

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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THE BREAKING OF BREAD

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GMcK It was mentioned to me in relation to these meetings that this is largely a young meeting, and I have that in mind in this suggestion. What we need when we are young are building blocks; to look at fundamental things in the great truth that we have and understand them. I hope that we can get some help together about the breaking of bread. I read the verses in Joshua because it is very attractive that God tells them to take these stones out of the Jordan to be a reminder to them, "When your children ask hereafter, saying, What mean ye by these stones?" We break bread every week on Lord's day morning and sit round the table with the loaf and the cup on it, and we should be ready for our children to say, "What mean ye", what does this mean? We do it over and over; it is rightly very precious to us and we guard it, but "What mean ye by these stones?" What does this breaking of bread mean? These stones were to be "a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever". These stones are like elements of the truth, and they took them and they set them up in Gilgal. I wonder if the breaking of bread is one feature of the truth that we might look at in this way.

In Acts 20 the setting of the gathering together was that they were "assembled to break bread". What is on my mind is to enquire together about the breaking of bread as distinct from the service of God. We speak about the morning meeting and we know what we mean. We assemble and we break bread and what flows out of that is the service of God, but we assemble to break bread; that is the reason we go. It seems to me that these brethren here assembled with a purpose - to break bread.

Then we have the loaf and the cup, and the loaf speaks to us, as we know, of His body. I often think of this scripture in Hebrews, "Sacrifice and offering thou willedst not; but thou hast prepared me a body". What does it mean, what does that loaf mean to you; what is it a symbol of? We might get some help about His body and the doing of God's will. Then the cup is brought out where we read in Luke 22.

When we think about the cup, we get the idea of the new covenant, “the new covenant in my blood”. We might get some help about what these things mean: what is the loaf, and what is the cup; why are they there? We should be ready to answer these questions.

In 1 Corinthians 10, the breaking of bread becomes an expression of our fellowship together. “The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of the Christ? ...for we all partake of that one loaf”. By taking the bread and the cup we commit ourselves, and we share in it together, and I think it becomes an expression of fellowship.

I read in Exodus 21 because I think the other thing that is fundamental about the breaking of bread is committal. First of all the bread and the cup on the table are speaking to us of the Lord's committal, His devotion; but then it raises a question about our own committal, and the fulness of the committal of the Hebrew bondman in Exodus 21 is very attractive.

RWF I am sure that is good and very necessary. In 1 Corinthians 11 we have the exhortation, “let a man prove himself, and thus eat of the bread, and drink of the cup”, v 28. Do you think that rehearsal of the fundamentals of the truth enters into that? We tend to use that scripture as implying self-judgment, but the word is “prove” not 'judge' and there is a difference between the two. Do you think that young and old do well to rehearse the fundamentals before approaching the Supper.

GMcK I think that is helpful. So it helps us to ask ourselves why we are doing it and what we are doing. I remember Mr Bert Taylor said many years ago, 'If the world understood what we did they would not let us do it'. That takes some thinking about, but it is a good exercise to ask ourselves what we are doing and why we are doing it. I think we will get help with understanding how dignified it is; how it is to be taken respectfully. These things all result from understanding it properly. My thought is that when we speak about the Lord's supper we tend to move quickly into a discussion about the service of God, which is good; but that is not why we gather. We gather to respond to the Lord's word. I am not setting the service of God aside for one moment, but what is prescribed is that you should break bread, take the bread and the cup.

RWF It is the Lord Himself who leads in the service of God. He is the One we remember, and He is to be given the full place in our hearts before He leads.

GMcK So when we come on to thinking about the bread and the cup, that is what happens: that is my experience. Contemplation of these symbols that He has given us makes the breaking of bread what it is, because I find that whatever there is in my life is put into perspective as I am recalled to His body and His blood.

EFW In the early days in the Acts that is one of the things that sustained them, “they persevered ... in breaking of bread and prayers”, Acts 2: 42.

GMcK That is very helpful because I imagine that there were times when perseverance was needed to keep it going. There were hard times during the war, for instance, when faithful brethren kept the breaking of bread going.

EFW It is certainly something that we would wish to do whatever else may have to be dropped. Reading is very important, but I do not think that anything comes up to the importance of the breaking of bread, not only to us, but to the Lord Himself. I think that is something that the Lord is looking for perhaps more than anything.

GMcK We need to get down to its simplicity. In our Christian pathway, we might get confused or have doubts or even get discouraged, but if I go right down to the fundamentals, what has the Lord asked me to do? Then I find that it is nothing complicated. There is almost nothing to be confused about. I am not suggesting that these other exercises are not real, but at the base of it the Lord has given us a great help in making this so simple.

EFW I have often thought that what is done is something that everybody can do. Many things only some are fit to do, but we all can eat some bread, we can all just sip the cup; that is all that is needed.

GMcK I know that there is much more in it, but you could say that that is all He has asked me to do. I think it is very appealing, especially when we are young, and maybe even when we are very young. Why am I breaking bread? Because the Lord has asked me to do it.

DAB These stones came out of the Jordan; they came from where the priests' feet had stood. I know the Supper was instituted before the Lord died, but it comes out of His death as far as the taking of it is concerned. I was noticing in Joshua that God compares it to their passage of the Red Sea. We might think that would relate more to what we have enjoyed in the way of salvation. The shedding of the blood of

Jesus has given us that salvation from sin and the world, but then there is this which is a further step, and it reminds us that not only is our salvation dependent on the death of Christ, but every step we take into God's inheritance is on that basis as well. Does the Supper remind us of that: here is the means of passage into God's inheritance which was through the death of Jesus?

GMcK So the symbols of His death would help us in every step of our pathway too, every step we take is to be in line with the death of Christ, a Man who has died to this scene.

DAB We are reminded at the Supper that all that we have depends on what He did that is spoken of in those emblems.

RJF The Supper is something that is living - we remember One who has died but He is living. These stones which were set up were inanimate things; but the Supper is not inanimate; it is something that has life to it.

GMcK It has life because He is a living Lord. We come and see the bread and the cup on the table and that is all they are; they do not move, but the intention is that they call thoughts of Jesus into our minds and our hearts. For me it is a great comfort because everything is settled then, whatever might concern me, whatever I do not understand, is put in its place when I consider the bread and the cup.

RJF The emblems themselves are symbols: it is not literally the Lord's body on the table, but we can all be caught up together by them and find that the Lord is always the same. We may not be the same but the Lord is always the same and He is looking for a living response.

RWF In connection with a living response, it is often said that "in remembrance of me" is an active a 'calling of me to mind' (note i 1 Cor 11: 24), which is very personal. I fear sometimes that, going by my own thoughts, we tend to reduce things to the habitual or ceremonial, but the Supper is very personal. It is at the Lord's request and it is for His pleasure now that we remember Him. We speak of the emblems, the loaf and the cup, but they speak of Him. We must arrive at what underlies the symbols, we must realise the true meaning to the Lord of what the loaf and the cup are.

