

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 69

December 2012

CONTENTS

Spiritual Leadership Among God's People

Page 1

Willingness

Marshall Cowan

Page 22

How God Has Won our Hearts

Jim D. Gray

Page 27

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE

Numbers 13: 30-33; 14: 1-10, 24, 38; 21: 16-18; 32: 12
Colossians: 3: 12-15

NMcK We have had a lot of ministry in our area with regard to principles of fellowship - foundational matters which have been a help and great benefit to see. Another side of things which goes along with that has been before me, and that is the side of mutual affection and individual devotedness; the working out of these things among the saints, which is a bulwark and a stay against the enemy's activities. The side of holiness and love and life among the saints is an antidote to what would come in to deaden and to dull and to corrupt. The Lord speaks about that in the gospels, of having "salt in yourselves" (Mark 9: 50), meaning a preservation of what is genuine, what is real, what is vital. Salt is a preservative, it preserves life, stops any corruption coming in, and maintains things in vitality. You notice in the epistles too how things are to be genuine - such as, "unfeigned faith" (1 Tim 1: 5), "love in truth", 2 & 3 John 1. In the salutations of Paul at the end of the epistles there is no flattery or anything unreal; there is what is real, genuine and true. Formality and orthodoxy would tend to hinder, take away from our real genuine links together, but what is a real bulwark and a real stay is that our links together are true and real in Christ. In the beginning of Acts, things were not on a sentimental basis or a formal basis at all, just what was genuine and real. We need the principles, we need order, but along with that we need the inward side of things, the side of things which is going to go through.

The scripture in Numbers is very useful; it records the children of Israel's journey through the wilderness. It speaks of them from the divine side, how God views them as having moved through the wilderness, and not from the side of what God did for them. It is not what Moses and Aaron did in officially maintaining them, speaking of the authority of Christ and the priesthood of Christ; but it is from the point of view of what *they* did. I think this is represented somewhat in Caleb and Joshua, although Joshua also becomes a type of Christ. Caleb and Joshua went through the wilderness *with* the people, and you can see what a tremendous asset they would have been. You might say, what an asset they would be in the locality, working among and with the brethren and not in any outward or great way, but mutually bringing in a spiritual leadership, a leadership of mutual love and devotion, of working things out from among the saints.

I wondered if we could just get some help as to that, because there is something of Joshua and Caleb in each one of us. There is something of Joshua and Caleb in all our localities, and I think that is the side of thing that is going to support and ensure that from our side, in the responsible side of the testimony, we will journey, encamp, and remove and therefore continue.

DAB Formality would be enough if fellowship was simply formal, but are you thinking that, if it refers to something holy, there must be a living affinity among the components; and is that why you are suggesting that we look at Caleb and Joshua together, because it was not only what they were individually but how similar they were in their spiritual desires and exercises?

NMcK They had been to see the land, and they knew what it was like; they had enjoyed the land together. The other spies had too, of course. It speaks of the two carrying the grapes on the pole (Num 13: 23), and it has been suggested that Joshua and Caleb would have been two that would have been able to carry these grapes together.

DAB I think it is very helpful. We are here for a fellowship meeting and its object is to promote this kind of affinity, going and looking at the land; but to be exercised to be built up together.

NMcK So, while much of the teaching in Numbers is individual, the whole assembly went through; and Joshua and Caleb worked from the midst of the people. They go on, and we want to promote that kind of working together, the kind of devotedness and life which was seen in them and the features that were seen in them.

RHB Paul says in Timothy that “the end of what is enjoined is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and unfeigned faith” (1 Tim 1: 5), love from all those things. The very words used suggest that there is what is unreal around so that the unfeigned faith and the good conscience and the pure heart are needed by all of us if we are to be preserved in those conditions.

NMcK That is partly why I read in Colossians. There is the thought in the new man that the old man is done away with, so that the features that come out are features that are true, not corrupt features of the old man. We often read in regard to the land and what we enjoy when we are together. But actually Caleb and Joshua went on with this line when things were extremely difficult. I think that is when things are

required to be worked out in this way. There is not the same need when we are enjoying the greatest assembly privilege, this love and this mutual working out of things is required when the things are at their most difficult.

DJW In Joshua 14, Caleb spoke of the word as it was in his heart, "And now behold, Jehovah has kept me alive, as he said, these forty-five years", v 10. I wondered whether that is something to take account of, the land was in his heart before he was actually in the land himself.

NMcK Mr Norman Meek spoke in his ministry of Caleb's daughter in his home (Raising the Level p18) when he went through that wilderness: what he would have talked about in the tent, what his daughter would have gained; and that is the end of the exercise in Judges: they received "the upper springs and the lower springs", Judg 1: 15. Think of being preserved in Caleb's tent throughout the whole of that wilderness journey. It would have been an area of preservation, an area where the land was talked over and enjoyed, an area where Caleb was a man of influence.

DAB All of these old people were going to fall in the wilderness under God's judgment. Caleb would have pointed out that God had promised to bring the young people in. Is that something that we need to lay hold of, that God has made that promise to the coming generation?

NMcK For the help of the younger ones, the thought of the older generation passing away and younger ones coming in is that the flesh is dealt with in the saints, and what goes into the land is of God, is of the Spirit. It goes on with Roman exercise, and Corinthian exercise.

JRW You made mention of chapter 33, and we were noticing in reading it locally that God in His grace goes over their goings out and their encampments with no reference to their failures. I was wondering if you had any particular reason for reading this section where there is such grievous departure on the part of the people?

NMcK Moses and Aaron would speak of the official side, Christ in glory and interceding for the saints - the apostle and high priest - but Joshua and Caleb were in keeping with the feelings of heaven in regard to every matter and were working to still the people. It says, "Caleb stilled the people before Moses"; it seems to me that they put them on the right line and would desire to put them before the Lord in regard to these matters, not considering matters in regard to themselves, but the

Lord's rights and the Lord's view.

JRW I think what you are bringing before us is most instructive and helpful. I noticed as it was being read that “the glory of Jehovah appeared in the tent of meeting to all the children of Israel”. There were many that did not take account of it, but nevertheless the glory was there, and it was really because Caleb and Joshua gave a basis for that.

NMcK So there was divine approval at least in what Caleb and Joshua did. Persons going on rightly give the Lord a basis to go on with the people. We could have read in any number of places: the tabernacle system itself is a tremendous analogy, the inward side of things is seen in the curtains and so on, speaking of the saints; but Caleb and Joshua represent actual people. I think for the younger people it is helpful to see that, that they represent something that is in each one of us and that they were actually persons who went through these circumstances.

