

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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CKR In this reading I desire that we may consider the oil in the cruse. I will just read the verse again in 1 Kings 17 verse 16 that is the theme for these two readings. "The meal in the barrel did not waste, neither did the oil in the cruse fail, according to the word of Jehovah which he had spoken through Elijah". It did not fail, and let us say right at the beginning that the dispensation of the Holy Spirit will conclude in triumph and in glory. In Acts 2 we have the coming of the Holy Spirit and the distinctive nature of that as indwelling the hundred and twenty who were in the upper room. It says that, "it sat upon each one of them". This shows the distinctive nature of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon individuals so that the Holy Spirit becomes, typically speaking, the oil now in the cruse. Acts 2 shows the resource and power for the filling out of a dispensation the like of which has never been and will never be repeated. But then we begin to see as the truth opens out in the book of the Acts that the oil in the cruse really works out as the Spirit is known in localities, and Paul is given the light from God not only to open the truth of the assembly, but also to open up the place and resource of the Holy Spirit as known in local assemblies. While other epistles could have been read in the interests of our enquiry, we might consider it in relation to Corinth and to Ephesus, and then to see beautifully the culmination of the whole matter is that "the Spirit and the bride say, Come".

I trust that we will see that in 1 Corinthians 2 there is both the meal and the oil, and I read Acts 19 because I think we see there that before Paul writes to Ephesus, he establishes a basis that the meal was there and understood as related to the Lord Jesus. I think in Acts 19 Paul was establishing that the meal was there, and then he expands on the oil in the epistle. But initially we have in Acts 2 the unique nature of the coming of the Holy Spirit. As we saw in Luke 1 and 2 in the earlier reading, the distinctive coming in of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus was a holy matter. Now we have the incoming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2.

EJM It says they were in "the upper chamber", Acts 1: 13. Do you

think the conditions were provided for the incoming, just as in Luke 1 they were in the hill country?

CKR I think so. We finish Luke with the company going back from Bethany into the temple, and there they were “praising and blessing God”, Luke 24: 53. The Lord Jesus had gone into glory, ten days ensued, and this company is waiting. We see in Acts 1 these characteristics, giving themselves to prayer and staying in the upper room. The number twelve was fulfilled in chapter 1 of the Acts (v 26), and then there was the coming in of the Holy Spirit. What a momentous moment this was, a Man has gone into heaven and God is now here in the presence and resource of the Holy Spirit of God.

DBR “It sat upon each one of them”. We are reminded in the type that the oil could not be put upon the flesh of man, Exod 30: 32. With the leper, it was where the blood was Lev, 14:14-17. This is a redeemed company.

CKR I think that is right, so that the hundred and twenty were really divinely prepared souls for the reception of the Holy Spirit. As you say, the blood was put on the tip of the right ear, and on the thumb of the right hand, and also upon the great toe; and on top of the blood was put the oil. Cleansing has been accomplished and the anointing of the Spirit is given. As He is acknowledged and known there will not be failure. Divine power is known on the earth.

RB And the Spirit is maintaining in the testimony, right down to this very moment, that same character of greatness that was seen in Christ, is He not?

CKR Exactly. All that went up into heaven when Jesus went up. Then it came down here in the grace of the anointing when the Spirit came from a glorified Christ and indwells souls. What a wonderful moment this is for heaven when there were souls on earth that had received the gift of the Holy Spirit of God.

GCMcK The tongues that sat upon each one of them were “parted tongues”, it says; so there was a link then involved in the coming of the Spirit among the disciples, do you think?

CKR Say more.

GCMcK Well, it was not an individual tongue on each of them, it was “parted tongues, as of fire”. It seems to suggest that they were together

in sharing in this same blessed privilege.

CKR “And it sat upon each one of them”. There is a restful touch in that. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that is coming upon them, because this was distinctive and it was a unique experience. Here we have the unique matter of, “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit”. Human beings are now vessels imbued with divine power.

RB When the Lord speaks about the Spirit in John's gospel, He first introduces them to “another Comforter”, John 14: 16. Is that not a great thing in the testimony at the present time?

CKR As He had comforted His own, so the Holy Spirit would become “another Comforter”. It brings in the nearness and service of the Holy Spirit which is something I am sure we would all desire to know more of.

RB Is that why, when Peter speaks about the suffering position, he says, “the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you”, 1 Pet 4: 14.

CKR Quite so. Think of the restful complacency, which is a great matter to contemplate, of a divine Person dwelling and resting upon the hundred and twenty individually.

JDG They become witnesses of Christ glorified. They had been witnesses of Him on His time on earth. The Spirit comes as a witness too according to John 15, but here the whole thing is unified, one body, one Spirit.

CKR Quite so. That is a great truth that God desires will bind human hearts and lives together. It is not on the surface, but is deep and has its source in the power of a divine Person here in the Spirit.

RG It says later on, “This Jesus has God raised up, whereof all we are witnesses. Having therefore been exalted by the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit ...”, Acts 2: 32, 33. “This Jesus” - that is the same Jesus that we had in the first reading, and now He is in this exalted position, and from there the Spirit is coming to bear witness to Him, do you think?

CKR So, “he has poured out this which ye behold and hear”. Think of divine feelings and divine resource all coming out; heaven's feelings being expressed now with delight, giving completeness and support for the testimony to the Man who has glorified God on the earth and now gone into heaven. And what is now being secured and developed in

this dispensation is a vessel which is like Him and for Him.

JS Before this happened the Spirit had spent ten days with this Man in glory.

CKR These are days that we know little of. They must have been blessed days in heaven. The revelation of God had taken place in Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But this is a different aspect, the holiness of their own relations with Jesus in Manhood in glory, having glorified God and having gone back into heaven. What a matter for our contemplation! Then the Spirit comes forth from that. It is a scene of victory and glory.

JS So that persons were given the ability to speak. The Spirit's knowledge of Christ personally would enter into that speaking, do you think?

CKR That is right. This scripture is at the threshold of the Spirit's mission for this dispensation which is to bring the features of that realm where Christ is glorified to human hearts who have received the gift of the Spirit. So that the light of heaven and Christ glorified is now filling the hearts and minds and affections of such souls.

TM In the scripture in 2 Kings 4 you have the vessels, the empty vessels, then you have, "And the oil stayed", 2 Kings 4: 7. Is that like what we have here "sat upon each one of them"?

CKR Well, it is sufficient. The Holy Spirit is sufficient for the filling of the vessels. We see fulness in this incident, not only to fulfil responsibility but also to live in sonship on the rest.

RT There is an impression of irresistible power in the way things are put here, clearing away all that had been before, and clearing away man completely to make way for a new system.