GMcK We come into it by doing a physical thing. The Lord has not left us many things like this - baptism would be the only other one - but we can take comfort from the fact that He has just asked us to do this; and

in doing this we fulfil His commandment. From that point of view, we could come together, break the bread, take the cup and go home. I am not suggesting for a moment that we do so, but it would fulfill what the Lord has prescribed. I think we need to elevate that part of the Lord's supper in our minds because it is for our preservation.

AEM I was wondering whether it helps us to elevate these things if we regard our assembling together in the right light. It says here, "lift up each of you a stone and put it upon his shoulder". As the saints gather on a Lord's day morning they come as those who have proved themselves, who could be said, in a certain sense, to have one of these stones upon their shoulder. They are assembling, not just coming into a room, but assembling to remember the Lord. He has died for each one and they are there to commit themselves. Do you think that would help elevate it?

GMcK The twelve tribes were all involved. I think that is one thing that comes out, that it is something that we share. The breaking of bread is something that is to be shared. Acts 20 gives us the assembling, "the first day of the week, we being assembled to break bread". I want to stress that they seem to assemble with a purpose. If I was asked on Lord's day morning, 'Why are you going?' I would like to be able to say that I am going to break bread. I know what we mean when we say we are going to the morning meeting, but let us get to the meaning of the assembling, "What mean ye".

AEM In Numbers where they had the silver trumpets, the first blow of those trumpets was that they should assemble together. That was the first thing before any other movement or action. The first thing was that they assembled together, Num 10: 2. There is real power in assembling.

GMcK When you consider that we assemble around the emblems of His body and His blood, and they are symbols of His death, it puts it on a very profound level. One of the things that goes along with the breaking of bread is dignity. We must understand that. If we value the things that are on the table, what they mean, then the breaking of bread is a very dignified occasion and must be protected in that way. Some of the other occasions we have may be less formal, but the breaking of bread is elevated to a special level, "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of the Christ?"

TJH Did you have any more on your mind as to the stones being on

the shoulder? These are not small pebbles, they are large - perhaps they could even be walked upon. They are put on the shoulder. Is that like taking responsibility for matters in connection with the breaking of bread? Responsibility is to be taken by all, the twelve tribes were involved.

GMcK I was thinking of these stones as elements of the truth that the young ones might start to understand. So if we look at the breaking of bread, how do we understand it, what does it mean? I think it is interesting that they were large stones; this is a weighty subject.

RWF Another aspect of that is that we can understand through faith that God provides the power to take up and to bear that responsibility. We might feel that the stone is too large - if it is a monumental stone it might well appear that way. But God provides the power if we have the desire.

GMcK He will give us by the Spirit the understanding as well, if we commit ourselves to the practical side of it, if we will go and do what He has asked. Perhaps everyone here could start with that - go and do what He has asked. I think the Lord in His grace will give us a deeper and more profound valuation of what it is we are doing and why it is that He has set it on. Why do you think the Lord left us this?

RWF Because He was looking for us, and desirous that we might look to Him. It is a provision for us, and the bread and the loaf are material things provided in grace as a reminder. They are not objects of faith in themselves but they are a reminder of Him. We would do well to open our minds and hearts to the realisation that the Lord has a present desire that we might remember Him, and that regularly.

GMcK I can see very clearly that it is for our preservation, and we experience that. His desire is in it as well. In Luke He says, "With desire I have desired". He enjoys seeing the brethren going and doing what He has asked them to do.

PHM It is preservation. It is putting us in touch with One who is in heaven. Others may be limited to considering the Lord's death, but we are remembering One who has risen and is in glory. Do you think we experience that as we come together to remember Him? The occasion puts us in touch with the One who is living and who is in heaven, and it really puts us in touch with One who is outside this sphere that we experience in our daily lives.

GMcK That is what it does; it can change my perspective and outlook completely. Just by coming and looking at the emblems on the table I may find that I have become wound up in myself, wound up in my own affairs; but as I walk into the room I am faced with these monumental symbols of the Lord's devotion, and everything is put in its place. I think you see the Lord's wisdom in giving us this to keep us freshly attached to Him.

JW Is there a side in which the stones represent the saints? There is a stone for each tribe; there is the complete thought there. We do not have all the saints available, but we do need saints to have this occasion. The first thing is that we meet one another.

GMcK You would not break bread on your own?

JW Paul put the breaking of bread in an assembly setting.

GMcK That would come down to, "where two or three are gathered together unto my name", Matt 18: 20.

JSG Is there a suggestion in the twelve tribes, in its application to us, that every believer should do it? I suppose the beginning of that is individual responsibility, but are we not helped to see that this is individual first and it is for every believer? It was the twelve tribes; none was missing. We might say that many have had their bad times, but there is provision for that in 1 Corinthians 11 as to us too.

GMcK "This do in remembrance of me": there is a call in that; the Lord is expecting an answer to that from every heart.

JSG We sometimes think of the challenge of that in connection with one who may miss it at times, but it applies to us all as we first receive the Lord into our hearts and trust in His finished work and believe that He is in glory, that He has given us this to do. It applies to all believers.

GMcK In its simplicity it is a way of answering Him; we come to know Him as our Saviour, and I might ask myself then, 'What can I do?'. There is a very simple thing you can do for Him.

DAB How does this then bear on the exercise that all His own might do it together? He did not say that different companies could hold it apart from one another. When the Supper was instituted all those who were available to the Lord took it together. That raises all kinds of questions in the working out of it, but is your exercise that that kind of thing should be more to the front of our minds in our exercises with other

believers?

GMcK The scripture in 1 Corinthians 10 suggests fellowship. Who are we happy to break bread with is an expression of fellowship, and what can we share together? I would just appeal to every one here along these lines. There is a place that I know I can go and I can fulfil the Lord's request. The Lord in His grace has set me there, and I would appeal about the simplicity of that. There are lots of questions that can confuse, and I do not feel able for them, but I am very attracted to the simplicity of the breaking of bread. If I believe that it is held in a right way and in its pure form (as we have it), I would commit myself to that.

RWF There are certain matters we can leave with and to the Lord. That is not to reduce our exercise or responsibility, but I have often been impressed in connection with the Supper, and those with whom we break bread - and others with whom we do not break bread - that "The Lord knows those that are his", 2 Tim 2: 19. In a sense we can leave the matter there. You have spoken of simplicity; we can simply leave the matter there with Him.

GMcK Another thing that appeals to me is that these exercises were in the hearts of Mr Darby and others. They went back to the simplicity of this, just the table and the bread and the cup.

PJW In connection with that, Mr Darby said that it is a precious privilege given to us to remember the Lord Jesus, Collected Writings vol 27 p257-258. We speak about responsibility, but he said that it is not an ordinance; it is a precious privilege given to us to remember the Lord Jesus.

GMcK Would we find some help in understanding what the bread and the cup mean? Do you not think that the valuation of that would help us understand what a privilege it is?

