express what belongs to God in me and it will do it. That is expressing itself in life.

WL Is “bondmen of God” one fruit that you are born of God?

JDG Yes, and you are rejoicing in it. It is not bondage. You have freedom from sin, “But *now*, having got your freedom from sin, and having become bondmen to God”, it is not bondage, it is liberty.

JCG Say some more about this positive side of yielding. It is mentioned once or twice, “yield yourselves” and then “reckon yourselves dead to sin”. There is some kind of assertion of the work of God in that, is there?

JDG Yes, I understand we get help by the Spirit as we yield ourselves. God has given us the Spirit of God to help us. Someone else has said that nature is character, but power comes from the Spirit to express these things. What I have been saying, we have the nature. It belongs to us as born of God by divine workmanship in us, divine operations. The Spirit will cause those features to develop in me and you and express themselves, and they will express themselves along the pathway of “not of the world”, John 17: 16. Would that be right?

We come to Exodus. The thought there, as would be evident,

was the dwellings. First of all you have persons individually. According to Romans 6 you are in this world but apart from it because you love the Lord and have been drawn to Him, have affection for Christ. You do not want to be in the world that cast Him out, but He died and He is risen. He is related to another world, and I want to be related to that world and have my tastes there, my joys there. We come now to persons who have households, "But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings". This is the land of Goshen. It is in Egypt, but it is the land of Goshen. This is the time of the plagues or the signs, plagues for Egypt, signs for the children of Israel. God distinguishes the children of Israel and distinguishes their dwellings in the land of Goshen. There is light there. That was the light that came in in Christ. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." That is that light that is in these dwellings.

RJC On the other hand there is thick darkness in Egypt. I thought of that when the Lord came in, "He came to his own, and his own received him not". That was darkness religiously when the Lord came into this scene. But there is light in their dwellings, there is tremendous contrast between thick darkness and the children of Israel having light in their dwellings.

JDG At the present time in which we live, if there is one thing registers with you in this country, it is that the darkness is increasing, but there is light in the dwellings of the saints. Do I live in relation to that light?

DBR Delightful to God! I was thinking for instance, a young brother and sister saying they will go and learn, morning by morning, to get on their knees, that is the life of Christ. That is the kind of life He lived and that would be seen now in our houses. I think, too, the older you get the more precious it becomes. It would be that we can just simply speak to God.

JDG That is right. That was in my mind, the protection of a believer's home, heirs together of the grace of life, a very beautiful suggestion. We have both got an object in life that is going to go beyond the natural. The natural is wonderful as it is but it will cease, but heirs together, husbands and wives and children can live in an environment where there is light and safety.

CKR Say more then about what this light is that is in the dwelling. It must be a heavenly light. Paul drew a lot initially on households and light coming in. There was light in the house of Judas in "the street

which is called Straight”, Acts 9: 11. There was light as he visited place by place, as though there was something of this principle developing as the truth of the assembly began to fructify.

JDG Yes. You mentioned the assembly. It was in my mind that we should speak about walking in the light of the assembly, but the household is part of that. It is an environment related to the gathering of the saints. It goes before the gathering of the saints. What kind of light is in my house? Am I living in the light of Christ glorified and the Spirit here. As surrounded by a world of darkness, do our children see a difference in our houses compared with what they might meet with their peers at school?

GAB These three days must mean something. Is it not the death of Christ that sets my household apart from a worldly household?

JDG You are referring to the three days in verse 22, “there was a thick darkness throughout the land of Egypt three days” bringing out the death of Christ? We have been affected by Christ raised from the dead. We were speaking about it in Romans 6, but there is no doubt there is darkness in Egypt, darkness in the world. In this setting we are in Goshen. It is the setting of the testimony in the world in which we are in which we have to work out our daily toils amongst men, apart from men. But you return to your home, and it is a respite.

JAG Does this light relate to the leadership of the Spirit, and the inheritance, and sonship.

JDG Yes, it does, and these features are expressed livingly in the believer's life. We are speaking about persons being married here and households, but it does not exclude persons who are not married because they have a household too and have to take up their households. So there is light in all their dwellings there too. Persons may come into the house of a sister and can see there is another kind of life there that is according to God. But I was thinking that marriage in the Lord is not just for one day. Our brother here undertakes marriages for us, and we are thankful for that, and marriage in the Lord is stressed, but it is not just for one day. In a Christian marriage there is husband and wife and the Lord, and that always has to be carried through. It is not just for one day in their lives, marriage in the Lord. It is to characterise the whole of their lives as husband and wife, and as children come on they are all related to the Lord and His authority.

JAG Everyone who has the Spirit has intelligence in capacity to

appreciate the light and where it is leading to.

JDG Our homes are different; we are not trying to say they are not, but we need to protect them. We need to protect them and protect the children. Particularly as technology has affected our homes of necessity on account of business and other matters, but we need to protect the children so that there is a difference in the home from a worldly home. Time is not spent on certain practice the way the world spends their time, but the believer's house has opportunity given for prayer and for reading the Scriptures with the family. There is a protection in that.

WL The jailor was baptised, "he and all his straightway", Acts 16: 33.

JDG What a joy to come into a house where there is rejoicing. They rejoiced householdwise. Why? Light had come into his soul and had affected his arrangements and his home, affected the whole of his life. It is not just for one day. It becomes a life practice, and it is a joyous practice because, what is life? We are speaking about life. Life is enjoyment of what God has given you in your being and the environment where you can enjoy the blessings of what is in Christ Jesus now before the day of glory comes.

