

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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THE FATHER'S HOUSE

John 14: 1-4; 17: 22-26

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1 Kings 8: 6-9; 6: 4-7; 6: 29-36; 7: 8

RT I just felt this morning, dear brethren, that the occasion increased in wealth as we proceeded, especially as in the Father's presence. Maybe some impress was left on our spirits, and having this reading and the hymn we have just sung, Hymn 144, would give us a deeper appreciation of the place that we are destined for. The place is already prepared and we are now being prepared for the place. And I think that it requires our peculiar attention today, to freshly lay hold in our spirits of the place that is prepared already for us. Exercises may help to lead us to be more suited to the place.

The Lord is leaving the disciples here, and He wants to leave that impression with them: "Let not your heart be troubled ... I go to prepare you a place". He has already done it; He has gone: He has prepared the place. And He says, "I am coming again". What a heart He had for them! So He says, "that where I am ye also may be". That is the love that He has for us, dear brethren. He wants us to be in the place where He is, "that where I am ye also may be". He says, "ye know where I go". Well, do we? These are exercises that may arise in our hearts as we speak of the blessedness of the place. In John 17, He says, "that where I am they also may be with me". He has already given them glory, and now He wants us to see His glory. Some of these things would come into the types in Kings; but John 14 says that the Father has many abodes. Paul says, "I bow my knees to the Father ... of whom every family ... is named"; there is a place for every family. What a place the Father's house is going to be! All the families - Adam, Noah, Abraham ... - there will be a place for them all. And the centre of it all is the ark in its place. I just thought these impressions may expand as we speak about them, dear brethren, quicken our affections and give us a deeper sense of the restfulness and the beauty and the charm of that place. May that be left on our spirits now in the difficult times that we are in. The Lord is very tender with them in chapter 14. "Let not your heart be troubled", as if there is a rock outside of everything else, an anchor.

RG When the Lord said this, do you think He had in His mind and heart that there was to be a place for sons, so that where we read next we have "the glory which thou hast given me I have given them". Persons were in accord, were they?

RT Yes, I think that is right. He has given us a glory. Hymn 76 says,
There no stranger-God shall meet thee-

and then it says,

Stranger thou in courts above!

Maybe we do not know enough about it, but that is what the Lord would be saying here, I think, that there will be no strangers. He has given us a glory to be there but then He has a glory that we will behold as the Centre of the whole system.

AB It says, "I ... shall receive you" but then there is something more, "receive you to myself". There is something very personal about that. What would you say?

RT Well, that is what Kings opens up: the ark in its place. We get some sense of that, that He has been here, placed in circumstances like we are in, but now He has gone in to prepare us a place: "I am coming again and shall receive you to myself". We are going to see Him in His own glory and beauty, the glory that the Father has given Him. It will move our hearts in worship eternally: the ark in its place, the staves drawn out, the journey all over. What a journey it has been! It says, "There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone". The wilderness was over; there is no rod of Aaron but the ark in its own beauty and glory filling that place.

TDB Is the Father's house an eternal thought? God's house is provisional but the Father's house is eternal?

RT Well, would you want to leave it? It will be eternal, to let loose, we may say, the affection and the wealth that has been gained in the pathway here by the Spirit. There is something being wrought now by the Spirit that will be set free in those conditions in eternal praise to God, do you think?

DM Jr Is that why the Lord Jesus uses the word "abodes"? He speaks about the place, but "abodes" is more the thought of staying, is it not?

RT Well, that is Ephesians. The Father - "In my Father's house" - but then Paul says in Ephesians, "I bow my knees to the Father ... of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named". They will be named for the place, many families there, and they will all have a different glory: Old Testament saints will have a glory, Israel will have a glory; and the assembly will have a glory seen all of its own. But they

will all have glory about them; and they will be in their place, all giving tribute to the God that purposed this wonderful place.

MC Something will be distinctive about the first of all the families? God will have pleasure and delight in them all, but there is something very pleasurable in what He has secured in the first family, those that are related to Christ in such a way as this.