PJW Our affections need to be engaged with the Lord, and then we will view it as a privilege, not as a chore or something that we just have to do each week, but something that we will be eager to do as regarding it as a privilege and a blessing.

GMcK Hopefully our conversation might elevate it a bit. It must not become a mechanical thing.

RWF Do you think when the Lord says, "my body" and "my blood", there was nothing ordinary about that, but it is altogether elevated,

attractive and intimate?

GMcK In Luke 22, the description of the Supper shows it is a very intimate occasion. One of the things I was considering was the fact that we share - we take of the bread, it is in one basket, and we share the cup. We do things in the breaking of bread that we would not do at a meal. I think the word intimacy is right and it links with the Lord's own desires. He set it on that way so that we might learn His love in it and we might get drawn closer together as well.

RWF It always seems to me that, in the description that Luke gives of the Lord's instructions as to the Supper, what you speak of becomes quite apparent in connection with the Passover cup, "Take this and divide it among yourselves". It is in the light of that that He has instructions as to the Supper. It is in the light of that that we break bread, and we drink of the cup, dividing it among ourselves. It would be a statement too far to say that we are sharing it with Him, but there is that degree of intimacy with each other.

GMcK We should try and speak of these things, the bread on the table and also the cup. The scripture in Hebrews says, "Sacrifice and offering thou willedst not; but thou hast prepared me a body" - so as I look on the loaf and as I take of it, what thoughts come into my heart and mind?

RHB Do you feel challenged when you do that?

GMcK I feel settled.

RHB We have spoken of the privilege of it and the responsibility of it, and we have referred to the personal character of it. I would say for myself that, as the meaning of it is freshly appreciated, it presents a challenge because it represents the devotion to the will of God that was absolute - "thou hast prepared me a body". This was a body in which He came to do no other will; not His own will or the will of any other, but the will of God. He made that commitment in the knowledge that it would involve the sacrifice of Himself. There is the announcement of the death of the Lord, but scripture also speaks of "being conformed to his death", Phil 3: 10. If we come into fellowship - or break bread - as young believers, our hearts are vibrant in affection for Christ, but as we go on week by week, does not the Lord raise a challenge with us as to the extent to which the sacrifice that He has made has been answered to in our lives?

GMcK I think that is quite right. I was thinking about that in relation to the scripture in Exodus about committal. Do we not find that contemplation of Christ, and His body, and His devotion helps us with that challenge, because it brings us to an object which is outside of ourselves? Contemplation of Christ is the best way of judging myself, because I find that everything is in Him. Everything is outside of me, nothing relies on me, it all relies on Him. I think that brings a challenge with it.

RHB I was not thinking so much of self judgment, although that is necessary and it is referred to later on - the proving and then later on the judging of ourselves so that we are not judged, but I was thinking of the holy import in those emblems. They speak of devotion through love. You have read of the Hebrew bondman, "I love my master, my wife, and my children". That was not simply profession on the part of Christ; it was demonstrated in the sacrifice that He made. I feel that the Lord would challenge us in the Supper as He challenged Peter, "lovest thou me more than these?", John 21: 15. What is the reality of my love in the presence of love that is testified to supremely in those simple emblems?

GMcK I think that is helpful. It has the effect of drawing me out. Having confronted this contemplation of Christ and His devotion, there must be an answer.

RHB That is the way that it would be preserved from becoming a ritual. You said it must not become a formality to us, but the question is, how is it going to be prevented from becoming that? The Jews were given the Passover, and it became the Passover of the Jews, or the feast of the Jews; God was left out. We know that many take up the Supper in a formal and ritualised way, but surely it is the fact that our affections have been touched and drawn out that makes it real rather than simply ritualistic.

HJG I was thinking of what you drew attention to as to His coming to do Another's will. It is a tremendous matter that one of the Godhead should take up such a responsibility and, having been given a body to this end, that really brings it near to us. It is not something afar off that maybe we do not understand, but it has brought it near to us. Do you think that helps us to understand what you have been thinking about?

GMcK This is a matter for our affections. As you say, He has come near. "Sacrifice and offering thou wiltedst not": this scripture presents it

as God taking pleasure in nothing else but Christ. Think of a body being prepared for the complete fulfilling of God's will. This is the kind of contemplation we should have as we look at the loaf on the table.

HJG It was, "This day" for Israel (Josh 3: 7); and "this do in remembrance of me" for the disciples. It would make us think of Him.

GMcK Now I am starting to think, not of what I am doing, or even what I need, but starting to think of Him.

DAB If we have any thought of what is material, this body is the most precious material thing that there has ever been. It was prepared by God for the doing of His will. Every moment of that life in that body was precious to God. Every movement, every act of any member of that body - finger, hand or eye - thought, word, everything was for God's pleasure. Then He says, when He gave the Supper, 'It is for you'. Something so superlative is presented as, having at the end, been given for me.

GMcK The hymn says

Holy vessel of God's pleasure
In His service day by day (Hymn 30).

We had at meetings in Glasgow the life of Jesus, a Man without compare. You cannot find adequate words because of the accumulation of glory and perfection in His life, and then *that* offered up is what we have in the loaf.

DAB In a sense, I can begin to understand that such an offering must be for God, because He is the only Person great enough to appreciate the wonder of it; but when the Lord gave the Supper He said it was for us. That I find even more stupendous.

GMcK "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you". The Lord's desire is in this but then He presents us with these emblems that contain such glorious truths as to His body and the fulfilling of God's will, "Lo, I come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do, O God, thy will"; and then "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all". I think we will be helped to value the breaking of bread more and more as we go over some of these scriptures.

BCB I was thinking of the Psalm from which this is taken and the thought of delight comes in there, "To do thy good pleasure, my God, is my delight", Ps 40: 8. Is that something that would save us from the

ritual side of doing it every week? I do find that a challenge; what frame of mind am I in? Is it my delight? I think that is a challenge.

GMcK My experience is that the contemplation of Christ works every time. We come in and find that Christ is always the same. Whatever has bothered me or might be out of place in my life, whatever it is, there is something very assuring and stabilising about coming to the breaking of bread.

EFW There is no substitute for the material things. The bread is there and it is a fresh loaf complete in itself. Would that link with the body prepared? It was perfect in every way. But then we break it, and it is broken at that time; not before, to make it easier to eat, but it is broken at the time of giving thanks.

GMcK There are a lot of young ones here and they are used to the breaking of bread as we have it. There is meaning behind the loaf being complete?

EFW It is there complete, but then we do not leave it there: we break it with a view to participating in it actually. It is more than just thinking of it. We actually partake of it, and the same with the cup.

GMcK I like that, because maybe I am at fault in speaking too much about looking at the emblems, but as you say it is much more than that; it is much deeper. I am going to partake of them, I am going to have my part in that, I am going to commit myself to that. It is a very deep thing.

EFW I expect we have all had the feeling when we were younger of the emblems passing us by. We could be thinking about them rightly, our affections were drawn, but we were not participating. That affected me: I wanted to participate.