CKR In Elisha's case it was a new cruse that had to be got, 2 Kings 2: 20. Here is a beautiful sphere of divine power and glory on earth as the dispensation is ushered in in such a wonderful way. The dispensation, what is determined as a whole period of time now about two thousand years, was inaugurated when Christ went into heaven and was glorified, and the Holy Spirit came. It is a wonderful matter to realise that that divine Person has been here since and will be here until the rapture. So that is the period of time that we are considering, and that "the oil in the cruse" will not fail.

RT It has all come out of heaven with no earthly connection apart from what the Lord left when He was here in manhood.

CKR That is beautiful! And it will go to heaven finally, breaking with what it was as here on earth provisionally because it is destined for heaven. These are wonderful matters and yet we experience them now in the time scene. Every one of us who has received the gift of the Spirit may have the leading and influencing of power of a divine Person. We have a new source of power.

RB In chapter 16 you get that beautiful expression, “the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them”, verse 7. It is the Spirit really that is of that Man in the testimony, which is still going on today?

CKR Absolutely. It is maintained and it will not fail. I do not want to over-emphasise it, but that is what I would like to leave, that the meal will not waste and the oil will not fail. We need to get that thrust of victory and assurance into our souls.

GCMcK Speaking is the first evidence, is it? They “began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth”. So the Spirit is still speaking. It runs down through the dispensation, “what the Spirit says to the assemblies”, Rev 3: 22.

CKR Quite so, and we have now spiritual things being communicated by spiritual means. If we can move on to Corinth, this is the way Paul brings out this truth. In his epistles to local assemblies he finds liberty to expand upon the place of the Holy Spirit.

DBR “Filled with the Holy Spirit”.

CKR It is not a partial filling. The reception of the Spirit by an individual, to my mind is a complete thought. The extent to which I give place to the Spirit is another matter, but the Holy Spirit fills and also forms the house of God. It is characterised by the influence and power and resource of the Holy Spirit.

So when we come to 1 Corinthians in chapter 2 I suggest that verses 1 and 2 are the meal, “For I did not judge it well to know anything among you save Jesus Christ”. I think that is the meal. The meal was introduced at Corinth in the word of the cross in chapter 1 (v 18). It was necessary to set aside all the display of man and to get Jesus Christ as the foundation, that order of manhood. Then he goes on in chapter 2 and on through the epistle to bring out the place and resource of the

Holy Spirit. In chapter 2 the theme is the Spirit and the things that have been prepared for those that love God.

JB The Corinthians had been building the wrong man, and this gave a devastating blow to that system, do you think?

CK That is very good. Say more on that please.

JB “*Him crucified*”.

CK That is right. It shows that that character of manhood was displayed at man's greatest point of humiliation. There was a moral glory that shone there. So it is “Jesus Christ, and *him* crucified”. It is the divine answer to the display of the first order of man that God has ended it in the crucifixion of Jesus. That character of manhood was able to sustain it, He was able to bear it. That is one glory of His humanity, and as a result of that we can come to “the oil in the cruse”.

DB We speak about the natural man. We know he has been superseded. “But the natural man ...”. The note is interesting, ‘the man animated merely by his created soul, without the teaching and power of the Holy Spirit’. Is this something very important for all of us?

CK Yes. I thought that we would see the way the believer's mind and being are influenced and formed as we come more and more under the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is not according to the first man, because that is gone, but it is according to the way that God is developing the features of Christ and the formation of the assembly.

DB The natural mind is a dangerous thing. I thought it important for all of us to have a renewed mind. It is only by the renewed mind that we can properly evaluate things, do you think?

CK Quite so. That comes into Romans 12: 2. So in a sense God is able to use your mind, but it is on a different approach and principle. It is not the result of man's intelligence or man's learning, but you are leaning upon the Holy Spirit. So there is such a thing as “the mind of the Spirit”, Rom 8: 6. My mind begins to think and desire after divine Persons and divine things.

DB So that the renewed mind would be something that is effected in the believer by the Spirit. Do you think we would be encouraged to speak often and have to do often with the Spirit?

CK Absolutely. I think you can see that in the way Paul opens

things up. We did not have time to read all these references but he refers to sowing to the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, praying in the Spirit. These are all features that come into the epistles. Paul seems to find liberty, and feels the need in his teaching to bring in so many references to the Holy Spirit in the various epistles. It is a good study for us, including our younger brethren, to read the epistles and see where the Spirit is referred to and what verbs are used to give an indication that the oil in the cruse is functioning, and flowing through the mind and affections and being of the believer.

RB This is not doctrine. It is seen very practically with Timothy. It says that he cares with genuine feeling how the saints get on, Phil 2: 20. That is really the effect of these verses, is it not?

CKR Yes, that is right. It is the effect of desiring “the things of the Spirit”. That is another expression that comes into Romans 8: 5. So you begin to see that we are in the realm of revelation here, what God has revealed to us by His Spirit. It is a great privilege to be conversing over things today that God is revealing by His Spirit, “Things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard, and which have not come into man’s heart, which God has prepared for them that love him”. What treasures we have!

EJM In the household of Chloe and the house of Stephanus, Paul had spiritual affinities right away, do you think?

CKR Quite so. These were souls that appreciated the oil, and saw the danger of its functioning being impaired because of local conditions like division. So all of that is cleared by “Jesus Christ, and *him* crucified”. He then brings out, and begins to open up, the greatness and glory of what can be known of things of the Spirit in local companies.

AGM This is the normal service of the Spirit. It is very interesting that He searches “even the depths of God”. That is in the line of revelation. There is nothing knowable of God that God is not prepared to reveal, but it is by the Spirit.

CKR There are many matters to be considered in our times together which are basic and essential and helpful, and you often feel you are really touching deep things; and all of that is part of the filling out of the knowledge of the service of the Spirit in local companies. So there is a great advantage in giving place to the Holy Spirit collectively.

JDG There is a link here with Theophilus, is there not, just to link with your thoughts? “Things ... which have not come into man's heart, which God has prepared for them that love him”? It shows you how simple it is where there is true affection for divine Persons that we might wait for God unfolding His mind.

CKR That is right. So the Holy Spirit brings the love of God. It is shed abroad in our hearts, Rom 5: 5. A love for God becomes developed, and then entrance into spiritual matters flows from that as we consider and go in for these things.

JDG The work of God in the believer will respond to that.

CKR That is right. It is a wonderful matter that we touch on. New birth has taken place, and then the gathering together of all the work that has gone on, so that we are in the company of those that are “sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints”, 1 Cor 1: 2. You have a company now secured which is an extension in the hundred and twenty worked out in local meetings. Paul has laboured, and this is a company that has been developing there.