PJW In Corinth, where there was so much failure, you have the house of Chloe and the house of Stephanas, 1 Cor 1: 11, 16. I wondered whether they would represent some of these features seen in Caleb and Joshua? They gave Paul a basis to write what he did, “the assembly of God which is in Corinth”, v 2.

NMcK I was thinking about them as well. He says of Timotheus, “For I have no one like-minded who will care with genuine feeling how ye get on”, Phil 2: 20. They needed that authority, correction, and exhortation in Corinth, the low state required it. If Paul had gone he would have had to have come with a rod, but he sent in Timothy there, and Titus. It worked; there was something now there that could work among the saints and along with the authoritative side that was needed. It brought them to things, and they grieved according to God.

RDP These men had God's view of things. Is that not critical for us, to get God's view? “Another spirit” is a spirit that is imbibing what is of God.

NMcK Yes. Earlier Joshua had not departed from the tent of meeting; he had been with God, he “departed not”, Exod 33: 11. It does not tell us of him coming back out; his life was taken up with these things.

RDP It is not the people's ideas; they maintain God's ideas, God's thoughts.

NMcK In difficult circumstances they went on and held truth at its right level and went on with the truth as it is. Sometimes we feel that we may have to try and meet matters and bring in correction, but we go on with what is right and the truth meets error in every case. What is right and what is good is always the antidote to what comes in that is wrong.

JSH You were saying earlier as to affection. Is it affection for the Lord that comes first, and then we are brought into affection for one another? I was thinking of what it says, "If Jehovah delight in us, he will bring us into this land". We were reading during the week in John's gospel as to Mary of Magdala; she had affection for the Lord, but then the Lord could say to her, "go to my brethren" (John 20: 17); that is an area where there was love amongst themselves, but also love for the Lord.

NMcK We read recently in Ephesians 4 where you get these concentric circles, "There is one body and one Spirit ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all ...", v 4, 5. The point is that they have a common object and we require that as believers, and as bound together we have a common object. Our love for the Lord and our faithfulness to His death brings us together.

DJW-ts Is the glory of Jehovah the answer to "Let us make a captain"? There is no alternative; it is either life or something that is merely profession. A lot of the religious bodies have somebody's name attached to them; that is like a captain. The real life is connected with the glory of Jehovah; it has appeared in our own day.

NMcK I think that is very helpful. Life is so necessary in regard to us being together. It was the evidence that God was with them, that which the magicians in Egypt could not imitate at all. If there is something of life, there is something of God there.

DJW-ts It is an interesting expression as to him, that he "lived still": it is almost a suggestion that the whole line is going to be continued in somebody by God Himself. The question is whether I going to be one of those persons who "lived still"?

NMcK That is the exercise; are we going to continue in this way in what is genuine and what is vital, what is real? I think John's gospel - the last gospel to be written, we understand - is on that line, the line of life, and the line of family affections, because in the family there is nothing unreal. We do not put on pretence, we do not try to be someone we are

not, we are what we are in the family, and we are appreciated because of that.

DAB Would you say Joshua and Caleb had faith that the glory would appear? I was thinking about the way Moses reasons with God after the golden calf, he shows that God's glory was now committed to fulfilling His purpose in relation to the people, Exod 32: 13. The question arising here was not mere hesitation among the people, but they were doubting the glory of God; because His power, His honour, was now identified with them in relation to His purpose. We have a very firm basis on which to work these things out.

NMcK You mean our faith in what God can do.

DAB In a sense what God *must* do.

NMcK Yes, He must be faithful to Himself; He must remain faithful. The difference here is that the ten had their eyes on the giants and the difficulties, and the two had their eyes on God and what He would do for them.

DAB It has been remarked that giants do not look very big to God, nor high walls.

PJM God's word to Moses is, "this people despise me" (Num 14: 11); that is a very strong thing that He says.

NMcK There is some disrespect for the Lord in His position and His authority in what they do. The question was not whether the land was good and worth going in for; the question was whether they were able to do it, and whether they had the desire to do it. Many have a link with the Saviour, but no desire to go further than that, to go into enjoy God's full thoughts. These things come into His commandments. They are given as light, they are obligatory for us.

PJM The question was whether God was great enough and strong enough to get them into the land; they were looking at themselves and forgetting all that God had already done. When we lose our faith and courage and we are not aligned with God's plan and His purpose, we risk despising God.

NMcK It is also helpful for the younger ones to remember that this generation represents the flesh in ourselves, and the flesh in ourselves will never love the land. It requires what is according to Spirit, the work of God in us, which heads up in Numbers 21, where flesh and Spirit are

distinguished typically, and the Spirit is made room for and therefore leads.

PJM To feel small may be a good place to start: “we were in our sight as grasshoppers” - this is not what the giants saw, it was what they saw. They were looking at themselves and feeling small. The answer to feeling small is to seek God because He is infinitely great. He is all-powerful: “thou canst be hindered in no thought of thine”, Job 42: 2. But, if I turn inward and feel my smallness and do not look to the One who can do anything, then it is a time for despair and may lead us to despise.

NMcK Mr Stoney speaks of seeing ourselves more thoroughly as God sees us, vol 8 p192. We too often look at ourselves, and at how the brethren see us, or other such things. We are on safe ground if we see ourselves before God.

PM The knowledge of the Father underlies our being apart from all that is here, and underlies the family relationships that you speak of.

NMcK You are speaking of John's line of things, that the Lord would bring us to know the Father and enter into family links?

PM He says that to the fathers, “because ye have known him that is from the beginning”, and to the little children, “because ye have known the Father”, 1 John 2: 13. I wondered if these two men knew Jehovah. They did not only know His word but they knew Jehovah, “If Jehovah delight in us, he will bring us into this land”.

NMcK How would you differentiate that from what has been said about the knowledge of God, and that He is so powerful, and able to bring us in that way? Why, do you refer particularly to the Father?

PM I thought the Father involved family relationships. We can be restful in the knowledge of the Father. He is all-powerful, but we can be restful in the knowledge of the Father because, if He delight in us, He will bring us in. One thing the knowledge of the Father does is to cause us to understand what He does delight in.

NMcK Yes. The Lord says, “nor does any one know the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son may be pleased to reveal him”, Matt 11: 27. Then He says, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me”, v 29. That is, that under the Father's will we would learn the Father in our life here, learning from Him. These things would be available to us in the

wilderness here and bring us into enjoyment of the knowledge of Him.

JW The question in this section is as to whether we go forward or go back. Mr Raven said we are either going Christward or we are tending in the direction of man, vol 1 p6.

NMcK That was one thing about the wilderness journey, and the tabernacle system as it was set up in the wilderness: it required continual devotion and exercise; it was never designed to be static. It was only really after Numbers 21 that they journeyed towards the land.