RJF The words are simple, “eat” and “drink”. We are to be participators: we do not come to be an audience at the Supper; we are to eat and to drink.

GMcK I have often noticed that: “let a man prove himself, and thus eat of the bread, and drink of the cup”, 1 Cor 11: 28. It does not say, 'prove yourself and find out what you find and then we will see'; it says, “thus eat of the bread, and drink of the cup”. The power is there to be purified, Christ has done it all, to clear everything with Him and “thus eat”.

JRW How can we help younger brethren as they grow up? How can we help them to take the first step in relation to breaking bread? In the

days of Naaman, the prophet asked him to do something fairly simple and he made it very difficult, and there were those around him who were able to help him, “if the prophet had bidden thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he says to thee, Wash and be clean?”, 2 Kings 5: 13. I was just wondering how those of us who are around the young ones in our localities can help them to take the first step in relation to it?

GMcK It is by making it as simple as it can be. Having given my heart to the Lord and found that He is my Saviour and understood what He has done for me, I do what He has asked me to do out of love for Him. That was what was on my mind. If we combine it with the service of God, which is very right to do, we might be daunted by it; but what we are asked to do is to go and remember the Lord in the breaking of bread. We can help the young ones by starting at that level.

JRW I can remember an element of fear in relation to asking to break bread when I felt that my affections were prompting me in that direction. I can still quite clearly remember that, and wondered how we can help those who are younger. I am sure there are many that are responding to what you are bringing before us. I am sure there are many who have the desire in their hearts, and I wonder how we can practically help such to overcome that element of fear that we find in our hearts.

GMcK It is a question of whether I want to do something for the Lord, “this do in remembrance of me”. It is as simple as that, it is profound and it is not to be taken up lightly, but it is simple.

AEM The young people should not take this up just because their local brethren desire them to. I would suggest that if they look particularly at the older brethren, and listen to brothers giving thanks for the emblems and the thanksgiving following it, they will hear and see what it means to a lover of Christ to partake of it, and if that prompts them to want to do something for Him that would be pleasurable to Him.

BCB We do not have to understand all the big words before we want to break bread. I am just picking up on the fear side because I would say the same for myself. I can grow in my appreciation of the great things of God and will always do so until I die, but what you are saying is that there is something very simple and fundamental that we start off with.

GMcK In case the younger brethren think we are focusing everything

on them, this is an exercise for me and for older ones as much as anybody, that it should be valued and understood so that it does not become a ritual.

QP Paul says, “the things that I write to you, that it is the Lord's commandment”, 1 Cor 14: 37. We know from John's gospel that the commandments are linked with love and then in his epistle he says, “his commandments are not grievous”, 1 John 5: 3. Does that help us that, even if we view it in the context of commandment, the Lord Jesus says, “as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love”, John 15: 10.

GMcK I am just attracted to the simplicity of it that if I love my Lord and He asked me to do something I should do it.

RWF One of the difficulties that we might have when we are younger is that we feel that our love for Him is inadequate, and we hesitate on that account, but I wonder whether the scripture in 2 Corinthians helps as to that, “For the love of the Christ constrains us”, 2 Cor 5: 14. It is a question of His love and not of mine exactly, although He looks for a response to His love in my heart. But it is His love that is to have the all-powerful influence upon us.

GMcK I think that is what becomes clear to us in the breaking of bread; His love is first. There must be an answer but the contemplation of His love first is the way that we get to it.

AJMCS Is the cup helpful for us in that? I was noticing in 1 Corinthians 11 that the thought of remembering is extended to the cup. I think that we would all be challenged and be exercised, and who can say anything about having love for Christ? We can take the cup and delight in His love for us. The cup expresses the new covenant in His blood, and that is entirely unconditional; it is not dependent on my love, it is dependent on His love.

GMcK As I understand it we are brought into something that is wholly new.

RWF I wondered if you had that in mind in connection with Hebrews, “I come ... to do, O God, thy will ... He takes away the first that he may established the second”. The loaf and the cup speak of what is new. We think of them perhaps historically but they actually express what is new. In Hebrews there is a good deal of emphasis on the new covenant and we have two words for 'new'. One means fresh as entirely different

and the other means continually fresh. The Lord has established what is new in both senses, (Heb 12: 24, note) and entrance into that in practice is by way of the Supper. In connection with the challenge the question might be for me whether I am still dwelling upon the old. I know that literally the old and new covenant apply to Israel, but am I still living in the old? The Lord has put on something entirely new, and the Supper is a gateway to that.

GMcK The thing to cling on to is that it depends on Christ; the first has been taken away and the second established, and then in the new covenant we come to what has been said already, that nothing depends on me. The thing that appeals to me about the cup, and the new covenant, is that it is sealed in His blood. That seems to put me on a rock solid foundation. All thought of my own inadequacy or unworthiness is swept away because everything is established in Christ, and His blood seals it. God has not just spoken to us about His love, He has sent His Son and He demonstrated it. He offered Himself up and He died. How much more of a demonstration do we need of the love of Christ than that?

DAB Why do we have two emblems? We have spoken about the emblems and in a sense they have a combined voice because they represent the life of Jesus laid down, the loaf and the cup separate. But as has been pointed out there is a distinct remembrance connected to each of them.

GMcK We are trying to get to the fundamentals and whether we are able to answer, "What mean ye ...?". The question would be, 'What does it mean, what does the whole thing mean?', and then, 'What does the bread mean, and what does the cup mean?'. One of the things that I understand is that the body and the blood being separated is speaking to us of the death of Christ.

DAB There is something very powerful in having two emblems speaking of the same thing, but we give thanks for each emblem, and there is something special and on its own account in the cup. Paul adds the word that the cup is to be taken as a remembrance, and it is in relation to that that what is new is introduced. I do not know if he might have spoken about the new covenant in relation to the loaf, but Paul brings it in in relation to His blood to remind us that what is new has this seal upon it.

GMcK The new covenant is there. A covenant is like an agreement, it

is the proposals of grace that have come from heaven, through Christ, to us. For us there is only one covenant. The new covenant applies directly to the Jews because they had the old; we only come into the blessing of one and that is the covenant of grace. The thing that appeals to me about it is that it is sealed in His blood. The tremendous impact of that should affect us every week, that His love has not only been spoken about, not only theorised about, but it has been demonstrated to the extent that He *died* to manifest that love.

DAB In relation to the history of the covenants, it shows that God puts His people on new ground, and then the covenant seals them in their possession of that new ground. It is not that He makes the covenant and then brings them into it, but He puts them on new ground and then seals it in the covenant. That is what the blood of Jesus has done.

MRC Could you say something as to what we experience in partaking of the Supper? The scripture gives the suggestion, “how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread”, Luke 24: 35. It is the living experience of knowing that the Lord comes and manifests Himself in the heart of the one who partakes.

GMcK The experience of that is very precious and is to be longed for. In my week there is no other experience that comes near to that. The other thing is that I would not want to make anything too difficult. I would just like to appeal that the taking up of the breaking of bread rightly will lead us into these things, and the possibility will be there for spiritual experience, but we must begin by understanding what it is that He asks us to do.