RT I thought that was the house for Pharaoh's daughter in the type. We read in the close about the house of Pharaoh's daughter; that was Solomon's wife. There was all that beauty and all that charm of the house, but there is another place: there was a place for Pharaoh's daughter, his wife. Christ and the assembly will give a peculiar lustre, I think, the final touch, maybe, to the Father's house. But Christ will be there, the Bridegroom and the bride, do you think?

MC Yes. In John 17 it says, "I desire that where I am they also may be with me"; so that what is secured there is entirely for His own delight, is it not, in the realm of divine love and complacency?

RT Yes, it is "that they may behold my glory which thou has given me", that we may come into the whole wealth of the house. "I desire that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory which thou has given me, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world": to see the Son as loved by the Father. What praise it must evoke to see the way the Father loves the Son. He gave all things to be in His hand and here is the grand result of it all, many families to be suited and to be at home in the Father's house and to behold His glory.

There Christ, the centre of the throng,
Shall in His glory shine,
But not an eye those hosts among
But sees His glory thine. (Hymn 178)

The notes and praises that are awakened will all ascend to the Father, will they not?

AB Paul does not give us exactly the Father's house, does he, when he says that "if our earthly tabernacle be destroyed, we have a building from God.... eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor 5: 1); is that a different thought?

RT Well, it is a house "not made with hands". I think that is what is working now; the Spirit is doing that: He is building the material for it.

The entrance itself will await the rapture, but the material for it is being wrought now. "Not made with hands"; it is a great tribute what the Spirit is doing. There is something being formed now. May we give more room to Him. There is something being formed now that will find its eternal rest in the Father's house.

DSp So the Lord Himself is the great Operator in this whole system, is He? He goes to prepare a place for us; as you say, He has already prepared that place. We had a touch this morning of the fact that we have been given to Christ to bring us home to the Father; so we see the Lord as the great Operator in everything that He is doing, and then He is operating to bring everything back in relation to the Father.

RT Yes, very beautiful, is it not? Jacob says, "Bring them, I pray thee, to me", Gen 48: 9. You see what he does: he elevates them, does he not? He says they, "shall be mine", v 5. It gives us some impression of the path that we are on: it is not doom and gloom. There is something being formed that will be for the Father's pleasure and praise. I felt there was some special touch about the meeting as we were speaking to the Father this morning: the Father's love resting on the sons, the joy He finds in them, and that joy filling the whole scene with praise and worship and glory to God.

RG When the Lord said, "my Father and your Father" (John 20:17), do you think that gives us some impression of the place that we are brought into? "My Father": a personal touch there, is there not? Personal knowledge of the Father and the Father of the Son, and we are brought into the same place, and the same position, do you think?

RT Tell us some more about it.

RG Well, I do not know that I could, but it seems to me that there is nothing inferior about all this. It is according to God's purpose. God's purpose was that He would have man according to His own heart, suitable for His own presence to give praise to Him, do you think?

RT Yes, and you see the way that He has worked it out, as you said in the beginning, "the glory which thou hast given me I have given them": entirely suited to the place through the work of Christ. His priesthood and His grace have followed us, but then the added thing is, "behold my glory which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me". The Father's love for the Son; the Son's appreciation of the Father's love: what should our love be? It should be growing on our hearts, the way that the Father has loved us to bring us to be in His own presence,

suiting to His eternal thoughts.

TDB I was thinking of one of the last hymns that we sang,

Love in its own dwelling, every voice is telling
Of glory known ... (Hymn 100);

- the atmosphere of the place; we will be living in that.

RT Yes. Well, it will be glory, glory, glory, will it not? The eternal song - something will be awakened that will never cease. The praise will be eternal because the atmosphere will be different, but the Spirit has given us some foretaste of it now, I think: to be in a home where Christ is the Centre of the throng.

DTP You think of Christ in resurrection; He settled the disciples as to Himself and the place that they had before Him. That is like, "Let not your hearts be troubled", and a settling. There was that period when three divine Persons were in the glory; that was distinctive at this time after Christ's resurrection, but you would feel the Lord's longings to be settled with His own, in view of them touching that period that was unique in divine purpose that satisfied divine Persons.