JW Caleb wholly followed Jehovah - God's movements would be forward into the land. Do you think that, as we acquire an appreciation of Christ and spiritual things, we would seek to gain more and go forward?

NMcK They are to get the gain of each exercise that they pass through. Even Miriam's exercise meant that the whole assembly was detained because of what she had said, but God's thought was that they would get the subjective help on it and move forward from there. We have to view the conflicts and any difficulties in that way - that we are to get the gain of them and move forward, Numbers 12: 15.

JW I am sure of that. If we go through any conflict rightly it would mean a greater appreciation of Christ. We spoke about the glory appearing; we gain some increased appreciation of Him. But, it is an exercise to go forward and have Christ before us and spiritual and heavenly things; otherwise it is going back to Egypt.

AM One thing which comes into this passage which would help us to go forward is that they said, "Jehovah is with us": their links were not simply based on an ecclesiastical claim, or simply on the knowledge of what God had promised, but really they had a link together based on the experience of the divine presence.

NMcK It is imperative to have some sense of that. The house of God is here because the Spirit is here in persons and therefore God dwells here. We noticed again in reading in the chapter in Ephesians 4, that the unity of the Spirit exists because persons have the Spirit. God is here in persons, but we are collectively to have some conviction that divine Persons are with us in what we do.

DJW-ts I was thinking of the beginning of chapter 14, it was the whole

assembly; I estimate that it may have been two persons out of two and a half million. It puts the thing in perspective, but God must support what is of Himself. I was thinking of what Paul said, “the Lord stood with me”, 2 Tim 4: 17. The numbers do not count; it is where divine support is.

NMcK The Lord must support what is right; God must support the truth, and the truth can never be gainsaid. The question is whether we are going to be right in regard to the glory and in regard to the presence of the divine Persons.

JRW Can you say more as to their experience in the land? The land was in their heart and they just hold to that; they say, “The land, which we passed through to search it out, is a very, very good land”. It comes out several times. I was thinking of the man in John 9; he says, “One thing I know” (v 25): he had had a real experience and he held on to that.

NMcK We are not going to help anyone if we are not really in the enjoyment of things ourselves, and we will only be able to help in the measure in which we are. It is interesting what it does say: “Now the time was the time of the first grapes” (chap 13: 20), showing the fruitfulness of the land. Then it tells us of Hebron, “Now Hebron had been built seven years before Zoan in Egypt” (v 22): something of what God had had in mind for man was there. It speaks of something God had in mind long before sin came in, long before Egypt had been working. What we have in mind for ourselves may be far short of God's thoughts, but it is a great thing to enjoy, what God has for us.

JRW What real experience of the enjoyment have I? It is only that that will hold us.

AAC Could you help us in the way that Caleb was sustained in this? I was thinking of Peter. He says to the Lord, “Lord, if it be *thou*” (Matt 14: 28); he begins to walk on the water and then he looks around him, which is maybe the experience that we often find, but Caleb has some impression of this land which sustained him. This is something that I think you are encouraging us in. How is Caleb sustained in this approach?

NMcK That was really what was in my mind to enquire over to get some help on. You get the thought that he lived still, that is simply, that his whole life was in it; that was what his life was. It says, “the just shall live by faith”, Rom 1: 17. That is, faith is not just that we can see things and we have them as light, but by the Spirit we hold them in our hearts

for our gain and enjoyment. I think this is the way Caleb and Joshua were; their whole life was that. I think if we try and live our life so that it is part here and part there, it is difficult to be sustained in it.

RHB There is reference to “another spirit”; were you connecting that with the new man?

NMcK It does seem to link on with that, the kind of spirit that characterises us in our links with one another, and what is expressed in these links with one another. The spirit is a small 's' here, and I think the new man gives us something of the state or characteristics of persons here. It runs along with the body, the body is the way things operate in an underlying way, but the new man is how the thing is expressed and it involves having a right spirit. It is an interesting subject to look through scripture and see the scriptures where 'spirit' with a small 's' is spoken of because it gives us something to lay hold of, that there is something characteristically spiritual in the believer. It comes in at being born anew in John 3, “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (v 6); it is a line of things that goes through; it is a line of things that has been born of God, a line of things that is vital and real. You get it again, “For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of wise discretion”, 2 Tim 1: 7. That is what is to characterise us and it does so through the help of the Holy Spirit, but as being true of what is spiritual in us.

RHB I think it is helpful. Paul says to the Corinthians, “do ye not recognise yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you”, 2 Cor 13: 5. That was said to an assembly that was in a low state, but he reminds them of that and we need help as to how we can identify that and be maintained at that level because there is the sovereign side, but then the epistles speaks about “putting on” which brings in our side.

HTF In that verse that we are alluding to God refers to Caleb as, “my servant Caleb”; God was served in the line of things that you are bringing before us. Do you think we need to see that, that that is what the pleasure of God is in His people?

NMcK Yes, God draws attention to Caleb here, “my servant”, he upholds him and He does that because he is one who had been before God and whose heart was on what was of God, and what he could do for God, not on his own will or the flesh. He does not represent the flesh; he represents what is spiritual of us. I think having “another spirit” is that, that there is something that is spiritual in the saints.

DJH Mr Darby's note (see Rom 8: 9) speaks of the difficulty of putting a larger or small 's', and I see that the note here suggests it could read 'spirit **with** him'; it is striking then the closeness of identity of the Spirit in that way.

NMcK Mr James Taylor said, 'A man is what his spirit is', vol 46 p239. If a man has a tender spirit, that is what the man is. In Colossians, it is not that we put these things on as a cloak and take them off as we will: it is the kind of man and kind of spirit we are to show.

DAB I was wondering if what we see in these two men is the way they answer to the word of God. When they were in Egypt, God said that the land was flowing with milk and honey (Exod 3: 8), and when they went they found that what God said was true. God did not say anything to them in Egypt about giants and high walls, and the others may have thought it was unfair that God had not told them about the difficulties; but Caleb and Joshua laid hold of the fact that God has presented a good land, so that there must be a way therefore of removing the things that were not good, even if that meant exercise for them. Is that the spirit of it, the positive way in which they take up their belief in the word of God? The others might have thought that there was more to this than what God said, but that is not a right approach.

NMcK I can remember getting help in what Mr Raven said about returning to first principles, vol 8 p146. You do not take your bearings from what is around and then try and set scripture aside as impracticable. If the thing is there in scripture it exists - so find that thing; and that requires exercise and it requires movement in the right direction. The word of God is not limited to scripture; it is given through persons and therefore if others are enjoying it, the exercise is why I am not.