RG "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord", that is like Romans, "come into my house and abide there", Acts 16: 15. That is what we have here now.

JDG That is very fine, to have light in our dwellings, to come into a home where that kind of light is shining, another kind of light, light from heaven shining in the believer, shining in our homes. Our children are brought into that environment. Outside there is darkness in Egypt, but we want to lay hold of this, heirs together of the grace of life. In Peter, there is an exhortation to the husband but it does not exclude the sister either. It says, "Ye husbands likewise, dwell with them according to knowledge, as with a weaker, even the female, vessel, giving them honour". Then it says, "as also fellow-heirs of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered". That is a wonderful attitude to have. It is really the elements of what comes from Christ and the assembly. "Husbands, love your own wives, even as the Christ also loved the assembly", Eph 5: 25.

TDB I was thinking that John speaks in his epistle of things that we have seen and contemplated and handled, 1 John 1: 1. That was substantial in the life of Jesus, was it?

JDG You see it in our homes. There is to be an expression of that kind of life in our homes, that “had light in their dwellings”. What a privilege to be in such a house! What a privilege in responsibility to maintain such a house, to maintain it day by day, every day. There are ups and downs in life. We have to work the truth out together, work things out together in the pressures of life, but if you have something together of the grace of life, that is not only the light of another world but the enjoyment of it together. There is a bond formed in the marriage that is going to be greater than the marital bond in the end really. The marital bond will not go through, but “fellow-heirs of the grace of life” is something that is formed spiritually and will go into eternity.

WL What is “the grace of life”?

JDG It is just enjoying the Lord. What do you think?

WL That is helpful. It is not fellow-heirs of life, but “fellow-heirs of the grace of life”. There is something deep in that.

JDG It is an expression in the believer of the choiceness of the favour of God which I can enjoy in my life and in my household.

JAG I was thinking the mutuality of love in Priscilla and Aquila and their being in all these different places as being a manifestation of it.

JDG Yes, and you are linked up with a living God. There is life according to God expressed in the home.

JAG And all are welcome there.

JDG That is right, and there is a mutuality of joy as you entertain the saints in your home. It is evident there is an atmosphere there in the home that is in the enjoyment of this kind of life. I know there are problems, and toilsome life, and we have many exercises, and going through this scene is not easy. We know all that, but what a joy to come home from the toils of business whatever they be, and find a person there who is a fellow-heir with you of the grace of life. What an adornment! What an atmosphere!

JCG “Giving them honour” is an acknowledgement really by the husband that there is the work of God in the wife, and the children can see the mutuality that exists there. It provides an atmosphere of love.

JDG They will see natural affection too, but they will see something else. When it comes to Lord's day morning, what will they see? Persons desirous of going out to remember the Lord Jesus, persons

who spend the Lord's day committed to the Lord Jesus, persons who, as far as they are able, spend the Monday evening in prayer in the assembly, persons who are committed, as far as is possible, to working out life here below to be amongst the saints on the week nights. I often think of one brother who gives the announcements and speaks of 'the mid-week city reading'. I like that, because it is a place we should always be at. Why? Because you are going to taste something of the grace of life there, in the midst of a world of toilsomeness, which is greater than the home. The home has certain characteristics that are similar to this, but it is greater than the home. You come in to see other persons, to use an expression that you get in the Old Testament, that are acacias. They have been in the world and they are acacias. They have been through the wilderness, acacia-wood, formed after Christ, and now they are released in an atmosphere in which you touch something of eternal life in the mid-week. Oh brethren, why do we not be there? Why do we not live this kind of life as far as is possible? Why do we not live it? It is for our enjoyment. It is going to be for our blessing in our households, blessing in our families. We all have exercises in our families, there are very few households that do not, but for our enjoyment to have this kind of life.

JCG Mr James Taylor likened the company of prophets in Samuel, and the hill of God (1 Sam 10: 5), to the middle of the week, vol 60 p497. The company of prophets would express what was of life by the Spirit.

JDG That is a good expression, "the hill of God". There were the Philistines there, so you need strengthened. It is a strengthening occasion to help you to continue for the next three days, you might say. It builds you up in your soul to go back to your home, and out the next morning to your work, back into the toils of life and back in the evening, "fellow-heirs of the grace of life". Wonderful!

DBR What did you have in mind in your opening remarks about communication of life?

JDG I just thought that, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men" was going to be communicated to us, imparted to us. Has it not been communicated to you? I am sure it has.

DBR That is this verse here, "the grace of life". It is what has been communicated, what we have been introduced into by the same blessed Person.

JDG Yes, "the grace of life" would not be far from the sphere of

eternal life, would it?

Well, what I thought in Romans 8 was that the Spirit identifies Himself with us, as the sons of God. There was just one touch I had on my spirit, "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit", that is the Spirit objectively. He indwells us but He is also there objectively, "that we are children of God. And if children, heirs also: heirs of God, and Christ's joint heirs". I thought it is an added gem there, because the rest of the chapter goes on to the question of toils and we are not sure how to pray as is fitting, and the Spirit helps us in that, but He just touches your heart here. You are on the heavenly way. You are on the way to the inheritance, and I link it in my mind with what we have just spoken about. He would say to you, 'Well, if you want to enjoy the inheritance in the mid-week, seek the company of the saints as they are gathered'. It is possible. That should be the objective of our lives.

These are the only impressions I had. I trust they have been some encouragement to us. No condemnation! May it be an encouragement to us as we set our feet again on the highway and are strengthened in it by the Spirit!