And so in chapter 12 he begins to open that out even more. This is a very precious part of Paul's first epistle to Corinthians. Headship and the Lord's supper come in in chapter 11, and now we come in chapter 12 to the thought of the body.

GCMcK Is the body a distinctive feature of this dispensation?

CKR “There is one body”, Eph 4. I think it brings out the relation of a vessel down here that is linked to a glorified Christ. Colossians presents Him as Head of the body; so headship has to come first. That is what I thought as to 1 Corinthians 11, the Supper moving affections, and souls gathered together; and then you come to chapter 12 where the Spirit and the services of the Spirit and the operation of the body are opened out.

GCMcK Of old there was Israel and the different families, but there is something very precious in the body here because the Holy Spirit is involved in baptising all into this one body. It seems to be a great feature of this time, do you think?

CKR Yes, and it is distinct, the body exists. That is why in Ephesians 4 it is the first concentric circle, “There is one body”, v 4. It is an entity.

JS Why do you think there are so many references to various

things being by “the same Spirit”?

CKR One of the things about the body is to cut across any thought of independency so that the source is the same, “the one and the same Spirit”. We are drawing on the resource of the Holy Spirit of God.

JS It is very interesting, because these are different features of service, but there is a certain similarity in how things are coming out, and that is an important thing in our local gatherings, do you think?

CKR That is right. I think there is a blending together. So it is important that our links are right together - as under the Lord - so that as we come together we begin to function together. We are moving away from what is ministerial and are seeing the body beginning to function. It is the oil, it is circulating and flowing.

JS Do you think the matter of being baptised by one Spirit into one body would show how we can merge together with our brethren in our local gatherings?

CKR It is an important feature to be able to blend together and work together with your local brethren and then brethren generally. It is a feature that I am sure the enemy is set against but the Spirit and the Lord are here to support. We would seek to desire to get the benefit of that because “to each the manifestation of the Spirit is given for profit”.

RT Is it an individual experience, being baptised into one body? It has been connected with satisfaction. If we had the experience of it we would be satisfied with our place in the body. We would not bring in any trouble if we were baptised into it. We think of baptism as a negative thing but baptism has a positive side, has it not?

CKR So personalities are merging into the company. You are finding your place. We used to be exhorted to do that, when we were younger, to find our place in the body, to desire to find a niche. I trust everyone here feels they have a place in their local company where there is a service and a part you can fulfil, and only you can fulfil it. Your part cannot be filled out by anybody else, and you have a responsibility, and I have a responsibility, to fill out the part we have been given and to grow. The whole matter is developing and is for profit and blessing.

RT We “have all been given to drink of one Spirit”. That would bring in the satisfaction, would it not? We are enjoying, and we are animated by, the place we have been brought into.

CKR Quite so. I trust we feel that today. It is the blessing of fellowship as we begin to come together. We see brothers and sisters together. You look across a company like this, all different age groups and experience with the Lord and experience with the Spirit, and all of this giving us what the body is. The full extent of it takes in every believer who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but Paul works through the truth of local companies in order to bring out the quality and character of this truth.

CCDR I was thinking that much of this comes from the Lord as Head as gifts. I was wondering, how that works out; do we need to look for greater expression of these things in the power of the Spirit?

CKR I think that is the case. Gift and its expression are needed, because the functioning and support of local companies all requires committal, and this allows the Lord to develop gift. All features of service are developed - it is not necessarily always service in ministry - as the filling out of matters brings in the grace of a word of wisdom and of knowledge as gone over here. We all need to supplicate the Lord and seek to be available and ready to do what we can.

CCDR I was thinking that the Spirit is here, and that these things should be known by us.

CKR They are known in measure but can be known more, particularly when you see younger believers coming on and services being taken up, and filled out in their own way. This shows that the Spirit, and the operations of the Spirit, are proved. There is blessing for God through all of this and increase for the testimony in a place or in an area.

TDB You referred earlier to Simeon and it says, "And he came in the Spirit into the temple", Luke 2: 27. Could you maybe say how we apply that to ourselves?

CKR We ought to come to every occasion in the power of the Spirit, and exercised before the Lord. Perhaps we need to be more exercised before coming to every occasion so that we come not in the power of the flesh, or anything of that nature, but as coming under the influence of the power of the Holy Spirit so that our minds and our affections are ready to move in that direction. In this way we are ready to be used by the Holy Spirit, and substance and growth are the result. We start every meeting with a hymn. This helps to bring in the joy of the indwelling

Spirit. You desire to sing with the spirit and with the understanding, 1 Cor 14: 15. As done in the joy of the Holy Spirit within you there is a great touch of victory about collectively singing.

JDG The Spirit rejoices at the expression of Christ in the vessel.

CKR Open that out for us please.

JDG It says in verse 12, "but all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ". The Spirit is satisfied in that blessed Man as expressed here in this vessel.

CKR The enemy would love to think he has defeated it and caused it not to be, but the oil will not fail. The vessel will be gloriously complete, will it not?

JDG The public breakdown will not in that sense affect what the Spirit has done.

CKR It will not affect what the Spirit has done, and this becomes a stimulation for us.

NJH Does "having the glory of God" (Rev 21: 10) commence with the Spirit coming in at Pentecost?

CKR I was not sure whether to ask to read Revelation 21 or 22, but I think God shows His delight in the whole matter by investing the city with the glory of God. Say more on it.

NJH Instead of man's glory marking the assembly, it is the glory of God. Is that right? It will culminate in the city coming down.

CKR Quite so. That brings in the anointing of this vessel.

NJH Moses anointed the whole tabernacle. Now, throughout the dispensation, should we have whole thoughts of the anointed tabernacle?

CKR And we want to hold to whole thoughts of the anointed vessel as this reflects the service of the Holy Spirit.

EJM There are at least two localities that we have no epistles for. I am thinking of Antioch and Berea: do you think we also see in them the fruit and operations of the Holy Spirit?

CKR I think that would be so, and in the Bereans you have the searching of the Scriptures. In Antioch they were ministering to the

Lord and the Holy Spirit directs Barnabas and Saul as to ministry.

EJM The Bereans “were more noble” (Acts 17: 11), and that is really the fruit and effect of the Spirit. “The nobles of the people” are referred to in Numbers 21.

CKR It is a dignified thought.