MRC Failure brings in the word of God in chapter 14. It is interesting that it is not Moses who speaks there. Do you have any impression as to Caleb there at that point? "And they spoke to the whole assembly of the children of Israel".

NMcK They gave the word of God clearly to the people.

MRC It was not Moses; he had not had this experience, but Caleb was morally qualified to speak. We are told in Ecclesiastes that there is, "A time to keep silence, and a time to speak", chap 3: 7. Caleb realised in the power of the Spirit that this was the time to speak and he

spoke from deep conviction of what he had seen and what he believed and what he was absolutely convinced would be.

NMcK So, to take a practical example, in our ministry meetings, if you were to speak you would desire to say something that you had enjoyed yourself, something that you had a real conviction of, something that you had found a tremendous help to yourself, and you would give it in a genuine way in which others would be convicted, by the Spirit.

DJW-ts Going back to the question of being sustained, is it significant that in chapter 9 the passover is reintroduced? It is not the passover as it was in Egypt, it is the passover now in the wilderness and they had to eat that also in the land. I wondered if that was the key to his sustenance along with the manna. It is related to the Supper for us.

NMcK That is where we enjoy things at the height. Our fellowship is enjoyed at its height there, and therefore we can feed on what is right, feed on the Lord but feed on the saints too.

DJW-ts If the spirit of persons comes out it is at the Supper. If you hear a man speaking to God you really see the character of that man.

PMW You spoke at the outset of features of Joshua and Caleb being in each one of us and each of our localities. Could you say something more?

NMcK We need to look for that. What has been said as to the two carrying the grapes on the pole - things have so much more effect if there are two to work things out together and two to bring these matters out. You can understand that, if two brothers are enjoying something, you want to be there enjoying it with them. We need the brethren to work these things out with and we need to work along with them in regard to that. You just need two brothers or sisters to work these mutual matters out and enjoy them together. I think it is very important that our links together are on this basis, and if they are we will enjoy them and we will get help together. I feel for myself I can bring into a relationship with another local brother that which is maybe not altogether based on the truth, maybe enjoying speaking about other things. It is not a help. If I maintain all my links together with my local brother on a level of the love of the truth and an enjoyment of fellowship in divine things, there *will* be this genuine affection and we will work together and we will carry things together. The older ones can get on with the youngest ones on this basis. The youngest believer, you can

carry something with them.

PMW We would encourage each “by the faith which is in the other”, Rom 1: 12. There is something there which we each should be able to bring to that relationship.

DJW Mutuality is intended to come to the fore in the day in which we are where what is apostolic has been removed, do you think? I wondered whether it is significant that Caleb's death is not mentioned in scripture, as if he represents a line of things that goes through to the end, in energy and life, when what is apostolic has been removed.

NMcK It links on very much with John's line. John shows a line of things that goes right through, involving the inward side. The Spirit being given in John 20, “he breathed into them” (v 22), is the Spirit given inwardly for this line of things; that is the side of things that goes through; it is not on the line of breakdown.

PJM It is interesting to see what comes into this passage from verse 6 - to analyse it slightly. They felt the shame of all those that had gone, and these two of them rent their garments. They speak about the shame of what they collectively were responsible for. Then there is the word of exhortation, but it finishes with a prophetic word, because they say, “Their defence is departed from them”; they had God's view of what had already happened.

NMcK You can see that the word which they gave them was faithful and true, calculated to bring them to repentance of what they had gone on with, and calculated to make them move in the right direction.

DAB It is very encouraging that God had people like this who could speak up for His purpose. There was so much half-heartedness, but God brings these two men forward because they were enthusiastic about His purpose.

NMcK Mr Stoney has an article, 'What is a Laodicean?', vol 3 p 208. A Laodicean accepted the truth but did not go in for it, and therefore denied it practically by not going in for it. In Philadelphia, the difference is that Christ is there and He is with them; they have a little power and they are not denying His name, Rev 3: 7-22.

DAB The same thing could be said about the tribes of Reuben and Gad: they quote Moses, they knew the ministry, but they had not been prepared to go in for what God had promised them. It is interesting to

see that the young people, the daughters of Zelophehad, wanted a position in the half tribe of Manasseh that went over Jordan.

NMcK It is not that we accept these things by what we say, but the question is if our lives are practically towards the land. If we do not go in for things we are denying them by what we do rather than by what we say.

Caleb and Joshua are not referred to in Numbers 21, but there were princes, and I thought it would be wise to speak about it -

“Well which princes digged, which the nobles of the people hollowed out at the word of the lawgiver, with their staves”.

What is in mind is the kind of activity of these princes, not just that this is the great turning point in Numbers where typically the sin and the flesh are judged, the brazen serpent looked upon, and men lived, and then they turn to the Holy Spirit. There is a making way for the Holy Spirit. It says, “Assemble the people, and I will give them water”; it is not entirely individual. I think the thought is that we make some way collectively, and I think we do that ourselves, just bring in some clear way, some passage way for the Holy Spirit to work and operate and refresh and spring up and bring in life, vitality and movement.

JSG If it goes with that, in Romans 8, where so much is said as to the Holy Spirit, it says, “If God be for us, who against us?”, v 31.

NMcK That is something they arrive at here; they arrive at what God is for them; they have the Spirit and the time is to move on. Romans 8 goes over the scope of this chapter and the following chapters in New Testament language and is a tremendous help in understanding these things.

PM What comes into Numbers 14 is answered in chapter 15 immediately by Jehovah speaking of the burnt offering, but here in chapter 21 there is something for the Spirit. For the believer's life in general, is not the result of every exercise we go through that there is something for divine Persons?

NMcK I think that is very helpful to see to see that there is more in the tabernacle system than approach to God at the brazen altar, there is going into the altar of incense: there would be something in all our gatherings and in our private prayer, something for God in it. Do you think that as we take that up as an individual exercise that we will be

helped in that line?

PM I wondered if it bore on an earlier question as to whether we are moving forward. If I am, there will be more for divine Persons; if I am not, my life will centre in myself.

NMcK In regard to what was said earlier as to having an object we need an object and we must move in regard to an object. We have been made that way, and we are required to go on with an objective in view.

JRW We have light as to what God has in purpose for us and it is to be laid hold of in faith, but do we need a state for it? I wondered if this chapter bore on that and the Spirit would help. "Well which princes digged" involved exercise in making way for the Spirit. Would that help us in our state to take up the inheritance?

NMcK The two things run along together, we need to appreciate them objectively, but we need what is subjective - we require a desire in our heart, and the Spirit working inwardly. There is a definite change here, they begin to move towards the land and it speaks here of the wars of Jehovah (v 14), not individual conflict in what we are going through in our own soul exercise, but it is collectively now that we are going to make headway and move towards the land.