Glasgow

26th April 2008

Key to Initials:

T D Beveridge, Kirkcaldy; G A Brown, Edinburgh; D C Brown, Edinburgh; J T Brown, Edinburgh; R J Campbell, Glasgow; J A Gardiner, Aberdeen; R Gardiner, Kirkcaldy; J C Gray, Grangemouth; J D Gray, Edinburgh; A S Henry, Glasgow; W Lamont, Cumnock; W M Patterson, Glasgow; D T Pye, Kirkcaldy; D B Robertson, Cumnock; C K Robinson, Glasgow

KEEPING

Edwin O P Mutton

Jude v 20, 21

2 Timothy 4: 7

1 Timothy 6: 20 (“deposit”)

Ephesians 4: 3

Revelation 3: 8 - 11

I thought, beloved brethren, to pursue the thought of what is kept. We have remarked on the desire divine Persons have to keep us in relation to their things. “Behold, he that keepeth Israel will neither slumber nor sleep”, Ps 121: 4. We have been occupied in the reading with the great sphere of practical salvation in which we can find safekeeping; where the Lord is supreme and where things are ordered for our preservation, our feeding, our encouragement and our growth, and how we can be part of that. We are seeking to help one another, to keep one another, to be concerned about one another.

These scriptures bring this matter down to an individual level. Jude exhorts us to keep ourselves in the love of God. Now this is an exercise for all of us. It is our responsibility. Jude puts it that way. He says, “ye, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God”. The note says to 'be in that state'. We certainly have the responsibility, beloved, as individuals, to keep ourselves where we can obtain this wonderful help that comes from the divine realm. What is involved in the love of God? The whole of God's purpose and pleasure centred in Christ. It is what God is: “keep yourselves in the love of God”. What God is is brought within our range in the Person of the Lord Jesus. It contains every thought of blessing and help that He has for the creature, the greatest thoughts of God. God has come out to man to secure man for Himself, to have him for His pleasure. Some of us were remarking in the morning reading that we are “brought nigh by the blood of the Christ”, Eph 2: 13; not just brought nigh, but “become nigh”. God has put us in that position, we have “become nigh”. In that sense, you cannot slip away. But then there is the side of responsibility, and we are to keep ourselves in the love of God. Life is very busy and very full, but this exhortation still comes to us all, to keep ourselves in the love of God. Let our hearts resort to where Christ lives as we get opportunity, at the beginning of the day, the end of the day, or at night when we

cannot sleep. Let us make time in the day to keep ourselves practically in the love of God. It is a wonderful antidote to everything that is here, the cares and burdens of life, the struggles that are often with us, circumstances that cause us pain and exercise. "Keep yourselves in the love of God". Keep yourself in it! Do not get away from it! The younger son in Luke 15 got away from it. He got a long way away from it and we can, once we start going that way, get a long way away, but Jude says, "keep yourselves in the love of God".

Our individual responsibility to keep things, to keep things pure, to keep things holy, to keep things alive among the people of God, stems from this, keeping ourselves in the love of God. That is where every impulse in the Christian's life should come from, in the love of God. Enoch was a man who was in that love. He "walked with God", Gen 5: 24. We can think of him as a man who kept himself in the love of God. For him to be translated made no difference to this, "he was not". Every day in his spirit he had walked with God and enjoyed the presence of God. We have known men and women like that, and we see it often in an aged saint. We see that they have kept themselves in the love of God, and the enemy cannot rob them of that. He can rob them of their health, their mental abilities, but he cannot rob them of their experience of the love of God. I think it is very wonderful seeing an aged saint passing through physical weakness and pain, and seeing that God has preserved what really matters, and He gives them a sense of His love and of being kept in that love. I think we need to cultivate that, all of us. It will be our preservation if we keep ourselves there, everything will be seen from the divine perspective. This is not exactly something that is done for us. Of course, we have the Lord's help and we have the Spirit's help, but Jude here puts it firmly on our responsibility to keep *ourselves* in the love of God. If we deliberately take ourselves out of it we are prey to the enemy; if we keep ourselves in the love of God, we will be kept in the appreciation and enjoyment of it. One of the things greatly stressed in present ministry is that it is not enough to have the light of these things. We need the joy and experience of them and that comes by keeping ourselves in the love of God.

Paul wanted the saints to be kept in the love of God. He saw things coming in; he saw things breaking up. These men we have read of, John and Paul, saw things disintegrate. You might have thought the Lord in His goodness would have allowed them to see things in their

lifetime going through in power and in freshness and vitality. No, these men saw things break up. John saw the break up in Revelation. Paul saw all in Asia turn away from him, 2 Tim 1: 15. But Paul had kept himself, John had kept himself, Peter had kept himself in the love of God, and that preserved them to the end. Nothing else would have done that. Paul finished up in prison, unable to visit or see the brethren. I love to think that the Lord gave Paul some sense that his letters were going to be of such use to the testimony. If Paul had not been in prison there are at least five epistles that we might not have had. How useful they have been! They have become part of the word of God. I do not want to be fanciful but I think the Lord gave Paul some sense that his work in prison and his writings were going to be of great benefit to the saints. But Paul kept himself in the love of God, in that restfulness. He said, "the Lord stood with me", 2 Tim 4: 17. Now, that is the love of God; the Lord standing with you.

Our hearts resort to where Thou liv'st
In heav'n's unclouded rays. Hymn 25

That is what heaven is. When I was quite young, I remember a brother asking in the gospel, 'What is heaven? Can anyone here describe what heaven is?' He gave the answer, 'Heaven is where Jesus is'. It is because Jesus is there that it *is* heaven. The Person makes the place, not the other way round. Heaven is what it is because Jesus is there.