MRC I would not want anybody to feel hindered because they might not feel that experience, but rather the desire would be to assemble with a longing in my heart that I might know it and prove it.

GMcK Somebody pointed out to me recently that this scripture in 1 Corinthians 10 is put as a question, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of the Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of the Christ?”. Clearly you could make a statement of it, because it would be true, but I think there is a question in it for all of us. The question points out that the level of our links together in fellowship is this, the communion of the blood of the Christ and the communion of the body of the Christ; and the fact that it is given as a question gives us a bit of a challenge. Are our links at this level? It puts the matter very high.

RHB The two material things that you referred to, the Supper and baptism, both speak of the death of Christ, and it is through His death that He has won our hearts. If we are the Lord's it is because He has won our hearts for Himself through the way that He has gone, but then as our hearts are touched together by that, it gives the Lord access in a peculiar way to our affections. If our hearts are moved to respond together and to hold our links together at this level, it affords the Lord, on His side, a peculiar opportunity as our affections are fresh and tender at the Supper to have access to us apart from all the busy life and occupation that has gone on through the week.

RWF Does that give us a fresh touch as to His own affections, "I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go free"? Was that the point at which you were aiming in the scriptures you had in mind?

GMcK We should consider in the breaking of bread our links together. If we belonged to a car club or something, our common interest would be that we both like cars, or golf or whatever it was; but if you ask what is *our* common interest, the communion of the body and the blood of Christ seems to be without compare.

I drew on Exodus 21 because of the idea of committal. This should be taken up simply, but there is this side of committal. The bread and the cup on the table speak of monumental devotion on the part of the Lord Jesus to us; and the question would be whether I am going to commit myself to Him. That exercise comes along with breaking bread. When we partake of the emblems, the challenge is, how committed will I be to the Lord Jesus Himself?

RJF It says, "the bondman shall say distinctly"; if we ask to break bread there needs to be something distinct in answer, do you think?

GMcK I think it is distinct. You may say, 'I will just do it', but the person who has been beside you has seen you do it. It is distinct. It is very obvious if somebody is not doing it or somebody is doing it. In what we do, it is distinct. The other thing is that it is intended to be irreversible, "I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go free; then his master shall bring him before the judges, and shall bring him to the door, or to the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall be his bondman for ever". This is a commitment that is meant to be irreversible. With the Lord it was so. On my part it is meant to be irreversible, I do not take it back, do I?

CCDR Certainly not, it is a question of love.

GMcK It is a question of His love and a challenge about mine.

Sunbury

11th September 2010

Key to Initials:

B C Bodman, Bristol; R H Brown, East Finchley; D A Burr, London;

M R Cook, Maidstone; R J Flowerdew, Sunbury;

R W Flowerdew, Sunbury; H J Glass, Toronto;

J S Gray, East Finchley; T J Harvey, East Finchley;

G McKay, Manchester; A J McSeveney, Twickenham;

P H Morris, Sunbury; A E Mutton, Witney; Q Poore, Swanage;

C C D Remington, St Albans; P J Walkinshaw, Gillingham;

J R Walkinshaw, Maidstone; J Wright, Havering;

E F Woodford, Dorking

LINKS IN THE CHAIN

Garth McKay

1 Samuel 3: 2-11

Acts 23: 12-17

Mark 14: 3-9

Matthew 27: 57-60

We had a trip earlier in the year to Lindisfarne on the coast of Northumbria. It is an interesting place to visit, a little island cut off from the mainland at high tide, so you have to wait for low tide until you can cross to it. The road disappears into the water and you have to wait for the tide to go down before you can cross. When you go over there is a castle and visitors' centre and all sorts of interesting things to see. But it is also an important place in the history of Christianity in our country. There was a monastery there and, in around the year 650, there was a man called Aidan, who was asked by the king nearby in Northumbria to preach to his people and convert them. Those were very dark days, our country was what we would call pagan and the rule of myth and legend and superstition was prevalent. Those faithful men went out as missionaries to speak to the people about Christ, and to convert them; and there would have been many dangerous journeys. You have to look a bit under the surface when you visit because the place was ransacked by Vikings and a lot is made of that, and a lot is also made of the works of art that they produced at Lindisfarne, but I looked under the surface and I thought about God preserving His testimony in a place like that, in the surrounding darkness of those pagan days. I thought of God preserving what was true and I thought of a man like Aidan with his companions, going out with the light they had about Christ in their hearts.

It occurred to me how God has relied all down the ages on persons who will put their foot forward for Him and become a link in the chain. God has preserved this chain of gold all the way down the ages and will preserve it to the end, but He needs links in His chain. As the years roll by He needs new ones. Aidan and his companions, their work is done, they had their part, and millions of others have had their part. They have done their bit, but there is a need for links in this chain of gold, persons who will step up and serve God, and commit their lives to Him. Aidan did not set this on; he was just a link in the chain. It is very wonderful to think who set it on, the Lord Himself. No mere man set it

on; it was the Lord Jesus. Aidan might have walked along thinking about that scripture when Paul said, "Let *us* also therefore ... run with endurance the race that lies before us, looking stedfastly on Jesus the leader and complete of faith", Heb 12: 1. He led: Jesus is the Leader. He is the foundation that has been laid. "For other foundation can no man lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ", 1 Cor 3: 11. The foundation Stone has been laid but God needs persons in His testimony who will commit themselves to Him and become links in His golden chain. Where is it all going? It is all going up to God. Where has it come down to? It has come down to you and me. That is what it is. This is not any advanced line of teaching but I want to appeal to you, an appeal to your heart about what you can do for Christ, about whether you will step forward and have your part in this wonderful testimony of Jesus that is going up to God for His glory.

I read about Samuel, not because Samuel was prominent but because he was a child. We do not know how old he was; he may have been about twelve years old here, and God called him. God had need of him. You can read the background here which is very sorrowful; the older ones who were around him, who had been given the authority, who had been put in places of responsibility, had all failed. Everything had got corrupted and God called a child, and He called him by name. I want to speak to the children; if you are old enough to listen and to understand what I say you are old enough to get this message: God might call you today. Has He been calling you already? This call that Samuel got was to him personally; it was his name He called, "Samuel, Samuel". He will say your name. There is no telling how He might speak to you - in the meetings, in your life at school, in your bed, He might speak; but if He speaks, take heed and answer Him. He called a child here. Could I say to you, are you going to step forward, could you step forward in your young years? Could you step forward and be here for Jesus? Who is going to be the one standing up for His Name in the classroom? Is there a child here who would do that for Christ, do that for Jesus? If God is calling you, do not ignore Him; He needs you. You could say, 'He will get by without me; He has many other prominent people'. He had many people here, and they had all failed Him. That is a sorrowful and serious thing, but God needed Samuel and He called him when he was a child. Do not listen to this thinking that it applies only to people who are older; it applies to you. It has all come down to you, and God needs persons who will step forward and be here for Him and do things for Him. We see the young children helping serve the