RT Well, would that I knew more about it! "Let not your heart be troubled"; that is something that is fixed, is it not? "Believe on God, believe also on me", the One who is conducting us in, you might say. And the Spirit having come from that atmosphere too, our hearts should not be troubled but we should have some sense of the Lord speaking here about the Father. "Righteous Father, - and the world has not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou has sent me. And I have made known to them thy name". It is not some story book; it is the Son making known the Father. He is made known in His grace and His ways, but think of Him making it known now, and the Spirit making Him known; so I think we get touches from time to time. But we know the place; it says, you know the place. Well, we are tested about these things but the Man that we loved and followed He has gone in, ready to bring us in that we may be at home in the place.

JT The Father's love comes into this. The Lord says, "that the love with which thou has loved me may be in them and I in them". Do you get some touch of what the Father's love is?

RT Yes, it would seem, as we quoted earlier, that Jacob's heart was moved when he saw these two sons. One of them was named, 'causing to forget': all the toil that Joseph had gone through is forgotten.

But the other one was “double fruitfulness”, Gen. 41: 51, 52. There is Christ; caused to forget all the toil that He may be fruitful; and there is the fruit. Joseph brings the two sons that are like him, and Jacob says, “Bring them, I pray thee, to me”; he says, “Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon”. He elevates them; he brings them into the full thought of sonship. There are no grades in sonship, brethren: “ye are all God's sons”, Gal 3: 26. We are brought into the height and joy of our calling.

AB The living experience that we have in the Lord's supper each Lord's day is unique; there is a new experience; and both in John 14 and John 17 it says “where I am”. Is that the leadership of the Lord Jesus, would you say?

RT Would that we made more of the experience. I am just saying this very simply: very quickly after, the conversation drops. Do we speak about our experience when we go home, the impressions that we have got, and think about them? That is the way that formation takes place. It is not only in the meeting; it is what takes place through the experiences, as you say, experience that should move our hearts that what we are brought into, and what we have a taste of now is a house:

Where deceiver ne'er can enter,
Sin-soiled feet have never trod;

But -

Free, our peaceful feet may venture
In the paradise of God. Hymn 206

MC It brings out God's workmanship. There is something by the way of formation in the saints in their affections, and that brings forth the response. I was very affected this morning by what was mentioned several times, the eternal song, and for that to remain on our spirits I think is a very fine thing, is it not?

RT Well, that is the stones of Kings, I thought. The stones had all been quarried; that is the exercises of the present moment. The stones were entirely made ready; are we ready for it? The sorrows of death and the exercises and sorrows that we pass through, they are all forming the stones. That is the wilderness experience, but you come to the chapter where the stones were already entirely made ready. Well, that is what is going on now, do you think? The stones are being entirely made ready so that they will be suited there. There will be no

reference to the past, but something entirely new:

The new creation's stainless joy (Hymn 81).

MC Divine perfection, is it not? It is really what we are brought to arrive at. Nothing short of perfection would be suitable to God, would it?

RT Well, how beautiful they are. Look at these stones in their place in this building: they were overlaid with gold; they are shining in lustre and beauty. They adorned the place. What a place the Father's house will be because of the saints in it - vibrant with life.

RG Psalm 132: 14 says, "This is my rest forever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it". There was no sound of hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house. It is a remarkable thing, is it not, that all that is going on in formation is being formed outside? But then when it comes together the formation is there, and we can fit together as the stones fitted together in perfection.

RT It is not a place like the palaces of men: it is vibrant with life. It is not something that is open in the season to show people around; it is there in vitality and life. There are all these beautiful woods, some of them with half open flowers; vital with life, all things vibrant with glory and praise; God is finding His dwelling place in it.