In 2 Timothy 4 Paul says he had "kept the faith". I think that implies, beloved brethren, that he was conscious that he had kept the totality of what the Lord had committed to him. "The faith", not part of it, not just the bit he particularly enjoyed. He kept the whole faith. He had delivered to the saints what the Lord had delivered to him. Part of it, in the second epistle to Timothy, is a very wonderful exhortation about how a believer were to live in a day of breakdown. "The faith", as we are told elsewhere, "once delivered to the saints", Jude v 3: Paul had kept it. I wonder whether any of us could say that we have "kept the faith". It is something to aspire to, that we seek to maintain the wonderful truth that has been delivered to us in a full and balanced sense. In a sense the truth does not need to be balanced, but what I mean is that we keep the faith in a rounded way. Some of us like some bits rather than others. Christendom is full of persons who have grasped and make much of a certain part of the truth at the expense of other parts. I think that it is important for us to take on responsibility for the whole truth. Paul speaks of "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20: 27) that he had announced

to the saints in Ephesus. He said, “for I have not shrunk from announcing to you all the counsel of God”. He says, 'I have kept it'. The faith had not deteriorated in Paul's hands. From the time it was given to him to the time he passed it on to Timothy and asked him to entrust it “to faithful men such as shall be competent to instruct others also” (2 Tim 2: 2), what Paul passed on was “the faith”.

I wonder whether the faith will suffer by being in my hands, that bits of it could be watered down, or bits of it forgotten? That is what happened in Christendom, and it happened very quickly. If you read the history of the early church in the years from 100 AD onwards, within a matter of decades there had been so much departure. Things had been given up. Hierarchies had grown up. Politics had come into the church. What Paul had laboured for had been undermined by the enemy. Powerful truths were carried through in the mercy of God, the golden line of the Spirit's presence holding the truth. Paul did not have the ultimate custody of the faith. No, that has continued. It has continued in the Spirit and there has been that line of faithfulness. That golden thread never snapped. It never could because the Spirit is here. But publicly profession became undermined. Some got to land one way, some another, but the prow of the boat was stuck fast and the boat broke up, Acts 27: 41. Paul had that sense that he had kept the faith even in the midst of the breakdown. I would like to exhort us all that we set ourselves to keep the whole truth, “as the truth is in Jesus” (Eph 4: 21); and have desires in our hearts that it might not be damaged in our hands.

That is a real exercise to me. As you get older and see other generations coming on, your children and your grandchildren, you say, 'What am I passing on?'. It has been passed on to me by my father and grandfathers, sometimes at great cost to themselves. There were men that faced the power of Trade Unionism, for instance, and those that faced the difficulties in the thirties in the depression, and those that had to stand for the truth in various conflicts. They had suffered for it; Paul had suffered for it; but he kept it and these dear men that we have known in our lifetime in that sense “kept the faith” and they passed it on intact. It is a question of how you and I are going to keep the faith, or whether we are just going to accept a slightly lower level so that we can get by a little more easily. It is what Christendom has done: they have adjusted their sails to the prevailing wind. You do not need to do that. If you are kept in the love of God you will be helped to keep the faith as it

was “once delivered to the saints”. It is a wonderful thing that God never has to alter His gospel to circumstances. Times change, life gets more sophisticated, we live in an electronic age, but God has not had to change the gospel. He certainly has not changed “the faith once delivered to the saints”. I think we should be exercised that we should keep it, seek grace to keep it, as it has been delivered to us by faithful men, by men who were committed to it. How Paul must have sorrowed to see how all in Asia had turned away from him, men he trusted, men he loved, men who were his brethren in Christ, and yet they turned away from him.

John was a man too who had “kept the faith”. Writing his gospel, speaking of the love of Christ, speaking of how the Lord loved him - how he must have gone over that in Patmos, how he had been in the bosom and leaning on the breast of Jesus! That is where John learned to keep himself in the love of God! What an impression he gives in his epistles of God's love! He kept himself “in the love of God” and, like Paul, he had “kept the faith”. I often sit in the prayer meeting and think there have been faithful sisters in the locality and maybe the Lord is honouring their faith, and that the testimony in the place where I am has come down through the exercises of sisters. There have been brothers there who sadly have not been faithful, but maybe those sisters “kept the faith”. Let us be committed to the faith that has been delivered to us!

And then in 1 Timothy 6 Paul pleads with Timothy to “keep the entrusted deposit”. I think this is something more personal. This is what God has given you, what God has given me; an impression of Christ; some particular understanding as we have come to love and to know the Lord Jesus, that has been put into our hearts, “the entrusted deposit”. Paul says in 2 Timothy that he knew that the Lord was able to keep that which he had entrusted to Him, chap 2: 12. The Lord can keep that, but what about you and me? God has put something of His work distinctively in each one of us. Not the same in all of us, no! It is going to take all the saints to display the glories that are seen in that blessed Man in the “vest of many colours”, Gen 37: 3. We do not all have all the colours, but we have a colour; we have an impression of Christ; we have an “entrusted deposit”. God has placed something in you and something in me which is a deposit that is worth keeping, and it has been entrusted, and there is a commensurate responsibility. If someone gives you something and asks you to keep it safe, you have a