I wanted to refer to Acts 19 on our way to the verses in the epistle to Ephesus. It is instructive that Paul insists, “Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye had believed?” He felt it essential to establish this amongst the twelve that were there. “And they said to him, We did not even hear if the Holy Spirit was come”. So he then introduces the importance of Jesus, “And ... they were baptised to the name of the Lord Jesus”. I suggest he was bringing in the meal. The meal comes in at Ephesus before the oil comes into the epistle. I thought we should see how careful Paul was as he moved into another place. How important it is then that this truth is known and understood if we are going to experience the currency of the service of the Holy Spirit in relation to the inheritance as in Ephesians.

JS Do you think Paul is recognising the importance of both the meal and the oil if there is to be the production of a little cake that is of true assembly character?

CKR Paul is very careful when he moves to Ephesus to establish the ground at first. They had to come on to the ground of Christianity in its fulness. This involved being baptised to the name of the Lord Jesus, and then he lays his hands upon them and “the Holy Spirit came upon them”. Bringing in the name of the Lord Jesus might refer to the meal, then the reception of the Spirit to the oil. The greatness of the humanity of Jesus and what He demonstrated as a foundation for the service of the Holy Spirit.

And so when you come to the epistle to the Ephesians we see the service of the Holy Spirit opened out. The epistle looks at the Holy Spirit as the Earnest of our inheritance, the household of God is formed here by the Spirit, and the power that works in us yields glory to God in the assembly. We have stimulating and heavenly experience as we touch the things that God has prepared for those that love Him.

JS Do you think the glad tidings of our salvation here would really be the glad tidings of another place? Do you think the Spirit as “the earnest of our inheritance” is really the power to link us with another

place that we can enjoy at present?

CKR It is very good to see that. So it is a fine expression, “the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance to the redemption of the acquired possession to the praise of his glory”. Paul’s language is always superlative and full. You begin here with “ye have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise”. Another aspect of the reception of the Spirit is the sealing, the divine claim, but it is all in relation to the inheritance. We are talking about what is on the other side of death.

RG Do you think “who is the earnest of our inheritance” should attract us to go in for this, so that we are not waiting for it. It should be an experience now that is what it will be when we are with the Lord in spiritual bodies.

CKR Quite so.

RG From time to time we get a touch of it, but we should give ourselves to this, do you think?

CKR We need to give ourselves more to the Holy Spirit collectively and realise that we have a resource so that these things can be explored and enjoyed anticipatively; and we begin to long more than ever for our body of glory and for the day to come.

RB Is this the cake now? It is “make me ...a cake”. Mr Raven’s ministry constantly reminds us not to fall short of divine purpose. The standard has to be maintained.

CKR The Holy Spirit will always be true to that. The Holy Spirit, as we give Him place, will fill us with heavenly thoughts and the glory of our blessings which are secured in Christ; and the place where that is particularly enjoyed is in local companies. Paul uses his letters to expand on this.

AGM There is one small word in this verse “to”; “the earnest of our inheritance to the redemption of the acquired possession ...”. The footnote is ‘up to’. The Earnest will not fail.

CKR Exactly. It is more than ‘till’, because it has the inheritance in view. As you say, it is “to the redemption”. There is no doubt about it. These truths should confirm us that the oil in the cruse will not fail. God is here in the Spirit in the saints, filling our hearts and minds and beings with the greatness and glory of an inheritance which He had in mind for

us before we were ever here.

DBR You read in chapter 2: 18. Is that functional? I remember a touch somewhere in ministry that it was not exactly a statement of doctrine, it is a statement of living experience. Paul had learned that this is the way of approach, through Christ by one Spirit to the Father.

CKR What an answer to God coming out in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit that souls can prove access to the Father through Christ and by one Spirit.

DBR Do you think it is like the new and living way?

CKR Mr Raven said, 'He really comes out from the *heart* of God to the *cross*, to reveal the love of God, and we go back the same way as He from the *cross* to the *heart* of God', Vol 14 p16.

NJH Was the woman in John 4 really presented with Ephesian truth, the inheritance then the approach to God?

CKR Quite so, the Father seeking such as His worshippers, John 4: 23. Think of the glory that vessels have been secured. She leaves her water pot because she can prove and come into the blessing of these things. Let us apprehend and enjoy these Ephesian truths.

NJH "Springing up into eternal life", John 4: 14.

CKR Quite so.

DBR Again the Person of Christ and the Spirit are brought together there, "through him ... by one Spirit".

CKR We will never get away from the glory of the divine arrangement in this dispensation. There are two divine Persons serving together to secure the glory of God eternally.

RT It is access here - it is going in to stay? It seems as though they are going to come out again. We are "fellow-citizens of the saints". We are brought into a system to stay there in the power of what we have been drawn into.

CKR "So then ye are no longer strangers and foreigners, but ye are fellow-citizens of the saints". Jesus Christ suggests the meal once again, but He is also the corner-stone, and the whole building is fitted together so that there is "a habitation of God in the Spirit".

RT The dignity of that would lay hold of us, that we are fellow-citizens of the saints. We have been brought into an august company to function in this character.

CKR If we begin to get a hold of this it will affect and dignify our walk, dignify our talk and our thoughts. It is a habitation of God that is in the Spirit. God's dwelling-place in the current dispensation is in the assembly. As walking in the light of it we touch these blessings.

EJM In Proverbs 31, "Her husband is known in the gates", v 23. That is Jesus Christ Himself, is it not? You were saying Jesus Christ Himself is the meal. There is no other Man for this glorious vessel.

CKR Jesus Christ Himself is the Corner-stone. He is the Anchor, and the architectural dignity and quality of everything is secured by the Spirit. The habitation is "built together". How close the saints are to one another! God is forming a vessel which is the aggregate of what has been formed in persons secured in the time scene by redemption and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. This is the divine dwelling.

JS It says, "in whom ye also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit". Is that a reference to the saints at Ephesus.

CKR I think it is. This looks on to the whole millennial day. The habitation of God will be known through display, but it is "in whom all the building fitted together". It is an entity. It is described as a house, "a habitation of God in the Spirit", but divine Persons, Christ and the Spirit, are the Formers, and the Ones who hold everything together.

JS It is worked out really in practice in your locality, do you think?

CKR That is right. Therefore as we touch these things we need to see that there is the potential in local meetings despite breakdown. We always have to remember that we are in days of public brokenness, but the fact that the Holy Spirit is indwelling the assembly also gives us the resource to touch these things.

RB Is the Lord's supper the evidence at the present day that the oil is not failing, because the young ones may ask us, 'This is happening and the next happening; what evidence do you have that the oil is not failing?'. Do you see it there?