RG The olive is a reminder of the Spirit of God, the living Spirit, but then the evergreen cypress might speak of life amongst the saints? The doors lead into the most holy place, the Father's house. We take character from the Spirit Himself when we approach through Christ by one Spirit, do you think? There is life in Himself, in the Spirit, the Spirit of life. That is the same Spirit that was in Christ Jesus, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. That is the Spirit of life that motivates us. What a privilege we have, do you think?

RT Yes, and it is all overlaid with gold. I used to think that gold was a type of the love of God, but I think I have seen since that the gold is a type of divine righteousness. All around wherever you look -

God's righteousness with glory bright (Hymn 88)

fills that scene. And that was all seen in those flowers and the woods; they are all there, but what they are bearing is the gold. It is a wonderful thing when you think of God's righteousness. There is great scope in it in the way that He has done things. But His nature is love; and here it is flowing in this place that it is entirely suited to it.

MC It is interesting how many cherubim are here. We are moved by that,. It says they stretched forth their wings over the ark, as if they were living beings. I wondered if that brought out divine love, and perfection and protection too. The ark was held in that situation - protected, do you think?

RT There will be no disturbing elements will there? Everything is protected and guarded. Think of the joy of the Father in seeing now persons who are interested in that, persons who are touched with His grace and interested in the place that is being prepared. What joy the Father has now! And there is a protection of all these things going through amidst all the breakdown, something going through in which God is going to have His final rest.

SN I was thinking about what you were saying about keeping the level of the impressions that we get. I was thinking of the two on the way to Emmaus. The Lord came there, and they were affected; so they were still speaking of Him after, were they not, being at Jerusalem? Would that be something we are tested in in terms of our maintaining the level and the impressions we get, and how we build on them?

RT Well, I speak for myself. You feel how quickly we get down to material things; and we have to do them, but can we come into material things from the sense of the Father's house? They will not be so important to us if we got some sense of our place in that house. These things fall into *their* place when God has His place. The two you mention speaking of their experience rose up and returned to Jerusalem.

DS Peter speaks of a precious stone (1 Pet 2: 4) which was treated as worthless, v 7. Believers are living stones in the eyes of the Father; and they are fitted together. There is something here of divine workmanship, where everyone is fitted together like that. It gives the ground for the Lord's supper, do you think?

RT Yes, it does, and they are all working. The steps suggest there is movement. The door of the house overlaid with gold; the beams and the wood are there: everything is operative; it is not merely ornamental. They are all working and operating. There are the palm trees, and then there are the steps that go up. It is not just all on one level; steps are going up. There was room made in the house; there was width as you went up. So you may begin with the forgiveness of your sins; you may go on, appreciating the Lord for His guidance and help in wilderness circumstances, but can you come up to this other storey where Jesus

fills that holy place, and glory dwells?

RG The queen of Sheba was moved by Solomon's ascent by which he ascended into the house of Jehovah. It was not going up to his throne of judgment; it was going up to the house of Jehovah. What a privilege we have to be with Christ, and not only to see it now but to be with Him in it, do you think?

RT Well, she was affected by it. She sees that all her glory and all that she thought that was hers is eclipsed in the presence of this glory. Well, are we affected when we see it? So, these steps: as you go up it gets wider and the Spirit has more room and more scope to cause us to see the glories and the beauties of that divine abode. And functioning in it; these flowers were not just ornaments. They were there in their beauty; the saints are shining in their glory. And then there are these folding doors - there is nothing rigid about it all; it is full of life. The folding doors are all swung open. That gave me some impression of all the families that will be there: folding doors. There will be a glory about Israel, there will be a glory about these saints that are suffering today, and persons that will suffer as in Revelation in all the testings that are going to come into this world. There will be a glory about all these persons, and they will all be radiating their own glory in the Father's house to His eternal praise and glory.

RG Tell us something about these half-open flowers now.

RT Well, a half-open flower: does it not show freshness and potential; it is living, is it not? The doors are opening out to bring everybody in, but then there are the half-open flowers. They all have their place; we are all God's sons; there are no grades in sonship. We are all God's sons; there may be something different in quantity, but the quality is the same. What are you going to say about them?