responsibility to do just that. Here, Paul with all his feelings, says, "O Timotheus", a personal appeal to this young man, 'There is something in you which is of God, and you are to keep it. It is precious. Do not be robbed of it! Do not lose the preciousness of it!' In one sense, of course, the work of God in you and me cannot be destroyed. That is a great comfort. Far better if you have been entrusted with something from God to keep it and make it available to the saints, put it into circulation. It reminds me of the parable of the talents, Matt 25: 14-30. One man went and buried his but there are others who traded with theirs. "Keep the entrusted deposit". This is something very particular to each one of us. The faith is the same for each one of us; it is "the faith once delivered to the saints". I think "the entrusted deposit" is something that would be specific and special to each one of us, the glory of the work of God, star differing from star in glory, 1 Cor 15: 41. That glory, dear saint, is an "entrusted deposit". God has placed something in you, in an earthen vessel. Paul says, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels", 2 Cor 4: 7. Thank God we can see it; but sometimes we do not. I am often challenged at a burial as to whether the work of God in the beloved saint being buried was actually appreciated by me while they were alive; whether I actually saw the treasure that was there. We ought to value the work of God in each one; it is very, very precious. If we keep ourselves in the love of God, I think we would begin to see the treasure that there is in one and another. You say, well, that is a very awkward brother or a very awkward sister, and they say things that are a bit alarming at times, and they offend people and so on. Paul says in that wonderful chapter in Philippians 2, "each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves", v 3. Mr Alfred Gardiner used to say that there is always some feature in your brother or your sister of the work of God that is more developed in them than it is in you and that is what you value, that is what you esteem. There is always some feature of the work of God that shines. Maybe there are lots of other features that preoccupy my mind and should not. Can I focus on God's deposit in them and value that? What a wonderful thing it is, that there is something in every brother and sister. Could you identify that in every brother and sister in your locality, a feature of the work of God that makes you esteem them as more excellent than yourself? I do not think the enemy would have too much room for bringing in personal feeling if we were on that line. So, "keep the entrusted deposit"; be yourself; let it shine; and then make sure you see that deposit shining in others because there is

something special in every blood-bought saint.

God loves variety. If we were all the same in natural things it would be unworkable, but in spiritual things there would not be the opportunity for God to temper together. Paul speaks about that: “But God has tempered the body together”, 1 Cor 12: 24. He has set us together; He has put different shining stars together; and that is what your local meeting is and that is what my local meeting is, a collection of stars. God has put something special in all and he wants that to shine. He has put something in the young people. Some of us older ones can be critical of the young brethren, and sometimes they deserve it as we did when we were young and did things that we should not have done. But if there is a work of God begun in a young brother or a young sister we need to esteem that too, and those of us who are older should foster that, and let it grow, and let it shine and bring that into circulation, because God loves that. There is something very special about devotion and committal in a young brother or a young sister. Some of us wasted those years, did not really get committed to the Lord's things until those years of youth with our youthful energy and our ability to learn, and to take in the ministry, had gone. God is able to “restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten”, Joel 2: 25. The exercise now is to keep the “entrusted deposit”, to value it in ourselves, to keep it in ourselves, and to value it in one another.

I go on to Ephesians 4, and again we are exhorted by Paul in one of his prison epistles, “using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace”. You do not keep things safe and pure just by hoping. It needs diligence. We need to be diligent and to value the things that we have. We should be above the level and standards and customs of the world through which we are passing. We have something distinctive and we have to do with the very greatest things that have ever entered the heart of man, “things ... which God has prepared for them that love him” (1 Cor 2: 9) and it needs diligence. And if you keep yourself in the love of God, you will want to be diligent in this area of keeping things in a pristine condition for divine Persons.

We have often been told we do not make the unity of the Spirit; it is there, to keep. I think this links a little with what was said in the reading about how we are together, how we are in our places. Are we “using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit”? When we review the history of the testimony, we see certain things that were done “using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit” would have done them in a way

that better reflected “the uniting bond of peace”. So let us use “diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit”! Do not bring anything in among the saints, beloved brethren, that is going to make for disunity. Strive to use diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit! Strive for the things that unite the saints! Even the spirit of disunity can cause trouble among the people of God. Even if things are difficult among the people of God, we still need to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace”. It is there; it is in the Spirit; and we need to keep that unity among the people of God, and especially any of us who have the privilege of serving the saints. We need to see that it is a very, very serious thing to speak or act in a way that gives the enemy scope to bring in what is divisive, even in thought let alone in action.

I just finish with Revelation and the word to Philadelphia. There are two things they had kept. They had kept the word of God, the word of the Lord; and he commends them also - and this is particularly what I had in mind - because they had “kept the word of my patience”. I would just like to finish with this: they had “kept the word of my patience”. The dispensation we are in, beloved brethren, the time we are in, is a time in which the Lord, indeed, God Himself, is showing patience. He is waiting over the world; provisionally it is reconciled to Himself, the work of Christ having been done. Think of how long God has waited over this world, the world that is going on to judgment. The appearance is of evil increasing, and these saints had been with the Lord in that: they had kept the word of His patience. We have to wait the Lord's time. We wait for the rapture. I trust all of us would like that to happen to-day, but we are having to keep the word of His patience, and that is sometimes very trying. The note speaks about 'endurance'. To keep going, even though we have the power of the Spirit and our High Priest being Christ on high; we are tested by the word of His patience. These beloved saints in Philadelphia had kept the word of His patience. They had been with the Lord. They had not been behind the Lord. They had not been in front of the Lord. They had kept the word of His patience. And the Lord adds this exhortation, “hold fast what thou hast”. Keep it safe! Do not let that deposit go! Do not let the great truths go! Do not let the saints' enjoyment of the things of God go through lack of diligence and lack of committal! Do not let me bring in what is weakening - “that no one take thy crown”. Beloved brethren, we have to do with the very greatest things. I will say that again, the very greatest things. Sometimes through smallness and isolation and difficulties, we lose sight of that and we let the difficulties loom large, but there is this crown, and no one must take it! The Lord Himself is speaking here. It is not

Paul or John. "And to the angel of the assembly in Philadelphia write: These things saith the holy, the true", v 7. The Lord Himself is speaking and He is saying, let "no one take thy crown"! Do not let the very best be spoiled! How much ministry we have had on this! The crown is the top stone and that is what goes first. It is what Ephesus let go, their first love. How sad that was! They did not have a meeting and decide they were going to give up their first love. No! It gradually came in through lack of diligence and lack of keeping what had been committed to them. They left their first love. Gradually, gradually it went. And the Lord says to Philadelphia, "thou hast a little power": do not let that crown go!