food and perhaps we think that is nothing, that is a little thing. It is not. You are serving God's people, you are stepping forward and taking your part in this precious testimony, this golden chain that is all going up to God for His glory. How exalted it is. Have your part in it, dear child. Are you going to be the one who sings out in the hymns? Who is singing out? It is a wonderful thing when you hear the voice of a child who has a grasp of the love of Jesus, and who is singing out to the Saviour they love. It has all come down to you, dear children, and I would urge you to have your part. You step forward; do not worry about the person next to you: you do it. God will take care of them, God will call them too, but He is calling you and if He is calling you, answer Him today. The thing about Samuel was that he needed a nudge. He heard three times and he went to Eli. Eli had the perception to say, 'It is God who is calling you'; he needed a nudge. Maybe we can give you a nudge today, if you are wondering whether God is calling you; maybe we can give you a nudge forward. Is He calling you in the breaking of bread; are you thinking about that, are you not sure, are you stuck somehow? Let me urge you to step forward; He called Samuel when he was a child.

I go on to Acts 23, and here is another person being called forward into service. He is a youth. This was a critical time and God needs persons in critical times. How many there have been. Paul here is in danger of his life. Paul was going on in his path, going on to testify in Rome to the rulers there, and there was a plot to kill him. The Jews were going to kill him on the road and this youth hears of it, he "heard of the lying in wait". You say, 'God could take care of Paul', and so He could. God could have protected Paul with angels if necessary, but He does not use that way. He uses this boy to go and report it to Paul, and then Paul sends him to the chiliarch; this youth tells him the story, and then Paul has a great military guard around him when he goes and he is preserved. But it all came down to this youth. That is not the only way God could have used, but He used that way; He needed a person. You say, 'I am not like Aidan going out on his missionary journeys'. You may think that no one is going to remember the thing that you can do, but God will remember. This youth is not prominent. You could say it is not a very significant thing he did, but how valuable it was! He was prepared to put his foot forward and take his part. Think of how vital it was in preserving the apostle on his journey.

God has need of persons in critical times. Think of all the unknown servants of Christ; we do not know their names, but they are

there in history. Think of the history of the Reformation. I was thinking of the Bibles they printed in Holland; they could not print them here because it was too dangerous; they went over to Holland and printed them there and brought them back in boats. They brought them over under cover of darkness in danger of their lives. Who were these persons who sailed the boats? We do not know their names. God saw them. They were critical times. They committed themselves and served God in what they did. Where is it all going? It is all going up to God, and it depended on them in those days; it was their part. Our test is not the Reformation. It is not our test; it was theirs and they did their part. They are gone now, they have passed away, they are with the Lord. It is no use appealing to them now, their part is done, and there it is laid up as a memorial for them. The point is, what am I going to do? It has all come down to me, and I feel the edge of what I am saying very acutely, in critical times. Some of these ones that we would like to have around us who have gone before, they are gone now; it has come down to me and you. How are you going to respond? Can I urge you to step forward and take your part? You say, 'There are not critical times'. It is not the case. There are critical times in our localities: someone needs care, someone needs a touch, some one needs guarding. Maybe the Lord's rights need guarding. There are critical things to do if you look for them. Critical things need to be done for Christ. It may involve sorrow and sacrifice; it is almost certainly going to involve cost of some kind. It is a question of whether you are available to act for Christ, act for the Lord.

I was thinking of those days after the terrible division in 1970 when so many of our brethren were lost to us, and I thought of the brothers and sisters who went that following Lord's day to the meeting room and put the emblems on the table and carried on. Just think of the need for endurance and power of love for Christ that would get us through things like that, so that we might take our part.

In Mark 14 I read about this woman because she is a woman. She has this "alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard ... and having broken the alabaster flask, she poured it out upon his head", on the head of Jesus. All the men here missed this opportunity completely. We read in another gospel that He said that no water was provided for Him to wash and so on, but there was a woman there, she was a sister, and she knew what was needed. The disciples were presumably here, but they missed it, and the Lord says, "She has beforehand anointed

my body for the burial". What perception there was in this beloved sister who did something for Jesus when all the men missed it completely. I wanted to say a word about that - firstly to the sisters themselves, to encourage you that your part is as important as any other. If you do not speak in the meetings it does not mean that your part is somehow unimportant. This woman's part was the very greatest here because the others were not available, the brothers all missed it. I have had the experience very recently, several times, of missing something and a sister has helped me, a sister has pointed out the thing I should have seen, or the thing I should have done. Could I say a word to the brothers too? Is there a tendency with us to expect more from the brothers than the sisters? I do not labour it, I just would like to encourage us to see that these links in the chain of gold are sisters and brothers working together, and they are both needed. There are times when the sisters will have the answers, times when the feeling side of the sisterhood will be what is required, and we must lean on it, we must expect it to be there and we must use it.

The Lord Jesus is extremely commending here, "Wheresoever these glad tidings may be preached in the whole world, what this woman has done shall be also spoken of for a memorial of her" - it is all going up to God. Could I say to the sisters today, it has all come down to you, this test is coming down to you today? I understand that the sisters' part is sometimes harder to find, but it is there, and it is precious to Christ and it is needed. How it is needed. I feel it is needed especially in the subject of shepherd care that we listen to what our sisters are saying and how they might guide us.

In Matthew, Joseph of Arimathea was a rich man. He had been given some special resources, he had lots of money, and we might be given special resources. It might not be money, it might be time, skill of some kind, it might be anything, but Joseph was specially prepared for a unique service. No one else will ever, ever have the opportunity that he had. There is a special attraction in this to me: the Lord had died; it is a unique point in the whole of the Christian testimony. What could we say about it, but the Lord's body was there and a certain precious and valued service was required? It was required only once in the whole history of time, and there was a man there who was ready for it. He was disciple of Jesus. It says he was a disciple but secretly. It was not a secret after this day because, when others were paralysed by terror, this man stepped forward. A man who

had not been happy to say openly that he was a disciple of Jesus goes right into the court of Pilate himself and begs the body. What courage he had, how ready he was to take his place in this chain of gold and how glad I am he did it. He did something for Jesus that I would like to thank him for when I see him in heaven, "having got the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb": loving hands did that. They were not the cruel unfeeling hands of Roman soldiers, but hands of a disciple of Jesus. God needed him that day, and he did his part. God needed him when the others were not available to Him. Is there a chance that He has a job for you today that He has prepared you for, that needs to be done? Maybe no one else can do it. Think of that. Think of the place where you have been set, the things that you have been given, maybe the gift you have been given, and maybe just the fact that you are there. There is a brother or sister beside you who needs your help; there is no one else there, you are the one. All these things that Christians have done down the ages, they will all be written down, all written against their names: these are the things they did. They became links in the golden chain. It is all going up for God's glory, and has come down to us today, and we are to feel the edge of this word for ourselves. I do not know what it is that God has for you to do; it may be a prominent thing, or it may be completely hidden, but He needs you for it. He needs you and He needs you today.