JRW Would digging and hollowing out make room for the Spirit? It says, "Rise up, well! sing unto it"; there is no lack on the Spirit's side. The Lord says to the woman, "the water which I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life", John 4: 14. I wondered whether you could help as to what is involved in the digging and the hollowing out; it is the princes that do it, but that seems to make room for the Spirit.

NMcK That seems to be involved, removing any hindrance, "do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which ye have been sealed for the day of redemption", Eph 4: 30. One of the earliest mentions of Philistines in scripture is when they put earth back in the wells in Isaac's time and he had to dig them back out again, Gen 26: 15. I think the natural mind and the fleshly mind would bring in things that really are going to hinder the true flow of the Spirit. I suppose if we are going to apply it to what we are speaking about today the line of formality and things on an ecclesiastical line would hinder the Spirit working. It is remarkable how much these things do hinder the Spirit. The Spirit

would bring about things in a more genuine and family line.

JRW This section that you have read would suggest to us that it is right that there should be a response to the Spirit - "sing unto it" - as we have some impression in our hearts as to what the Spirit provides by way of enjoyment and refreshment. It is right that there should be a response to Him.

NMcK We had help as to that recently, as to the opening up of the truth as to worshipping the Spirit, and it is very helpful to see that. You might say that it was dug out through exercise, that the Spirit should be addressed.

DAB We should know about *worshipping* the Spirit, not just speaking to Him, but worshipping Him. Not all the hymns addressed to the Spirit express worship (see eg numbers 89 and 442), but this is a rising up *to the well* among the people. We have hymns about the Spirit's service, but there is more in worship than that.

NMcK The Spirit is due that in His Person; He is entirely equal with God. As to His Person, He is God.

DAB We see the children of Israel singing spontaneously here. Moses did not give them a song for them to sing the chorus: this is their song, there is something in them that answered to the springing water.

NMcK There is a subjective working out, something that is really in them. That is the line of things you get in Colossians: the Spirit not being mentioned: it is "Christ in you" (chap 1: 27), it is that kind of man in the saints that can be used and operated on by the Spirit in this way.

PJW It is Israel: I was thinking of the end of Psalm 45, "princes shalt thou make them in all the earth", v 16. It is the Spirit that comes out in this with a response that is equal to the exercise that has gone through with the princes digging. I was thinking of the meaning of the name 'Israel' - 'prince of God' - that it was after wrestling, which might go on with the thought of digging and hollowing out.

NMcK They suggest persons with wealth and substance and nobility, persons who are dignified, persons who are accustomed to spending time in these royal areas.

JSG Practically speaking, do you think the recognition of the princeliness of those who have set out the truth in the whole period of

the recovery is to be valued greatly? The hollowing out might mean that it needs continual maintenance in the soul so as to have access to God and be in the practical gain of that.

NMcK We need to value very much what was gone through in real exercise with these dear brethren that dug and cleared. They brought things back from the camp that had been spoilt; brought them back, cleaned them off and set them in their true setting. There is a lot of exercise in digging. You notice in the book when they spoiled the Midianities and they brought the bounty back into the camp, the gold and the booty; they had to purify it, Num 31: 20. These brethren went through things, they purified the truth, they brought it back in its right setting and right place.

KM You would not be able to get very much earth out with a stave. A stave is not an ideal instrument for digging wells.

NMcK Do you get different thoughts given here? The lawgiver gives the thought of authority and how we should be governed, and then the stave gives our own experience with God, our own measure of dependence and experience with God? Do you think that would be how we work things out in our own experience? As we are before God and with God in these exercises to clear the ground, make the truth available, make the freshness of the Spirit's operations available in the local place?

KM Every time we pick up the Bible in our private times and ask the Lord to help us read the Scriptures, or pick up the ministry, we do that. But the enemy would say, 'That is not very much', and everything works on a time scale in this world, how long it takes to do this or that; but we need to make way for the blessed Holy Spirit in our lives to help us understand the ministry and the Scriptures, when we have spare time. But we must make time.

NMcK I think we have sympathy with the younger ones, knowing a little of what it is like to have so little time due to pressure of work and so on, but there is no substitute for spending time in contemplation and praying, in sowing to the Spirit, which I think is what you mean. There is absolutely no substitute. The Spirit needs opportunity to work within us, and He has opportunity when we sow to the Spirit, and that is what will help us in our individual pathway and growing.

KM Othniel was perhaps a young person, but the proposition that

Caleb gave, “He that smites Kirjath-sepher and takes it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter as wife” (Judg 1: 12), must have been very attractive to him. It does not give any indication or any prescription as to how he overcame Kirjath-sepher; it just says he “took it”, and we see progress in a young person who has been attracted by what Caleb said.

NMcK We would see that there was something that he had to overcome individually to get that portion, maybe it was books, maybe it was something else, but something has to be overcome and time has to be taken. It says, “he that sows to the Spirit, from the Spirit shall reap eternal life”, Gal 6: 8. That is what spending that time contemplating, reading, and praying involves: sowing to the Spirit. Then we will reap the enjoyment of these things from it.

PJM In John 4 the woman was not asked to do much: “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that says to thee ... thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water”, v 10. The staves may not seem very efficient as a digging implement but actually the power that was released was out of all proportion; the well would spring up just as the Lord was promising for a very small effort on our part.

NMcK Things have to be cleared out, but the Lord is faithful.

DCB I was thinking of Caleb as “my servant”, and I was wondering whether something came to fruition in a company acting at the word of the lawgiver. It is a characteristic of the new man to be subject.

NMcK Something worked out in him from being His servant in that it was characteristically seen that he served God. They were brought out of Egypt to serve God in the wilderness. We should not think too lightly of that; that was why God said He had brought them out, “that they may serve me in the wilderness”, Exod 7: 16. God has that in mind that we should serve God here in the circumstances in which we are in the local settings; God should have servants there. That would make way for this springing up.

DCB There was a long period between these two references; there have been thirty-eight years of Caleb keeping these things, maintaining them in his life, and serving God in the wilderness.

NMcK In Colossians, the new man is a collective thought, as also the old man is a collective thought. The teaching of chapter 2 is that we have been “buried with him in baptism” (v 12) and have died with Him.

At the beginning of chapter 3, “If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above” (v 1); that is looking for the land, the boundaries of the land, “not on the things that are on the earth”, v 2. There you have the boundaries of the land, and how our mind and heart and affections as having died with Christ and being raised with Him are on “the things which are above, where the Christ is”. That is, that object that we have been speaking of, that Christ is there and that is where our mind is, our affections are there, our life is there, “with the Christ in God”, v 3. So we, “put to death” certain things (v 5), and put these other things on. Mr Taylor says it is an attitude of mind (vol 84 p184) that we take on these characteristics, that we determine that we are going to be marked by these features, we take these matters up for ourselves and put them on: it is the kind of man that is going to characterise us.