Let us keep these things, beloved brethren, the things we have gone over together, and there are many more in scripture. It is amazing how many things in scripture we are exhorted to keep. I could have read in the Old Testament about keeping the charge, about keeping the utensils in the house of God, about gate-keeping, but I just wanted to concentrate on these because they relate, I think, to the crown. They relate to the great things that God has given us to enjoy and we shall enjoy them at the full height of the love of God. Tomorrow morning we come, if the Lord leaves us here, to break bread; we enter into the service of God and we enter into it at its height. It does not depend on numbers; it does not depend on gift: it depends on affection for Christ; it depends on our having kept ourselves in the love of God. It is what is in the affections of the saints, "the entrusted deposit", that has been kept. It is the word of His patience that has been kept; it is the faith that has been kept, operating in the soul, that will bring us, freighted with love's treasures, ready to enter into the service of God. Is it not wonderful that we can lose sight of the conditions we are in and enter into that realm where everything is of God? We are brought into a large place where we can enjoy the very best that God can provide for men, and we enjoy it in its fulness. Why? Because we have Christ and the Spirit. "For through him we have both access by one Spirit to the Father" (Eph 2: 18), and there are no 'ifs' and 'buts'; there is no quorum. Men have their quorums. You come together sometimes for a meeting and you cannot have the meeting because there is not a quorum. "For where two or three" - that is the quorum - "are gathered together" (Matt 18: 20), you can touch the best, and you can have the enjoyment of it at the height that God intended it to be. Beloved brethren, can I say simply, do not let us settle for less! May the Lord help us!

Los Angeles

17th November 2007

LIFE AND DEATH

Kevin Pearson

Genesis 2: 7, 16-18; 3: 6-9;

Romans 5: 12-14, 8-10;

1 John 5: 6 (“And it is ...”) -12

I have been thinking that there is a saying in the world, 'a matter of life or death'. People call 911 for emergency operators and say, 'it is a matter of life or death' and what do they mean by that? They mean that somebody's life is at stake. As I have been thinking about that simple statement, 'a matter of life or death' I thought how the gospel is really that, a matter of life or death. The gospel is all summed up in those two words, 'life' and 'death'. From the very moment that we see these words in the book of Genesis, right to the end of the book of Revelation, life and death come before us throughout all scripture. Everything is tied up with those two things. You are either in life, or you are in death; there is no middle ground. You cannot be in death and be in life at the same time; you either have one or the other. We can say that naturally people are dying. Everyone from the day that they are born is on a course towards death, unless the Lord returns. So people are dying, but the fact of the matter is that you are dead already if you have not received Christ as your Saviour.

In the gospel message I would like to point out the beginning of things because God had life always before Him; He did not have death in mind. It was not His purpose for death, it was not His desire for death, but it is a necessity that death must come in so that there can be life on the other side. Life actually comes out of death in Christianity and it comes out of death through the death of the One who gave Himself for us. As a result of what He has done then we can come into life. What a wonderful privilege it is, and this is the essence of the glad tidings.

In the book of Genesis we see that God created man, and He created him to become, “a living soul”, not a dead soul. He had life in mind. Obviously when God formed man as dust of the ground, he was inanimate, he was not dead, you could not say he was dead, but God breathed into him, “the breath of life”, because whatever God touches it is going to bring in life: He is the God of life. He cannot breathe into something and not bring life with it. God made Adam a living soul and placed him in the garden. I am sure that it was a garden that was full of

life; can you see in your mind how beautiful it must have been? It was like no garden that we have ever seen - it was a paradise. What a wonderful thing to think that God loved man, gave him life, and then gives him conditions for life to abound. Everything that he had need of was supplied, and in the midst of that garden he put the "tree of life". There was that which could sustain the living soul for eternity as long as the conditions were met. But God had to test this creation; this man that he created, he had to be tested. He had to have man for Himself but only as man desired to be for God. He gave man a will, and a will to live for Him, or a will to reject Him. God gave man one simple test, "And Jehovah Elohim commanded Man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou shalt freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it". Notice it says, "Of every tree of the garden thou shalt freely eat"; that included the tree of life. It was in the midst of the garden. "Of every tree", but one tree he could not eat of. "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest of it thou shalt certainly die". This thought of death comes in right from the very start, because death morally is separation from God. Think about it. We read in the third chapter where the serpent comes in and deceives Eve, and Adam eats of the tree knowingly; he knew what he was doing. Death came in just as God had said. The serpent deceived Eve into thinking that death would not come in. You could say they did not die, they were cast out of the Garden of Eden. They had sons after that, Cain and Abel come after this, but moral death came in, there was a separation from God, a separation that had not been there before. That is why I read, "they heard the voice of Jehovah Elohim, walking in the garden in the cool of the day. And Man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah Elohim, in the midst of the trees of the garden. And Jehovah Elohim called to Man, and said to him, Where art thou?". It is a question that goes out to each and every one of us. We all have to ask ourselves, 'Where am I?' Where are we in our relationship with God? Where are you in your relationship with God today? Are you still tied to your sins? Are you still tied to the old man? Are you still bound by death? That is the question you have to ask yourself, and only you can answer it. Or, is there true life in you? Do you desire to have life? If you realise you are dead and there is no communion with God and no relationship with God, with divine Persons, then you are dead. Are you hearing the voice of Jesus calling? He is saying "Where art thou?" It is a wonderful thing when the voice of Jesus does call, and thank God the voice did call, "Where art