CKR That is right, and it also shows that the meal is not being wasted. Souls are taking advantage of the weekly opportunity to remember the Lord Jesus. As there, we can reflect upon Him, feed upon Him as we

consider all the beautiful characteristics that were brought out in Him. He, the despised One here, is the Object of our affections. Then the power of the Holy Spirit is known so that it is not a religious service that repeats itself week after week. It is a living vital touch that we prove through Christ that we have both access by one Spirit into the Father's realm.

RT It has been said that you have to be an Ephesian to live in Corinth. We sometimes try it the other way around, but it is persons who are in the joy of this that can fill out the public position in reality, is it not?

CKR I probably should have read Ephesians first then and then read Corinthians!

RT You work up from Corinth to Ephesus, but really you have to enjoy the inside before you can be right in the public. Maybe that is our weakness, we are not enjoying our privilege to come out in the true character of it.

CKR Quite so.

GCMcK The "habitation of God in the Spirit" is not simply a statement that there is a dwelling-place for God here but that He is actually dwelling. It makes the matter very real, does it not, and should it not affect our spirits even in our localities that God would actually have a place there by the Spirit?

CKR It is God that is here. A Man has gone into heaven, but a divine Person is here in the Spirit for the whole dispensation. So the presence of God, the holiness of God, and everything that relates to God in His attributes and in His nature is here. We ought therefore to have respect for the gatherings of the saints and for each believer, because the Holy Spirit indwells persons. All of that comes into this.

DAB There was great unity amongst the brethren who assembled at the beginning of the Acts in the hundred and twenty; the term "with one accord" was used. Is what you are emphasising now the unity that can be enjoyed amongst us as the Spirit is made way for in a full and distinctive way?

CKR Quite so. I think we need to cherish some of these things more, and to work at it, and to seek the help of the Holy Spirit. I think that anything that causes disunity is a display of the man that was finished at

the cross, but from this point of view then the Holy Spirit's is a uniting service. The normal service of the Spirit is to draw souls together, and from that point of view to enhance and to dignify the saints in God's sight but also in our sight.

DAB Not only is it a coming together and a fitting together, and here “the building fitted together increases to a holy temple in the Lord”, but “ye are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit” is a blessed upward movement which engages our hearts with Him. So it is a heavenly ministry, do you think?

CKR That is right, and that is Paul's ministry in its glorious heights.

TM In Acts 2 they were “all together” then it is “fitted together” and “built together”, and in chapter 4 it is the bond together. Is this word “together” very important?

CKR The word “together” refers to the fruit of the service of the Spirit. Right from early in Acts 1 it is brought in, but even in Acts 3, “Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer”, v 1. So two are coming together so that the bonding goes on. The whole matter is developed.

MM Are you seeing then that they are one. The Lord prays “that they may be one, as we are one”, John 17: 22.

CKR It is actually indwelling one vessel described as one body and one habitation.

Then in chapter 3 you have “the power which works in us”, with this leading to the greatness of the eternal thought that there will be glory to God “in the assembly in Christ Jesus”. You think of the power that is working in us in order to touch some of this. What great truths these are.

EJM As the apostle John “became in the Spirit on the Lord's day” (Rev 1: 10) it was really a power that was working in him. He was banished and he was isolated, but there was a power working in him, do you think?

CKR What a matter to prove “the power which works in us”, causing you to respond and to feel part of all of this that there is glory to God in the assembly. What a triumph for God this is when you think of what was, that God has operated for His own glory and secured a vessel indwelt by the Holy Spirit, united to Christ, in Christ Jesus, in which

there will “be glory ... unto all generations of the age of ages”. The dispensation is complete but eternity is looked on to.

RB You now get a different view of the meal, “and to know the love of the Christ”.

CKR Quite so. It is inseparable. You have also the Christ dwelling, through faith, in your heart. A glorious Person is there as the One who is the Centre of our affections in this precious realm.

Then to finish, the “the Spirit and the bride say, Come”: a divine Person and a creature vessel in perfect unity saying together with one word, “Come”, looking on to the appearing. Let us be stimulated to say “Come” to Christ.

Buckie

3rd May 2008

Key to Initials:-

R Bain, Buckie; T D Beveridge, Kirkcaldy; D A Brown, Grangemouth;
T R Campbell, Glasgow; J Drummond, Aberdeen;
R Gardiner, Kirkcaldy; A P Grant, Dundee; J D Gray, Edinburgh;
A R Henry, Glasgow; N J Henry, Glasgow; J B Ikin, Manchester;
B Lovie, Aberdeen; G C McKay, Glasgow; A G Mair, Cullen;
E J Mair, Buckie; T Mair, Cullen; M Metcalfe, Buckie;
D T Pye, Kirkcaldy; C C D Remington, St Albans;
D B Robertson, Cumnock; C K Robinson, Glasgow;
J Strachan, Dundee; R Taylor, Kirkcaldy; J Webster, Fraserburgh

VALUATIONS

C Kenneth Robinson

Proverbs 23: 23 to “not”

Romans 9: 22-26

Philippians 3: 8

1 Kings 21: 1-3

Joshua 2: 18-21

Psalms 23: 1-6

Revelation 21: 9-10

I would like to speak to you, dear friends and brethren, about valuations. I am sure that there are certain things in life that we really value. I will tell you a little personal incident I had last year. I was on a business conference and the person who was taking the session on business values asked us to write down five things that we really valued. I do not know if you have ever done that, but it is not exactly an easy thing to do, to determine five things that you really value. So this was done, and then the person said, 'Have a look at them and take one away'. Now you have come down to four things that you really value in life. Then we had to take another one away, so now down to three. Then, down to two. It did not go below this but we all had then to say what these two things were; I was thankful that I was not the only one in the room who said that one of the two things I value most is belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ with my future secured in glory. I would assert that what you really value you will buy, and you will never sell. The Lord may just appeal to every one of us; what have we really bought in the truth of Christianity, because the enemy, Satan, will always appeal to us to sell these truths and to give them up? I have referred to portions of scripture, and I will touch on them to deepen in our true valuation of certain of the truths of God. I wish to make an appeal to every one of us not to sell them. The injunction in Proverbs 23 is clear; it is in two halves: “Buy the truth, and sell it not”.