DAB It says that the new man is “created” (Eph 4: 24); so it cannot be Christ personally because He is not a creature, but it is like Him. If it is something that comes into expression in believers together then we really do need to work on this line with one another. It is not just that we have incidental relationships with each other, but the new man is something in which we all have a part that depends on the part of each other.

NMcK I think it has been said that it runs alongside the thought of the body; it is a very mutual *side* of things. The body consists of members; that is that there is a certain equality - not brothers and sisters, but members. The new man is that these things are expressed by persons taking on that character and therefore what Christ was when He was here is expressed collectively through the saints.

PM He says, “Put on therefore, as the elect of God”; I wondered if that linked with what we were speaking of as to princeliness, that there is dignity coming out in the saints as moving in these features of the new man and working in operation in the body.

NMcK We consider ourselves in that way, and we consider the brethren in that way. We do not go on with the old man, we do not condone him and we do not say that the features of the old man in anyone else are right or good, but we see the features of the new man in persons and we clothe the saints in this light, that they are “the elect of God”; and desire to act in keeping with that and to be characterised with these things.

PM Even if adjustment is needed, I have to hold the saints in my affections in the light of the way God holds them, and then there will be effectiveness in adjustment.

NMcK Yes, Priscilla and Aquilla were able to do that with Apollos (Acts 18: 26), able to bring in real adjustment to a brother who was very well taught, but able to bring in help. What was mentioned too as to the house of Chloe and Stephanas would show that. Paul wrote that first epistle to the Corinthians in the light of the first eight verses, what the saints in Corinth were according to God. He started there and then he brought in what was needed.

PM And he goes on to unfold to them such glorious truths that we might have thought they were not ready for, the truth as to God “all in all” (1 Cor 15: 28): what truths he unfolds to the Corinthians.

JSH I was thinking as to the old and young, and we can see it in them, just looking at one another and seeing what there is of Christ in one another and what He really values in one another. That is what will help us through. We have been thinking as to the way that God can view things in His perspective, but to see that in one another and what He really values in one another that helps us, old and young, to go on together.

NMcK It is incumbent on us, as getting a bit older, to form brotherly links with young ones because we will not be able to help them otherwise, we will not be able to go on with them. I can say from my personal experience that probably the one thing that has helped me most in my Christian pathway has been the brotherly interest of older brothers, persons who have been fathers, who have spoken to me of the Lord and the truth. If any matter was concerning me I could speak to them about things in a way in which they could bring in real brotherly help and influence. Your link with them was always in that level. Now, if our links are in that level then we will be able to see the work of God in that person. When we speak to them about what is in the news or other things, it is very difficult to see the work of God, but if you work at having a link at that level, you will see the work of God, you will see their exercises. These are very practical matters.

DAB Paul refers to them as to riches, and perfectness: these are wonderful things to speak about. They seem unattainable, but there is a level to which we have been called to enjoy things with one another.

NMcK We are brethren; that is a tremendous fact and a tremendous truth that we are brethren, not as a form as some may use it. “And to all these add love, which is the bond of perfectness”; that is a bond with each other. We are to have that bond.

London

17th March 2012

Key to initials:

D C Brown, Edinburgh; R H Brown, East Finchley; D A Burr, London;
M R Cook, Maidstone; A A Croot, London; H T Franklin, Grimsby;
J S Gray, East Finchley; D J Hutson, Edinburgh; J S Hutson, London;
N McKay, Glasgow; P Martin, Colchester; K Marshall, Rotherham;
A Martin, Buckhurst Hill; P J Mutton, Walton-on-the-Naze;
R D Painter, Yeovil; J R Walkinshaw, Maidstone;
P J Walkinshaw, Gillingham; P M White, London;
D J Willetts, Birmingham; D J Wright, Havering; J Wright, Havering

WILLINGNESS

Marshall Cowan

Psalm 110: 1-7

Song of Songs 6: 11-12

I have a very simple impression, beloved. I think a very fine feature to mark the saints is willingness, especially in days of darkness and breakdown and weakness. I think the Lord would be very pleased to have willing people. They would be willing in many ways, I suppose. I am just trying to get an impression myself about it, and I was thinking about the Lord personally first of all as the Hebrew Bondman, "I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go free", Ex 21: 5. I think that is the greatest example we can have of One who was willing to that extent. How testing that is: I feel tested by it. Nothing else claimed Him, as we know, except the will of God. Nothing else could divert Him, no matter what it was. Despite all the efforts of the enemy, all that was around Him, and the sufferings He endured, there He was, the perfect Bondman: "I love my master, my wife, and my children". That is very fine, is it not? And we are tested in that way too. I suppose we should all be able to say that, "I love my master, my wife, and my children". Everything in its place; nothing is out of place. The first thing is our love for Christ, our love for God, our love for the three divine Persons, and then other things of course fall into place, do they not?

So we think of the saints, think of what is needed amongst the saints too, and the question would be whether I am committed to the needs of the testimony, the needs in our localities in a general sense. There are many committed persons that we can use as examples. I was thinking of Aquila and Priscilla, for instance, and how they were willing to be committed to Paul; they joined themselves to Paul, Rom 16: 3, 4. They set themselves alongside Paul. What a support it must have been to the beloved apostle. How he took great delight in that couple and it would seem that Priscilla was equal to her husband, certainly in Paul's appreciation; both were persons who were fully committed to the testimony at that time. They were ready to link themselves on with Paul sacrificially, labouring in the work of the Lord supportively. There are many others, of course. I think Onesiphorus would be one. He was one who was willing to suffer. He was ready to suffer for the sake of the glad tidings, Paul's glad tidings. He was not ashamed of Paul's chain. Paul says, "The Lord grant mercy to the

house of Onesiphorus, for he has often refreshed me, and has not been ashamed of my chain; but being in Rome sought me out very diligently, and found me”, 2 Tim 1: 16, 17. How very beautiful, but I think that is also very testing, is it not? And to commit ourselves today to Paul, and Paul's ministry as to Christ and the assembly, involves reproach. Then we have a person like Phœbe who was “a helper of many”, Rom 16: 1, 2.

These are examples but there are many, many more in the Scriptures that I am sure would give us incentive to be here for the Lord. That is the simplicity of it really, that we are here for Christ, and we are here for the testimony's sake, not considering for ourselves. Of course probably the greatest hindrance is myself, my own considerations, but I think we are challenged as to whether we put Christ first, give Christ the first place. He is so worthy to have that place, the first place in our affections, as we think of the great sacrifice that has been His, to go into death, to die, to suffer, to go into the grave and indeed to be abandoned by God to meet the question of our lost condition and resolve the matter of sin and sins for ever. These are things we cannot measure, beloved. We cannot measure such sufferings and such committal and such willingness, shall we say, to fulfil the will of God. How very wonderful!