thou?” What if God had left things as they were? We could have gone on to read about how they were clothed, and sacrifice was necessitated in order to clothe them with something other than fig leaves. Think about trying to cover your nakedness with fig leaves. Before God everything is naked. There is nothing that you can hide from God; He sees everything that you do, every moment of every day, He knows every detail about you; there is nothing that He does not notice. We will all answer before the judgement-seat of the Christ one day to review how we have lived our lives here (2 Cor 5: 10), but the turning factor is going to be whether you have life or whether you have death.

God in His great love and His mercy has no desire for death. He has done everything He can to conquer death, to put death to nought, so that death no longer holds a bite, and has no sting. It cannot have the victory over you if you are a Christian, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ; it cannot have any victory over you. That is one of the great things that we can have, an assurance as believers, that we are entering into life when we pass through the gateway of death. If the Lord does not come, every single one of us will have to go through death. Why? Because the redemption of our bodies has not yet occurred; the price for it has been paid, but the redemption of our bodies has not yet occurred. There is a day soon coming when the Lord Jesus shall come with that assembling shout and those who are already with the Lord will rise, and we will be caught up to meet Him in the air, 1 Thess 4: 15,16. What a wonderful thought that is! Why? Because we are living. He does not only call those who have passed on to death, who are asleep through Jesus, they are not dead. What we understand as death is the cessation of the body, but they are not dead. Paul said, “we are ... pleased rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord”, 2 Cor 5: 8. What a wonderful hope that is. It is more than what the world calls hope, it is an assurance. People say, 'I just hope I can make it'. I was speaking with my mother today, dear sweet woman, I love her, but she is so confused and lost as to her eternal salvation; she has no clue about the gospel, she hopes that she has lived a good enough life that the Lord will have mercy on her. I tried to talk to her but she did not want to hear it, she changed the subject and moved on to something else.

The idea that you can ever live a good enough life is totally absurd. Why? Because of where I read in Romans, “For this cause, even as by one man” - that is, by Adam - “sin entered into the world”.

When did sin enter? When Adam partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. "And by sin death; and thus death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned", that includes you and me. There is nobody who has not sinned, "all have sinned", Rom 3: 23. "For until law sin was in the world; but sin is not put to account when there is no law; but death reigned from Adam until Moses, even upon those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam's transgression" - to put it very simply - you do not have to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in order to come under the penalty of death. You do not have to sin the way Adam sinned, you do not have to do this exact sin. Sin has passed upon all, and there is no one who can get to heaven and receive eternal life on their own merit. If you think that by attending meetings, living a good life, or even praying, are things that are going to save you, they will not. I am not discounting those; they are all good things, and necessary especially for one who is a lover of the Lord Jesus. If you love the Lord Jesus you would want to be attached to where He is, and do what He has interest in. If someone loves the Lord I cannot understand why they would not want to be with the Lord's people, and doing the things that the Lord would have them to do.

I have been thinking about what we enjoy here every single Lord's day. Paul tells us, because "ye announce the death of the Lord until he come", 1 Cor 11: 26. The Lord's table is not a table of death, it is a table of life because otherwise you get caught up in morbidity, there is no life there, there is nothing which you can lay hold of. If Jesus was a great Man, a great Teacher who came and died, then what else have you? If He was the Son of God, and He came and He died and He purchased your soul, then you have hope. He ransomed you, He bought you, He paid the price for you and He wants you. He desires you. Think about that! It is wonderful to think about how He loves us; He desires us. He desires to have you with Him, He desires to have you at the table. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ then you have a right to the table, a right to partake of the loaf and to partake of the cup. Who could stop you if you wanted to be at the table? No one! I cannot stop you if you are a true lover of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you have committed yourself to Him, and, as we have spoken of many times, you have 'washed your robes', Rev 22: 14. Then you have a right to the loaf and cup, and you have a right to participate in fellowship, and not to distance yourself from it, because this is where life is. There is life here; whether you can see it or not there is life here. If you cannot see it, then you have to be dead. If you are dead, there is hope, because life is

available to you, you do not have to be one who is caught up in death.

Where I read in Romans 5: 8 it says, “God commends *his* love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us”. What a wonderful thing that is, “Christ has died for us”. He knew that you were a sinner, He knew that Adam was a sinner, He knew what we were in our condition, and yet He was willing to lay down His life, to pay the penalty so that there would be justice served in the courts of God. Justice served and meted out. He took every ounce of it. None of us can fathom that. Think about the billions of people that ever have lived! He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (1 John 1: 2): that whole matter has been taken up completely by the Lord Jesus. He was holy, He was good, He was just, there was nothing that you could lay charge to Him about. He was the Son of God, and He died for you. It is a wonderful matter. On the cross He was able to cry out with a loud voice and say, “It is finished”, John 19: 30. That means that God is totally satisfied; He is satisfied with what Christ had accomplished. “Christ has died for us. Much rather therefore, having been now justified in the power of his blood”, think of that - “the power of his blood” - what wonderful power there is. It is cleansing power:

... wonder working power,
There is power in the blood of the Lamb.