The first truth I want to speak to you about, from Romans 9, is mercy. This is a beautiful portion in chapter 9. Paul has brought out much in the first five chapters and in chapters 6, 7 and 8 of the truth of the gospel, and that being worked out intelligently in the believer. Then we come to chapters 9, 10 and 11 and he is going over the history of the Jew, the place of the Jew, and the failure of the Jew, yet never forgetting that they were God's chosen people. He begins in chapter 9 to open out God's ways, “that he might make known the riches of his glory upon

vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared for glory". Think of God doing that. Think how God had a plan and a place according to His purposes and according to His counsels before we were ever here, and the time of our life came, for those who were to be touched by the gospel and reached by His mercy. God had souls in mind for blessing before they were created. Have you ever thought about that? Have we ever pondered the fact that before we were ever here God looked down time and saw us as persons that would be vessels of mercy. God had before prepared such vessels for glory. What mercy of God for hell-deserving sinners like us who, because of the character of our practices in the sight of a holy God, would righteously be condemned to an eternity without Christ. Now because of His mercy and His great love wherewith He loved us, He has reached us and we have become vessels of mercy. Not a vessel of ambition, or a vessel of business success or anything of that; I trust we all appreciate what it is to be a vessel of mercy. Grasp that thought! Buy it! Embrace it as a personal possession that you are a vessel of mercy. As we look around the rows, up and down the hall, what we see is a company of vessels of mercy. Not one in this room deserves anything other than judgement, but God in His glorious grace, who is rich in mercy, has reached us, and we are vessels of mercy. As you go through life never sell this truth. We could not sell it! What price would we put on it? We could never sell it, because God has secured and made us a vessel of mercy, and He was prepared to pay the price in the blood of His beloved Son. What a matter to think of! It would touch our hearts and our affections so that we value mercy. Here is one of the greatest writers in the whole book of the Bible, Paul, bringing out great truths and he never forgot that "mercy was shewn me", 1 Tim 1: 13. He was the chief of sinners. He had been an "insolent overbearing man", but he never forgot that God had reached him in mercy. Let us deepen in our understanding of it, and let us claim it. Even if you say, 'I have known the Lord for many years'; let us all enjoy mercy. What does the hymn say,

See mercy, mercy from on high,
Descend to rebels doomed to die; (Hymn 366)

We need these foundational blessings established in all our souls so that they strengthen us day by day. In verse 23 Paul writes, "and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared for glory," comma, "us", comma: the Christian "us", with every believer covered in that "us". What wonderful skill he

has in writing his epistles. He could have gone right on, 'the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared for glory, whom he has also called', but he makes it absolutely clear who he is referring to. Everyone here is between these two commas. Between these two commas lies a gem of truth. Never, never give it up! I was affected recently by a comment of Mr Raven's recalled in Mr Pellatt's closing ministry (vol 2 p 142). He says that one of Mr Raven's last messages sent to America was, 'tell the brethren in America *never to give up!*' - it is printed in italics. I thought it was wonderful to see the heart and soul and sincerity in this appeal. Let us look at older brethren and see that as brothers and sisters get older one of the truths they appreciate more and more is the mercy of God. When we deserved nothing but judgement, we were given mercy, and through mercy God has set us up for His glory.

Then when you come to Philippians chapter 3 you get another personal truth that Paul valued immensely. You can read of what characterised Paul earlier, what he was by repute, what he was by education, what he was as Pharisee of the Pharisees but he had reckoned and considered and counted "all things to be loss", on account of what? "The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord". What a truth to buy! Have we all bought that truth? The excellency of the knowledge of a glorified Christ! What a privilege to add that truth into your treasures. You have found this truth for yourself, you have followed it through, you have considered it carefully, the Holy Spirit perhaps coming into that, but you begin to realise that you have the excellency of the knowledge of a blessed, glorified Man in heaven. This is a truth that will influence your life. It gives you a different outlook because if you really have the excellency of the knowledge of a glorified Christ, you cannot commit yourself to the world in which He has been crucified. Every one of us finds these things all very testing day by day, but I want to present the positive side and that is, "Buy the truth". Teenagers and boys and girls here, this is a truth for you. And so you see the greatness and glory of all of this. Have you got a real sense that there is a Man in heaven, a glorified Man in heaven whom you know? And do you value that link jealously, with a jealousy which is of God, with the Holy Spirit sustaining you and giving you the power to know for a surety that there is a Man in heaven? Would you sell that truth? What would you sell it for? A place in this world, all of the things that perhaps the enemy would throw at you saying, 'Well, that is just for another day'. The vital truth of a glorified Christ in the souls of

believers has sustained and influenced life for generations and will continue to do so, and let us be amongst them! The fact is that there is a glorious Man in heaven, "Christ Jesus my Lord". Paul's Lord is our Lord and the blessing and glory of that is that we want to buy the truth. Buy it! It will cost you something to get it by way of exercise and by way of sacrifice, but buy the truth so that it becomes yours. What price would you put on that truth? Who could value it? Isaac Watts in his famous hymn says,

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all!" (Hymn 272)

That is like Paul here. Now is the time to develop our links with, and our knowledge of, the blessed, glorious Man who lives in heaven.

Now I am going to touch on 1 Kings 21. Ahab had an eye on what Naboth had. Naboth had a vineyard. Ahab wanted it, he wanted to buy it. He wanted to take it over for himself. It is the 'creep-creep' approach, and that is happening all around in the world, the 'creep-creep' approach, infiltrating more and more to distract your life from being for Christ and for the things of Christ. And so Naboth says beautifully, "Jehovah forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to thee!". This comes back now to our valuation of the testimony and of the great matters which are in the testimony, and Naboth says, 'I value this far more and I am not going to give it to you! You are not going to get the inheritance of my fathers!' It cost him his life. To apply it he had bought that truth. He had looked on the testimony. He had looked on the life of his fathers. He had looked upon the way that matters were being worked out, as we should in relation to Christ and the assembly in the testimony. He had cultivated the vineyard, he had looked after it, he had cared for it, and now the time comes when someone says, 'I want that. How much will you give it to me for?'. And he says, 'I am not prepared to sell it. The inheritance of my fathers is of far more value than what Ahab can put on it.' Do you value it? Do you have any sense of the inheritance of our fathers? There is an inheritance. There is an inheritance which has come down the generations in the Spirit through our fathers' faithfulness and through dedication in their lives to Christ and the things of Christ. This was so even in times like those when Paul was writing to the Philippians, "For all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus

Christ", and he had "no one like-minded who will care with genuine feeling" how the saints get on, Phil 2: 20-21. What genuine feeling marked Naboth as he says, "Jehovah forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to thee!" There is an inheritance down here anticipating an inheritance which is up there. There is a sphere of God's testimony that is to be entered into. Committal in view of being for Christ's day is the call, but you have to personally value it. I think there is a current call for us all to buy this truth relating to God's inheritance here in the saints and in the testimony. Let us claim it for our own, to have it as a possession that will characterise and influence our life appropriately, and then let us not be prepared to sell it. The enemy would come along, commerce will come along, religious matters publicly will come along, all of that will come along as if to say, 'This person is a devoted person and the light has been held and so on. I want that. I want to take that over and reapply it for another purpose'. Oh for the courage to be like a Naboth who says, 'I am not going to give up. I am not going to sell the inheritance of our fathers'. It is well worth valuing! Paul says to Timothy, "these entrust to faithful men, such as shall be competent to instruct others also", 2 Tim 2: 2.