RG They are not past their best; they are not fading. They are half-open flowers. Do you not think that we get an impression of that sometimes? Maybe brothers get an impression, or maybe the sisters - who do not speak - receive something; and the more we contemplate, the more we allow the Spirit to work in us, our impression opens up even more, and there is more and more beauty coming to light, do you think?

RT I think that is the best part. If we just said what we thought in our minds before we got on our feet, it has its freshness; but I think if you are in a suitable state, the Spirit will give you something fresh to say. Maybe it is in the heart of a sister. The Spirit will give you something

fresh to say that is in the heart in the company. It is fresh and it can be discerned, and the Father's heart is cheered by it, do you think?

TDB So you do not make up something in your mind before you get up; is that what you are saying?

RT Well, I think if the Spirit moves you in your seat we should be ready for something fresh also.

RG It is quickening, is it not?

RT Exactly; that is the word - quickening. A brother referred this morning to Samuel. The other sons were there but when David came in there was something that came into Samuel's heart; he never thought about it before. There is Samuel quickened, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he", 1 Sam 16: 12. What hallelujahs will be raised, will they not? I think this whole chapter, the Father's house, is filled with freshness and glory and beauty: not formality; no prayer books, maybe not even hymn books, but the Spirit's song will be sung.

DM Snr In the Song of Songs it is, "Before I was aware ...", chap 6: 12. If you make something up it is not the same as having something put into your heart by the Spirit at the time; is that right?

RT Well, the scripture is,

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

Are we willing, brethren? Are we ready? Are we ready through the meeting? We are all human; things come into our minds and thoughts, but are we all ready for the Spirit to give us an impression of the Father's house? I think He did this morning. I think there were some fresh songs in our hearts; the glory of this place that we are being brought into, which will be for His eternal glory.

MC Our hearts need to be expanded, do you think? If our hearts are expanded, do you think, then we can reach into this great, vast area of things? I was thinking about how it opens up, and it says of how the saints "may be filled even to all the fulness of God", Eph 3: 19. I was thinking about the liberty that we have, and there is liberty to move about, do you think?

RT Yes. Well, I think these half-open flowers would be something like that too: the great potential in the saints when the Spirit touches these chords. Half-open flowers have got a freshness about them and

great potential, and they are there to be unfolding and adorning the scene for the Father's pleasure.

EMcL Say more about the different floors of the house. I was wondering about them; the middle and the upper floors, the lowest floor.

RT Well, we do not just keep singing, "Oh happy day that fixed my choice". We may start there but can we expand in our affections. The Spirit is looking for room. That is Rebecca. The servant says to Rebecca, "Is there room", Gen 24: 23? The Spirit is saying that to us today. Is there room to go to the second floor, or whatever floor there may be until you come to the eternal scene where all is of God and all is for God?

RG Could we apply the first floor to knowing Jesus as Saviour, the second floor knowing Him as Lord, and the third floor knowing Him as Head?

RT I think there is more to it than that. The Bridegroom and headship are not out of place there. 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. What a company!

MC I was thinking of the windows; it says they were closed windows. I was wondering about it when we read it. It says "closed windows", but the note is very interesting because it says they were 'narrow without, broad within'. I was thinking it was a bit like the narrow way, is it not?

RT The world is shut out.

MC Yes, but inside it is very broad; so there is plenty of scope for expansion. Is that right?

RT Well, is that our hearts dear brethren? There is a narrow way, is there not? There is a narrow way. That is because of the circumstances that we are in; there are some things that we cannot do: they are not suited to persons who belong to the Father. There are some places that we would not go: they are not suited to the Father's house. But as you go in the whole thing is widening out - the glory is all within, is it not? It shuts out the world's attractions to us, and there are great temptations now today. Alas, we are tempted in a way that we were not before because now there is a lot of wealth about, and it is tempting God's people away into a world that is a broad way. But there is a narrow way for us outside, and inside there are these windows; that

is full of splendour and glory. Well, I think we want to keep in the light, do we not? "If we walk in the light as *he* is in the light", 1 John 1: 7. That is inside and outside.