There is power to forgive you, to cleanse you of all your sins, of all your unrighteousness, of all your unworthiness. There is also life in the blood, and that life is for you so that you can receive life because He does not want you to be in death. “For if, being enemies, we have been reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much rather, having been reconciled, we shall be saved in the power of his life”. We have the power of His blood, and now have the power of His life. In Colossians it says, “for ye have died, and your life is hid with the Christ in God. When the Christ is manifested who is our life, then shall ye also be manifested with him in glory”, chap 3: 3, 4. You have died, and you are dead in your trespasses and sin. Ephesians says, “and *you*, being dead in your offences and sins - in which ye once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience: among whom we also all once had our conversation in the lusts of our flesh, doing what the flesh and the thoughts willed to do, and were children, by nature, of wrath, even as the rest: but God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love wherewith he loved us, (we too being dead in offences,) has

quickened us with the Christ, (ye are saved by grace)", chap 2: 1-5. Quickened is a simple word, and means "made alive". He has made you alive if you have faith in Christ. If you do not have faith in Christ, you are, as it says in the first verse, "dead in your offences and sins". Death came in, death passed upon all men because all have sinned, you could not escape the penalty of death unless there was One who paid the price for you. Judgement was meted out on Him so that you could avoid judgement. He desires to give you life and He desires to be life to you. He becomes your life and the more that you grow in your Christian faith, the more that you love Him, and the more that you desire that He would be your life. I have the assurance that no matter what happens, and no matter what I do, my life is hid with Christ in God, and it is secure there. He is at the right hand of God, never to die again, and my life is hid with Him.

Am I going to fail? I will. I have failed many times already. For the sake of the young people, I can honestly say I led a wicked life when I was young, but I have two words to say... "but God". If God had not moved upon me in my life, where would I be today? Where would I be today if the Lord had not moved in my life? I would not be here amongst the brethren, I would be out doing wickedness like I was before. My own natural brother has spent most of his adult life in and out of a penitentiary, and I would probably have been there with him. There are levels of death; you can see it in people around you. You can look and say, this person has more death in them than others, you can see more death working. It seems that if man is left to his natural self all he wants to do is to gravitate towards death, darkness and despair. Man rejects Christ, but the offer is still there for everyone. There is not a single person that will be able to stand before the Judge of the living and the dead who will be able to say, 'I did not know'. The offer of life is there and it is your choice.

I read the passage in 1 John because it says, "He that has the Son has life: he that has not the Son of God has not life". Here again we have to ask ourselves, do we have the Son? Do you have the Son? You have to make it personal, do you have the Son? If you do not, do you want to have the Son? Life is in Him, "Christ who is our life", life is in Him. You can continue to go on in death and reject the Son, that is your choice. Nobody is pressuring anybody, God is not pressuring anybody, but He is making you an offer for life. He is saying that you do not have to go on in death, and you can accept His beloved Son and accept what

He did for you. If you do not accept the Son then you only have one thing to look forward to, that is judgement. The one thing you are going to be judged on is whether you have accepted the Son or not, whether you put your trust and faith in Him.

In 1 Peter it says, “who shall render account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead”, chap 4: 5). The living are the ones who have accepted Christ and have asked Him to be their Lord and their Saviour and have trusted on Him. They have put faith in His finished work, faith in the blood, faith in His life. The dead are those who are outside of all that, “For to this end were the glad tidings preached to the dead also, that they might be judged, as regards men, after the flesh, but life, as regards God, after the Spirit”, v 6. God has a desire that the dead should live. He does not want death; His end in view is never death. He has done everything to overcome death and one day death will be no more. There will be those who will enter into the second death, the lake of fire (Rev 20: 14), and they will spend eternity there separated from God, and there will be no more calls, “Where art thou?” There will never be a call like that again - “Now is the well-accepted time” (2 Cor 6: 2) - have you heard the voice of Jesus calling you? Have you been resisting the gospel and resisting the Son of His love? Now is the time to say, “O God, have compassion on me, the sinner”, Luke 18: 13. He has been waiting for you. Many of us have heard the story of the prodigal son since we were children. The father was looking out, waiting for his son to come, and when he saw the son a way far off (you do not have to come really close), he started toward him. He was waiting for the one word from the son to say, “I will rise up and go to my father” Luke 15: 18. That is all it took for the father. It is a precious thought to think of the father running to meet him. He did not crawl, he did not dally, because he was overjoyed; he could not wait to embrace his son, and he said, “for this my son was dead and has come to life, was lost and has been found”, Luke 15: 24. How wonderful that is, and what a joy to heaven it is when one repenting sinner comes home. Just one! All of heaven rejoices and all the saints on all the earth should rejoice whenever we hear of one who has repented and turned towards Christ. It should never matter who the vessel is or anything else, what matters is that God has secured another soul for Jesus today. Another one has come into life and out of death. What a blessing, what a great privilege it is to be of that company. The company of the living!

In Deuteronomy 30 God tells the children of Israel, "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil ... choose then life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed" (v 15, 19). The choice belongs with you. God has already made His choice, He has given His Son, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal", John 3: 16.

I pray that every single person in this room will enter into the joy of the Lord when this body is changed when the Lord comes for us. For "He that has the Son has life: he that has not the Son of God has not life".

May it be so, For His Name's sake.

Denton

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