And now in Joshua 2, just to speak for a moment or two about Rahab. She is an interesting person. Mr Coates says of Joshua 2 that before you get the military victory in the Book of Joshua you get a moral victory, in Rahab, Vol 30 p208. She was a harlot with a sinful history but mercy had met that history. God had his eye upon her, and there she is, she has a house in Jericho and it is a condemned city. Every one of us that has a house, has a house in a condemned world. There are two features about Rahab's house, a window and a door. Faith links with the window, as has often been pointed out, and the scarlet line is in the window. May I ask you, is there a scarlet line in the window? Have you got an outlook towards the promised land, God's inheritance, or is my window towards the inner parts of Jericho? These things become very testing and very exercising, but you can see Rahab valued the opportunity and the instruction to put the scarlet line in the window, a touch of royalty, a touch of dignity, a separating sign to be shown there. So Rahab's window would be obvious, and it would be in contrast to other windows. The scarlet line was in her window. What a fine feature that is! Rahab had bought the truth that God was going to bring His people into their inheritance, bring them into the land, and she was determined not to sell it. She wanted the assurance and for us the assurance comes by the help of the Holy Spirit that God will preserve us

for His inheritance in the day to come. Therefore let our homes be sanctified places, let our conversation, let our outlook, our prayer, everything, reflect the fact that I have a scarlet line in the window. James indicates that Rahab brings out faith and works. Faith links with the window, and I suggest that the works link with the door. The door takes her into the city, so as she comes out of the city she shuts the door on the city. She goes to the window and she is looking towards the land. How fine! What matters these are! When we come out of the commercial sphere into our houses, shut the door. Conversation changes, your eyes and outlook are towards the window, and what they are looking on to is God's inheritance and the great matters which He has in His purpose for us. What spheres of blessing such households are! How sad it is that there are broken homes, broken marriages. All these things are heartbreaking. Oh to see in all our homes a scarlet line in the window that clearly shows where our outlook lies, secured in God's inheritance and the day to come, so that we are preserved from having our sphere of influence wholly taken over by the Jericho system which is doomed to destruction and failure.

Now I refer to Psalm 23. All I want to say about this is that we might value the shepherdly service of Jesus. I remember reading a little story. There was a gathering in a little village and Psalm 23 was going to be recited by two people. One man was asked along to recite it because he was a good orator. The company assembled and he stood up and he recited Psalm 23 perfectly. Then a dear old believer stood up and recited Psalm 23 and there was not a dry eye in the hall! One knew the Psalm, the other knew the Shepherd. I do not know if I can say anything more on Psalm 23. One of the aspects that David appreciated in Psalm 23 was, "thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me". Oh the personal assurance that the rod and staff are. If God brings discipline in, as He did with David, what can always be relied on by us all is the rod and the staff of the Shepherd. Probably this is one of the best known Psalms. Often we learn it early in our days as believers and are able to repeat Psalm 23. My appeal is, know the Shepherd! Buy this truth, and strengthen our links with the Shepherd, "thy rod and thy staff" will bring in the comfort that is needed. There is no way you ever could have taken the Shepherd away from David. He was a shepherd lad, he brought that through in his experience, but he came to know Jehovah as his Shepherd. May we have come to know through our experience that deep link with the Lord Jesus. It is His priestly service. He is the One you can turn to and know when others are not around, when all the

experiences of life come upon you and you come through in the preciousness of knowing “my shepherd”. There is nothing that will ever take away from a Christian his or her personal links with the Lord Jesus Christ. The enemy would love to take it away from you but the enemy can never take away from you the truth we have by faith and enjoyed by the Holy Spirit because he does not understand it and is not given access to it. You may cover it up, you may lose it for this or that, but what you have in personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ enjoyed by the power of the Holy Spirit is not to be given up. It is to be treasured as a truth which is yours and yours alone.

So the culmination of all of this is in Revelation 21, and now we have the converse aspect to what I have been saying. God will now show you His valuation of everything worked out in the lives of believers, that is through difficult times, days of brokenness, and public church breakdown. All of that will be gathered up when the holy city comes out. Think here of the delight the angel has. “Come here”, he says to John, ‘I will show you a sight par excellence’ and what he is shown is, “I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife”. God has invested it with His glory. These things now are beyond the sphere of time and beyond death altogether. This is the culmination of the dispensation of the Spirit, when God will bring out those indeed who have been secured and formed in time and under the service of the Holy Spirit. The holy city is the aggregate of the individuals who have been redeemed and indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, formed together into a magnificent glorious spiritual structure that will be alongside of Christ eternally. I appeal to every one of us, buy these truths. Do not sell them. Buy them, appreciate them, deepen in the enjoyment of them. They are all for our salvation but also they are for God's glory.

May we be encouraged for His Name's sake!

Buckie
3rd May 2008

THE WILDERNESS JOURNEY

Jim D Gray

Exodus 15: 22-27; 16: 1 (to “wilderness of Sin”)

We have all begun the Christian path, have all come to Christ as Saviour. We have all been saved by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. We have all set out on that path, the Christian path. We are at various stages in it. You might recall in your own history the first steps you took after conversion, and what the change was in the circumstances in which you found yourself; in the same place, same town, same school, same office, but things had changed, something had changed. God had worked in your soul. Conversion is a wonderful thing. It is a real thing, conversion. It is not just a matter of the mind and accepting things in the mind, even the things of God. It is not that. It is more than that. Has there been a change in you and me? New birth has taken place. The Spirit of God has worked sovereignly in each of our hearts to bring about a change in our spirits; our own spirit changes, a new creature begins to develop, and it comes to fruition at one point when you confess Christ as your Saviour, and that is the simplicity of Christianity. You then do not desire, according to the type, to live in Egypt where you once were in the sin system. You do not want to live there. You have a desire to be here for the Lord Jesus. Your tastes have changed. You have been made a partaker of the divine nature, wonderful thing! Then you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. That is another transaction that takes place, maybe not immediately, but it takes place in any case. You set out, you cross the Red Sea. You move into another area in your pathway, a different walk, a walk that Romans 6 speaks about as “newness of life” (Rom 6: 4), and you come into the wilderness.