AB I was just thinking about the half-open flowers, that the petals may be very delicate, but the effect of the sun opens them up; the warmth of the sun.

RT Yes; in the Father's house, if you are on the outside, it is narrow. Light goes out, but inside there are the half-open flowers, and the glory is shining. What radiancy must have marked this place. Think of light being reflected by the glory of the gold, filling the house with glory. And then Solomon makes this special house. The doors were thrown open but then, "his house where he dwelt had another court within the porch, which was of the like work. And he made, like to this porch, a house for Pharaoh's daughter, whom Solomon had taken." What a place the assembly is going to have, the perfect expression of the Spirit's work and the Father's love and the Father's purpose. It is all going to be displayed in this house that Solomon has made for his wife. Well, dear brethren, may we have some sense of the glory of that place and the dignity that belongs to it. Every family will be dignified by sonship, of course, but there will be a dignity about the assembly. We will see that if we care to go through Revelation. "I saw the holy city ... coming down ... prepared as a bride adorned for her husband", chap 21: 2. That is all in mind in the Father's house; there will be a dwelling place, but there will be a bride and there will be a bridegroom.

DM Snr I wondered about what Paul says about the Father having "made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light", Col 1: 12-13. Is that like the carving, when it is overlaid with gold?

RT Very good. That is all done in the wilderness experiences. Our daily lives, our home affairs, local circumstances: these are all the preparation to be suited to be at home. There will be nobody kept at the door until they are ready then. You will be in the Father's house as a son with all the glory. It is a blessed tribute to the Spirit's work that there will be persons in sonship suited to the place that God has purposed.

TDB Would it be the thought of divine pleasure?

RT "Here will I dwell", Ps 132: 14. That is what Solomon had here; he had a dwelling place. That is what the Father's house is. "The tabernacle of God is with men" (Rev. 21: 3): a dwelling place. There will be a display in the millennial day but in this aspect of it - what we are

speaking of as the Father's house - it is a place where glory dwells, is it not?

RG Do you think that when Pharaoh's daughter was taken in here it would be like taken into favour in the Beloved? It says Solomon took her. "Taken us into favour in the Beloved" (Eph 1: 6): that is the best place I would understand.

RT Yes.

O God, the thought was Thine (Hymn 92).

Say some more about it.

RG I was thinking it was a place prepared by Him. It is a place prepared for an answer to His affections and the person that could answer to His affections was the bride. Solomon had taken her; it says, "a house for Pharaoh's daughter, whom Solomon had taken". There is the thought of choice in that, is there?

RT Yes, it reminds you of Ephesians there: "that he may give you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man; that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts, being rooted and founded in love", chap 3: 16, 17. What dignity belongs to them, entirely suited to a place where God has purposed to eternally dwell with men. Well, may our hearts be encouraged and exercised dear brethren that the place is there already. May we give more liberty to the Spirit, so that we are prepared readily for the place when the Lord comes.

Kirkcaldy

22 March 2015

Key to initials (Kirkcaldy unless shown otherwise):-

D Beveridge; A Buchan; M Cowan; R Gardiner; D Matthews Snr;
D Matthews Jr; D T Pye; E McLaren; D Spinks, Grangemouth; R Taylor;
S Newberry; J Thompson

MATURITY IN MANHOOD

G Bruce Grant

Numbers 12: 1-13

2 Peter 1: 5-9

1 Samuel 6: 10-12 (to 'left')

Genesis 47: 31 (from 'And')

What I have in mind is maturity in manhood. The Lord Jesus was always mature; there was perfection at every stage with Him. When He was at the Jordan in full maturity of manhood, the heavens opened upon Him and the Father said, "*Thou* art my beloved son, in thee I have found my delight", Mark 1: 11. The apostle in chapter 4 of Ephesians says, "until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ; in order that we may be no longer babes, tossed and carried about by every wind of *that* teaching which is in the sleight of men, in unprincipled cunning with a view to systematized error", v 13, 14. Ministry from Christ on high has in mind that "we all arrive ... at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ". It is as though we are arriving at it together: "we all arrive". That is God's mind for us and His intention: "we may be no longer babes"; "babes" is a right idea as far as it goes, but not in the Corinthian way, 1 Cor 3: 1. Paul speaks of babes in a slightly reproachful way to the Corinthians. God's mind for us is Christ, the Standard, His Ideal.