You say there is nothing that I can do like Joseph did. The Lord Jesus has gone, but He says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to me", Matt 25: 40. That is how the Lord feels about service to His people. Do something for the saints, do something for your brother, do something for your sister, and the Lord will say, 'It is just like you did it for me'.

I just wanted to appeal to you on these lines. Others have gone before, others have done their part; that is all over. God has all that treasured up, but the testimony is going on and has come down today to you and me. What are we going to do? What is our answer going to be? I would long to send us all out of this room with some fresh resolve, some strengthened committal for Him, some readiness to answer. The children, the youths, the brothers, the sisters, all of us together, we can all have our part. I trust you will take it up for Him today.

For His Name's sake.

Sunbury

11th September 2010

THE INSTRUCTED

John C Gray

Isaiah 50: 4, 5

John 16: 13, 14

1 Corinthians 14: 19

Ephesians 4: 20-24

I seek the Spirit's help to open up these scriptures in relation to the instructed One, to persons being instructed, and to the need for instruction. We start with the greatness and glory of the One who took the dependent place as Man, and this reference that we have read in Isaiah 50 sets out the objective first, "given me the tongue of the instructed, that I should know how to succour by a word him that is weary". That was the objective of the Lord and His instruction. Then we see the way in which He was instructed. How magnificent that is! Think of the Person of the Lord Jesus, unchanged and unchanging, as we were reminded at the three day meetings recently in Birmingham, the glory of the One who was there in unapproachable light, and yet that Person, whom we now know as Jesus, becoming incarnate, coming into a position of dependence. How majestic are the ways of God to achieve His purpose! I trust that we all appreciate the great and wonderful way that God has acted in Christ, in dependent Manhood, that we might come into blessing, that we might know the presence of God, that we might be instructed in the things of the Lord Jesus.

It says, not only that He was instructed but, "The Lord Jehovah hath opened mine ear and I was not rebellious; I turned not away back". There is no such thing in Jesus, but there is plenty of it in me, and perhaps in you. The first matter that the scripture is bringing out is that, if I am to be instructed in the way of the Lord and the knowledge of God, it really requires a subject spirit. It requires an obedience that was seen in perfection in Jesus, but should also be in my soul. It is one of the first things that we learn in the glad tidings, that the Holy Spirit is given "to those that obey him", Acts 5: 32. We tend to turn back - we tend to think, I have an opinion about this, and I have a thought about the next thing, and I do not perhaps sometimes agree with what so and so says. I think we need to follow increasingly the pattern of Jesus who was here in manhood as the One who was not rebellious, and His ear was open to the voice of the Father, "morning by morning". Think of God opening the Lord's ears "morning by morning". Here He was as a real Man; here He was as One who was ready for instruction. Then He took on the

instruction. It says, "to hear as the instructed". What do I hear, beloved brother, sister, young one? Paul says to the Corinthians, "There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of undistinguishable sound", 1 Cor 14: 10. That is that they each have their own topic of which to speak, but what about the voice of Christ? What about the instruction that is coming from heaven: do I have an ear for it? I think we should follow increasingly the model that the Lord Jesus has set us. I feel limited in what can be said as to the beauty of the manhood of Jesus who was here in total dependence and had His ear opened, "morning by morning ... to hear as the instructed". Think of the One who was the Creator, "by whom also he made the worlds", Heb 1: 2. He was here as a dependent Man and He listened to what the Father said. Does it not put us in a position where we would be listening to what comes from heaven? Does it not provide an example? Does it not point the way? How wonderful it is, "He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed". There is much in our lives morning by morning that we have to attend to, and there is much concern and much anxiety, and much flurry, and much activity, but let us fasten on Christ, and let us have an ear to hear what is coming from heaven, "morning by morning". Do we really listen to the voice of Christ? Do we listen to the Father's voice; listen to the Spirit's voice? We find all these things in the other scriptures that we have read, finding that as each day goes by there is another opportunity to be in communion and to be in communion that I might receive a word.

Instruction is well known to all of us, young and old. As early as a child enters into the nursery school there is instruction; continuing through the school, the college, and the work place. If you want to learn a job you have to be instructed. If you want to have a business you have to be instructed in how to run it. All these things are well known, but if you want to know about Jesus, about Christ, if you want to know about God, about the Spirit, similarly you have to be instructed in it; we have to learn, we have to be guided. Then the Lord was given "the tongue of the instructed". That means that He gave expression to what He heard. How beneficial that something was being conveyed of the grace of God, of the kindness of God, the compassions of God, the love of God, and much more from the heart of Christ as He hears it from the Father "morning by morning". The tongue of the One who was instructed was able to bring in instruction to others. Think of the instruction on the mountain in Matthew, what an instruction that was. It opened up the way of grace: "whoever will compel thee to go one mile,

go with him two”, Matt 5: 41. That is divine grace operating and the Lord in His instruction on the mountain brought that out. All the other teachings that He introduced, teaching the disciples at the sea as to the greatness of the types of the assembly (chap 13), teaching and bringing in what related to the positions of the mountains in Matthew - how full and how rich the scriptures are. Dear young people, do you read the gospels? What do you read and what do you expect to find in them? When you come to Luke's gospel you find that there are pictures of the way in which the Lord Jesus acted in grace towards persons. In Luke 7 we have the woman who was in need of salvation as against the cold Pharisee who thought that he was righteous. The Lord presents these gospel pictures. Then the neighbour in Luke 10, another wonderful picture. Then Luke 15, think of that parable in its magnificence unfolding the economy, all that it was in the heart of God. That was the Lord Jesus teaching. Then you come to Mark, you get the rapidity of what the prophet is, the great service that the Lord rendered to His disciples and to all persons that came to Him to be healed. John's gospel gives the unfolding and teaching as to the Father. How fully the Lord expressed everything. How profitable it is to contemplate the gospels. Next, you read the epistles and they instruct you in the terms of the truth, what was unfolded after Christ was glorified on high, but then come back and read the gospels, and see the Man of whom they speak and find out that there is something that is very valuable and something that will find an answer in your heart; because, if you have believed on the Lord Jesus, the work of God is in your soul and it develops and increases into a spiritual being which will shine in a day to come along with all the saints. Therefore the need that I should learn as much of Jesus as I can while I am here. The time of learning will be complete and our measure will be full as we reach Christ in glory. May we be encouraged, therefore, that we take this matter on.

In John, this is a well-known scripture where the Lord is speaking of the Spirit of God and He says, “when *he* is come, the Spirit of truth, he shall guide you into all the truth” - think of the wonderful guidance that we receive from the Spirit of God. Guiding means that He is showing you the way. Often, amidst all the scriptures that come up amongst us, we have to discern the way; “he shall guide you into all the truth”. We need to discern, in days of moral darkness which is increasing in our time, the importance of the truth as the standard. He is the Spirit of truth and we need therefore to find that He is guiding us in the right direction. John speaks about the discerning of “the spirit of

truth and the spirit of error", 1 John 4: 6. I know that John says that, "ye have the unction from the holy one, and ye know all things", 1 John 2: 20. Now that is true of the work of God in your soul and my soul, but because of what we are we need to be instructed and guided.