That is where I began: “And Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur”. You find you need Christ. They come to the bitter waters of Marah and the wood is cast in. It speaks of Christ. There is initial experience in the believer's history, and he learns it in a simple way in his life's history when he sets out on the path of faith. We learned it initially. We all learned it when we were young and thereafter going through life you learn at different stages what these matters are that I am going to speak about, the pilgrim pathway and what you meet on that pathway. You spend Lord's day amongst the saints, and that is wonderful. You touch a sphere of

privilege where the pressures of death are lifted from your spirit. You are in another realm for a time, sustained only for a time. That is all we are equal to, but your spirit is refreshed. Then on Monday morning you come into the wilderness of Shur. Every Monday morning you come into this wilderness. You have learned Christ, though, and you find that you cannot do without Him. If you are going to continue in the Christian path, you cannot do without Christ. But you come into this pathway and you find you are in that world where Christ is not, but He came into it. The wood cast into the waters suggests that the Lord came into the condition in which you and I are. He has been in it, and I refer to His days of flesh and blood. He has been in it. He is no longer in it, but He does say, “I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age”, Matt 28: 20. Another thing He says is, “I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you”, John 14: 18. So He has been in it. He is in it with us, and He will come into the position with us. What a Saviour! What a Lord! And so the wood is cast in and the waters become sweet. Are you in bitter circumstances, dear brethren? Some of us have known what bitter circumstances are. I think I can say that all of us have known in our measure what bitter circumstances are. The wilderness is not to my taste naturally or yours naturally, but you are moving as led there. “And Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and ... into the wilderness”. You are moving under the direction of the Lord, you might say, and He knows what you are passing through, and be assured that He is in the circumstances with you; be assured of that. He knows what the bitterness is; He knows that. He knows the waters are bitter, He knows the experiences we go through in life can be bitter, sometimes very bitter, but He comes into it and when you find Christ you find sweetness. If you do not find Christ you remain in bitterness, but He is available to us, He is available to us all. In life's circumstances He is available to us all but you have to seek Him out. You have to find that blessed Man, you have to have contact with Him. The Spirit of God is the Gift the believer has to revive him as he draws on that power and his link with Christ. You need to make contact with the Lord Jesus. If you do not make contact with the Lord Jesus you cannot continue as a Christian in testimony. It is too much for us. Luke's gospel speaks about the man that is going to war, “Or what king, going on his way to engage in war with another king, does not, sitting down first, take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him coming against him with twenty thousand?”, Luke 14: 31. That is the believer's position without Christ in the world. He is meeting a force he is unable

to overcome, but with Christ he is able to overcome. That scripture gave me some encouragement to proceed with this word. James's epistle speaks about the tender compassion and pity of the Lord, "Ye have heard of the endurance of Job, and seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is full of tender compassion and pitiful", James 5: 11. That is the Lord we know. I would encourage us, whatever circumstances we are in, to continue, continue with the Lord. We are faced with exercises where some have not continued. Somewhere along the line contact has been lost with Christ. Dear brethren, and dear younger brethren, we need it all the time. It is not only for young people here, it is for all of us. We need it all the time. We need contact with Christ daily, the Spirit too and the Father. We need contact with divine Persons. I am speaking about the Lord Jesus particularly because He came into the circumstances in which you and I are. He knows them. He has been in them. He says of Himself, "Reproach hath broken my heart", Psalm 69: 20. What a statement from the lips of the Lord Jesus, and yet He continued. He is the obedient Man, here for the Father's will, so He would succour us in the midst of the waters of Marah by coming in and being with us, alongside of us to make them sweet. "I am with you all the days". What a blessed statement! And to know Him that way! Make your Christianity real, dear young brother, dear young sister, dear older ones too. Make your Christianity real: keep alive in it, be alive in it and come into the enjoyment of it. You will find that the burden is released from your spirit. You may still have the burden but it is released. You have had a contact with the Lord and He will sustain you. I would encourage us all. He passes us through circumstances so that He might form us after Himself. He brings them into the wilderness of Shur. There is going to be a test. There are tests in all our lives. The humanity of Christ was tested; it was tested in the temptations at the beginning of His public pathway and He was found to be an overcomer. I say that with all holy reverence. He was tested again at Gethsemane and He was prepared for the will of God. God tests us but He is very tender about it. When you are younger He is very tender and there is grace upon grace. He can understand your thoughts, He can understand your feelings and He will support you in it. That is the God that we know, the God that we sang about, our times are in His hand. He will support us in it. He knows what we are passing through. I say again, He is going to form you after Christ. Whatever circumstances have come into our lives, He has an object in mind,

The dark threads are as needful in the Weaver's skillful hand

As the threads of gold and silver in the pattern He has planned.

That is God. He is going to bring it all to fruition. He is going to secure a work in all our souls that can be housed in a body of glory. That is what is going through, personality after Christ.

He brings you into these circumstances. He says, "I am Jehovah who healeth thee". The brethren might help me, and they do. You might get a word of encouragement to keep near the Lord. Someone might minister to our needs, as the scripture says in John 13, washing our feet to refresh us. Someone might help me to regain contact with the Lord Jesus, but only Christ can heal, only God can heal. We cannot heal anybody: only God can heal. Only God can heal what is in your soul and my soul that may be bitter. By Christ coming into it and being alongside me; and by drawing near to my Saviour and my Lord, I find healing, healing of a wounded spirit, healing of a distressed soul. Only Christ can do that, only a divine Person can do that, "I am Jehovah who healeth thee". Be assured of that. We would desire to help one another, but there is only one blessed Person who can heal. God as healing can come into your life and my life. They say time is a great healer, but greater than time is Christ. If He has made a void in your life He will come in and fill that void. Make way for Him. Make way for Christ to fill your soul. Make way for Christ to fill your life.

Than they come to Elim and twelve springs of water. I think He gives you companionship on the pathway, sometimes unlikely persons, but look upon each one as belonging to Christ. Try to find a bond, try to find a bond with one another after Christ. We were reading this morning, 'Absolute consecration to Jesus is the strongest bond between human hearts'. (JND Synopsis Vol 3 p402) Is that true? A bond between human hearts - find that bond with one another. However difficult one another may be, find that bond and you will prove the blessedness of entering into a sphere of eternal life. I think Elim with seventy palm trees and twelve springs of water suggests a sphere of eternal life known amongst the saints, and after that you will journey. They are not wandering here. They are led in verse 22 and they are journeying in verse 1 of chapter 16.

May the Lord encourage us with these few words to continue journeying under His guidance. For His Name's sake.

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