I was impressed thinking of this psalm, a psalm of David, as it says, and there are some beautiful references to what would speak to us of Christ, particularly the first one. It says prophetically, “Jehovah said unto my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put thine enemies as footstool of thy feet”. How very restful! God is carrying His thoughts through. There is nothing the enemy can do to hinder that. God is going to secure His end in Christ, and He has exalted Him and set Him down at His right hand and given Him the place that He is worthy of. He has crowned Him with glory and honour, “until I put thine enemies as footstool of thy feet”. It is going to happen one day. You will be able to look around in the coming day and you will not see anything that is insubject to Christ. How very wonderful that will be. Have you ever thought about it? If you look around today you will find very little if anything of this character, except in those who love Him, of course. But what it is to be subject to Christ! He is going to subdue all things under His feet. What power is His! He says, “All power has been given me in heaven and upon earth” (Matt 28: 18), and it will come into display in a coming day. How very great that is. We have the light of that, the secret of it, in our hearts. I do not want to go into all that detail, but what I

was thinking about was this sentence here, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in holy splendour: from the womb of the morning shall come to thee the dew of thy youth”. It is a question of what is youthful in character. John says the young men are strong, 1 John 2: 14. They are marked by energy, and I do feel the need of having much more energy spiritually, in spiritual things. I think the Lord would be very pleased if we were acting in that way, showing that kind of energy. In that way I suppose you could think of Achsah. She sprang down from the ass and she sought these springs of water, receiving “the upper springs and the lower springs”, Josh 15: 18-19. I suppose she would get plenty of energy from that. It speaks to us of the great resource there is in the Spirit of God, and I am sure she must have added a great deal to that situation. She was one with her husband, set as one, willing people, in relation to the needs at that time in the testimony of God for its prosperity and increase, and also to enjoy their inheritance together.

And so, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power”. As I have said, at the moment the Lord is in reproach; He is absent and we are in the time of reproach. Nevertheless He is crowned and He is given the place of supreme power which we recognise and, as being subject to Him, we would be ready to draw from Him also; because all things, the strength for the testimony, all the power, is coming from Christ from on high. He is Head: God “gave him to be head over all things to the assembly, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all”, Eph 1: 22-23. How very beautiful! “From the womb of the morning” - it is a very fine expression, is it not? It is the beginning of the day and here is something that is coming up that is very fresh and beautiful, “the dew of thy youth”, the morning dew. There is something special about the morning dew, I think. Perhaps we have not seen it too often, but there is something very special about it. I think it is something that keeps everything fresh. I think we get that as we draw it from Christ and His word. And so here He is, and He is “priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek”. What a Person we have to depend upon, beloved, One who knows and feels our cause and the needs of the testimony too, “priest ... after the order of Melchisedek”, something that can never break down. It is a very wonderful thing to think about. It can never break down. It is after that order, the order of Melchisedek. It says, “having neither beginning of days nor end of life”, Heb 7: 3. It cannot be traced, in that sense; it alludes to Christ in the greatness of His Person and what belongs to Him in relation to deity.

Well, then it goes on to this last verse, “He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall he lift up the head”. I think that is a very attractive expression and brings in the Lord's needs, speaking reverently, in relation to the testimony, and what He finds amongst the saints; “He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall he lift up the head”. It is a fine thing to think that the saints, ourselves as believers in the Lord Jesus and lovers of Him, can further the testimony, the movements of the testimony at the present time. I think this would relate to that. The Lord finds things in localities as He did in Revelation as He visited these assemblies, and He was able to take account of them, and He had a very fair judgment of each one. He brought to light what was needed which was lacking, and He brought to light the things that were pleasing to Himself, and I think we are in these days, beloved. If we think about it, and think of His needs in that sense: “He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall he lift up the head”. How very good to have some sense of His satisfaction in what He finds in a responsive people.

Well, I read in this section in Song of Songs because here He is coming down, coming into His garden to see what there is -

I went down into the garden of nuts,
To see the verdure of the valley,
To see whether the vine budded,
Whether the pomegranates blossomed.

It is a fruitful area where there is freshness, but also maturity. The assembly is that; it is a fruitful area. It is something that is yielding fruit for Him, and He is coming to look to see what He can find. I think on Lord's day morning we experience this, do we not? The Lord comes to us, manifests Himself, and I think this is the answer He is looking for. He is looking for this fruit and how fine the answer is here:

Before I was aware,
My soul set me upon the chariots of my willing people.

So that we are carried forward “from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit” (2 Cor 3: 18) in the service of God to enter into our heavenly part!

May we be encouraged, beloved, to be in these things. I speak very simply and feeling my own lack in them and feel the need that we need perhaps to think more of the Lord Jesus; think of the testimony

and how things function in our localities too. Very simply, we might think about how we start the meetings, for instance. Are we willing to give a hymn out, willing to pray; or to end the meetings? It is just a very simple thing, but how pleasurable that is to the Lord. It is how things function together, is it not, as we are set together in love? May we be helped in these things, beloved! May our hearts be set forward in willingness at the present time to be for His pleasure! For His Name's sake.

Kirkcaldy

5th June 2012

HOW GOD HAS WON OUR HEARTS

Jim D Gray

John 3: 16, 17; 17: 1-3

The thought came to me during the celebration of the Lord's supper on Lord's day -

For Thou our hearts hast won (Hymn 454).

I did not feel it appropriate at the time to refer to the state that our hearts were once in, for on that occasion when we were spiritually in a privileged realm, the Father's realm, our hearts had been won and past history, in one sense, did not come into it. The Lord was rejoicing in what He had in all our hearts because those hearts were linked up with Himself in a spiritual realm, the Father's world. It was inappropriate to bring in past history then.

However, tonight we are back in the realm of responsibility and we can take account of the question, 'How did He win our hearts?' -

For Thou our hearts hast won.