There is an interesting scripture in Isaiah, "when ye turn to the right hand or when ye turn to the left, thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it", Isa 30: 21. Very often I have turned to the right hand, thinking perhaps that I am doing what is right, but I have been wrong. Then perhaps I have turned to the left hand, another direction, but it may not have been of the Spirit of God. This is an important matter - "thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it". The Spirit of God is the guide into the truth, as it says, "he shall guide you into all the truth". I find that a great challenge, but the Spirit of God has been here, not only through the twelve apostles and the apostle Paul and throughout the dark ages, when the evidence of the Spirit working in persons has been very little recorded, but also in the time of the recovery when we have been recovered to the truth, the time of the revival, when "in the middle of the night there was a cry, Behold, the bridegroom", Matt 25: 6. The Spirit of God has spoken through these ministers of the recovery and God was in it. There is no doubt. Have you any doubt that God was in the ministries of the revival? Read them, see the living character of them. See the way in which God has spoken by His Spirit through them and led us to appreciate Christ and led us into the full appreciation of what the assembly is, that wonderful vessel composed of all believers who have the Spirit, in which we, through grace, have a part and which God is going to gather up to display alongside of Christ in the coming age. It is something of the beauty of what He has done in all the saints, myriads of the saints. It is not just a company of perhaps two hundred today, not just the company of all that are in this country, or all that we know throughout the world. There are going to be millions of believers in whom God has wrought a work which will display something of Jesus. But the question is at the present time, how much of it is displayed in you and me? That is the challenge, that the Spirit of God is intent on guiding us, showing us the way into all the truth - "For he shall not speak from himself"; that is another infinite grace, that the Spirit has taken a place of dependence. The Lord Jesus became incarnate and took on a dependent place. The Spirit of God has come from Christ in glory - "He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine". That is, He shall receive of what Christ is in glory, and display it in the saints, in the hearts of the

saints. How wonderful that is, and that is His dependent service. These two divine Persons, the Lord Jesus and the Spirit have taken lower places in what we call the arrangement of love, or the economy, in infinite grace, that we might see the way in which God has made Himself known. It is not just an arrangement of love that originates in God and is displayed through Christ and the Spirit, but it includes you and me. That is the mighty grace and power of the love of God that He would draw each one of us into it and find that there are persons who are ready to be found together.

In 1 Corinthians 14, it speaks of what I may say in the assembly, and that to me is a test also, and may be a test to some others here too. "In the assembly I desire to speak five words with my understanding, that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue." That bears on what we said in the reading as to the man with the pitcher of water (Mark 14: 13), the spiritual character of the servant moving about in levitical service in view of instructing of others also, and it is coming in the power of the Spirit of God, coming so that I may "speak five words with my understanding". That is five words that I know about rather than, "ten thousand words in a tongue". That brings up whether a lot of what we say may relate to the doctrine of the truth, and that is fine and right because we need that too, but in instructing others also it involves, "five words with my understanding". Will the Spirit of God, through what one and another says, bring light into my soul and wisdom that can explain it, that can make it understood, that can show what the Spirit of God has in mind? It is spiritually discerned and we are tested as we speak in the assembly. The assembly is a wonderful entity. It is the aggregate of all the saints brought together and it is important because she is going to be the bride of Christ, and not only that but there is going to be glory to God in that vessel throughout "the age of ages", Eph 3: 31. How fine that that should be so, and therefore if we walk in the light of it at the present time it behoves us to be careful as we move in these relations that we have with one another. So, I should not, therefore, as an older brother, exert more influence than is due because of what the Spirit of God may be showing through others that are younger. I am not putting down experience, or fathers amongst the saints, because Paul said there was a need in Corinth that there should be more fathers, "For if ye should have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet not many fathers", 1 Cor 4: 15. Fathers, however, should make way for others also in the assembly. "Five words with my understanding" may come from somebody that I did not

expect it to come from. I quote the incident in 2 Chronicles 20: 14, in the time of Jehoshaphat. He was in a dilemma as to what to do and instead of all the older persons that were round about him producing the solution, there was one young man out of the congregation that spoke up by the Spirit and gave a solution to the problem. It is very important that we respect the assembly.

The young people would understand that, although Ephesians 1, 2 and 3 bring in the purpose of God and the way He has secured it, chapters 4, 5, and 6 bring in practical instructions in the way in which we will arrive at it. This is one of them, "But ye have not thus learnt the Christ, if ye have heard him" (that goes back to Isaiah about our hearing, "morning by morning") "and been instructed in him". Have we been instructed in the Christ? How much have I been instructed in the Christ? It relates to Christ in glory, the position which He fills there, bringing out the fulness of what He is in the Father's presence and the greatness of what He is as Man there influencing the whole of the universe for God. Christ will be the One that will shine in the day to come. Christ is set in relation to making known everything that will be for the glory of God, so that it returns back to God, that God may be all in all. It is wonderful that every family is named of the Father. If He is thus Father of every family, that must involve that there must be sons, so that in every family that God will have there will be a display of some character of sonship, and it must stem from Christ. It must stem from that glorious Man, the Son of the Father's love - the beloved, *the* Son in all His distinctiveness. We do not know too much about the eternal age, but Christ as Son will bring everything back to God in all His greatness and glory.

Thus learning the Christ, "if ye have heard him and been instructed in him", is what we have gone over already. Then it says, "according as the truth is in Jesus". We learn it by the Spirit. That is that that Man Jesus is unchanged, the Man who was down here, displaying in perfection everything for God, is there in all His perfection in glory in heaven. Am I going to be like Him? Of course I will be like Him in heaven, but can I be like Him in testimony here at the present time? That is the point about the new man. Paul says, "having put off ... the old man". That is what is so obnoxious in the sight of God, all the opinions that I have, all the independent thoughts that I have, all the evil thoughts that Satan might put in my mind and heart - these are features of the old man. We have put that off, and then we put on the new man.

The new man is not represented in one person exactly, it is a collective idea - what God sees in the saints of the character of Jesus in them. What a testimony to God, what an expression of what is for Christ. Can we show that in our local meetings, large or small? Can we provide a testimony among men to the new man, "which according to God is created in truthful righteousness and holiness"? That is, that the new man displays the character of Jesus - that things are right and holy. Nothing is left at a loose end, nor swept under the carpet. Everything is brought to justice and everything is done in righteousness according to the standard of the love of God. The truth brings in the standard that makes way for the love of God to be expressed. How great these things are.

I commend these thoughts to us, and may we be encouraged in following the Model, the Lord Jesus, and seeking to express Him in some measure as we follow instruction from Him and from the Spirit.

For His Name's sake.

Witney

13th November 2010