My thoughts turned to this scripture: "For God so loved the world ...". That is the world as it was at the time when Christ was here, the same world as today, but as another has said, it is not the love of complacency: it is the love of infinite compassion. God had compassion on that world, and He has compassion on this world, the world in which we are. He takes account of everyone. Job says, "thou Observer of men", Job 7: 20. That includes you and me - God observes men. He observed them in the antediluvian world, where some awful conditions existed with angels entering into humanity; then in His consideration and mercy for mankind as a race He took them all away, except Noah and his family. That is what He did. Then He continued with man, watched him, set him up, saw failure, but also found pleasure in those whom He could call out of this world. God has called you, dear believer, called you into His world. But your heart must have been touched - what touched your heart, what made you turn to Christ? What made me turn to Christ? Initially it was for my sins to be forgiven; that is what made me turn to Christ. I suppose, if someone had quoted to me this scripture, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal", I would have thought it meant that I was going to go to

heaven when I die, and I would have a bright future when the Lord raises the dead and changes the living, I would have a body of glory and I would be enjoying that eternal life. God had more in mind than that; "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son". "Only-begotten" refers to time, it happened in time: as it says, "I this day have begotten thee", Ps 2: 7. Not too many believers understand that; those of us who have come under teaching which we are convicted is according to the truth as in the Scriptures understand that Christ was not eternally begotten before all ages by the Father. Quite a number of believers think that, and others think that He was in a relationship of sonship in the Father's bosom in the past eternity, but we have been instructed in teaching which, as I said, is according to Scripture that divine Persons existed in Trinity, three Persons in the Godhead, related to one another, co-equal and co-eternal. They are there beyond us; they are infinite Persons, and we worship in the sense of that. But, they came into another relationship, a relationship in which One of them came into manhood because God had thoughts in mind in regard to man, which were greater than what was in the hearts of men. One divine Person came into this world as a Man and He came in so that, from this scripture, God could give Him, "he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish". The man Christ Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all", 1 Tim 2: 6. Propitiation would be included; that is why the gospel goes forth. Propitiation is that God was satisfied with the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross, and God is able to come out and offer salvation to all. That touches your heart - that God has come out in the glad tidings to offer salvation for all. There is not one person in this world who cannot come to Christ if they accept Him as their Saviour. That is the greatness of the glad tidings; propitiation involves that "*he* is the propitiation for our sins; but not for ours alone", that is the sins of the Jews, "but also for the whole world", 1 John 2: 2. God gave His Son so that He could preach the glad tidings to this world that He so loved. What a thing to get that into your heart, dear younger friend, that God gave His Son, "his only-begotten". The scripture uses language that the human heart can understand; what a God He is! He says, "his only-begotten Son"; we understand what "only-begotten" means because we have families. Persons sometimes have only one child, a son, then he is the only-begotten son. God had only one Son coming into Manhood and He gave that blessed Person, One in whom He found delight. He gave that Person, He gave Him up so that, "whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal".

It touched my heart as I considered the scripture that God gave His Son, His only Son; if I believe on Him, I am not going to perish. That is not just future: it is now. It may include the future, but it refers to perishing now, loss of true life now. Life eternal is to be enjoyed now. God saw the condition of man under the pressure of death in this world, poor puny man, frail as he is; God knows what we are, and He says, 'I will bring forward my thoughts of life eternal into the present time'. He says, "may not perish, but have life eternal", that is now. What is life eternal? In an eternity to come believers will have life, but it would not be necessary to call it life eternal; it might be a similar character of life, but you would not call it that when time ceases to be. It says, "For God has not sent his Son into the world that he may judge the world, but that the world may be saved through him" - what is the world? The world is a sphere of life in which man lives at the present time, the habitable world, and God has in mind that that world will be saved through Him, that there will be a sphere of life for believers that is suitable. The finality of it is, "who takes away the sin of the world", John 1: 29. So the whole sphere is cleansed by judgment, but at the moment God is working through the glad tidings to draw your heart into this wonderful offer of His, that if you believe in Christ you will not perish but have life eternal

John 17 tells you what eternal life is, "as thou hast given him authority over all flesh", that is the place the Son has, "that as to all that thou hast given to him", that is those who have come to Christ, those who believe in Him, "he should give them life eternal". If you have come to Christ, the Father has been active in your life; He has brought you to Christ. It says, "as to all that thou hast given to him, he should give them life eternal". He has in mind that that sphere of life should be yours now. It says, "And this is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent". When you come to Christ, when God touches your heart, when you give your heart to Jesus, it is the beginning of another highway for you; it is a highway of life, and you will come into the knowledge of the only true God. What a blessing that is for a believer over against an unbeliever, who has no satisfaction, "having no hope, and without God in this world" (Eph 2: 12), as we were, once aliens from the promises. Now, "this is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" - we come into the knowledge of God as the true God; He brings you into that. He brings you into it in a sphere of life. Eternal life is a sphere of life, it is a world of life, and that life is found amongst the circle of believers. What a privilege to be amongst

believers and to be in the understanding and knowledge of “the only true God”. The whole of scripture contains the knowledge of God that we come into through the gift that God gives us in the Holy Spirit; we come into an understanding of the Scriptures, the Scriptures become a living page to the believer. I ask you, 'Is the Bible a living page to you?'. Does it illuminate itself in your heart? Now I know what God is to me: He is “the only true God”, I know Him as Father, “and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent”, I know that blessed Man. He is in heaven now, but I know that Man, and so you begin to understand the atmosphere of heaven which is found in the sphere of eternal life and it is to be found on the earth, but not in the world; it is found amongst Christian believers and you will find it there, as your heart is drawn after this blessed God who “gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal”. You are drawn into an atmosphere of appreciation of *that God* who has entered into your life and mine, an appreciation of the One whom He sent, “Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent”. He sent Him for the purpose of bringing you and me into the blessedness of a sphere of life where we can enjoy what is eternal now, with the pressure of death lifted from the spirit in that sphere. What a satisfaction comes from that, your knowledge of God, the blessed One who has considered for humanity in a way no other can consider for them, to bring them into blessing - poor, sin-sick, downtrodden, violent, corrupt man with a corrupt heart. God has touched all our hearts that have come to Christ and cleansed them and sanctified them and filled them full of his love, “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us”, Rom 5: 5. The love of God is a wonderful thing, entering into the heart of the believer and giving him a sense of eternal life. Eternal life is a sphere of affection, affection for the Father, affection for Christ, and stimulated by the Holy Spirit. What a blessing is yours, dear young friend, and dear brethren, that hearts have been won, won over completely, so that He fills the heart that no other can fill. The world cannot satisfy your heart, no other relationship can satisfy the heart in the way God satisfies the heart, because He brings you into touch with relationships which are eternal and blessed.

I hope that these few words give an impression - work it out for yourself - how God has won your heart. You may have the pressure of business problems, the pressure of day to day life problems; they are lifted from your spirit in the Christian circle because you are in an atmosphere which is holy, undefiled; and there is the presence of a blessed God through the presence of the Holy Spirit, to fill and satisfy

the heart. May it be your portion.

For His Name's sake.

Edinburgh

3rd July, 2012