The young here might say, 'Well, this is for older persons'. No, it is for everyone. Whatever stage we are at in our histories, we can be marked by maturity. If you think of the little maid who was taken captive in a foreign country, how she must have felt! Just imagine it, you young persons, if you were taken from your family and your country and were captive! How she must have felt! But she was not complaining. She said to her mistress, "Oh, would that my lord were before the prophet that is in Samaria! then he would cure him of his leprosy", 2 Kings 5: 3. That was maturity in a little girl. She was not bitter because of her circumstances; it was not only that she knew that the prophet could do it, but her feelings and soul entered into it: "Oh, would that my lord were before the prophet that is in Samaria! then he would cure him of his leprosy". She was in no doubt about it. She brought the glad tidings to her mistress, and her mistress passed it on to her lord. There was

maturity; she felt responsible in that situation because she had light that the others did not have.

Think of Paul's sister's son, Acts 23 17-21. The chiliarch took him "by the hand"; he must have been fairly young, but he also acted responsibly in that situation. He heard there was a plot against Paul; forty Jews had taken an oath that they would not eat or drink until they killed him. He heard that, and told Paul about it; then Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this youth to the chiliarch, for he has something to report to him. He therefore, having taken him with him, led him to the chiliarch. ... And the chiliarch having taken him by the hand, and having gone apart in private, inquired, What is it that thou hast to report to me? And he said, The Jews have agreed ..." and so on. Then the young lad said to him, "Do not thou then be persuaded by them". Think of a young boy saying that to a chiliarch! He was taking responsibility, and he was used for the preservation of Paul, another young person used in the testimony; so, young persons, this is for you.

Miriam was used also, for the preservation of Moses. Think of how great Moses became, but she was there at that point and no-one else could be used, and she was used to preserve him, Exod 2: 7!

These three young persons are mentioned as acting in a mature way. They felt responsible and acted rightly. It is open to you to act maturely even though you are young in years. The Lord took up the apostles; they were all young men and what maturity came out in them in the setting up of Christianity. Young men, it is for you also to act in a mature way. The flesh is never mature; it is always immature. Maturity involves the moral features of Christ taken on by us, and it is open to every one of us, brothers and sisters, to act in a mature way. What pleasure divine Persons must have!

David is another one who acted maturely. When Saul and Jonathan were slain on Mount Gilboa, you get the song of the bow, but David does not handle that matter in relation to how it affected himself. He felt how it affected God, and there is maturity in David: Tell it not in Gath, carry not the tidings in the streets of Ashkelon;

Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph", 2 Sam 1: 20.

It is how things affected the testimony, not how things affected him personally; there is maturity.

In Numbers 12 Moses is being spoken against, but you see

maturity in him. He was marked by meekness. There are three features of maturity here I would like to speak about: meekness, faithfulness and his interceding, praying, for Miriam. Now, the Lord Jesus is the Model: "I am meek and lowly in heart", Matt 11: 29. Think of it! How great He was in His Person, and that Person was here, and yet He says, "I am meek and lowly in heart". That is the King, the One who is to reign, but He is "meek and lowly in heart". You see His lowliness in how He served. Lowliness is often related to how we serve, in the attitude of our mind. You see the lowliness of the Lord in how He served and washed the disciples' feet; that was a lowly service. You see meekness in the Lord in how He suffered. What meekness shone in the Lord Jesus when He was in suffering! You see meekness in Moses here when he was spoken against, but that is a mature, moral feature because it is not the way the flesh would react. Whatever circumstance you are in, including one of suffering, meekness is the answer, meekness and prayer. Moses was not naturally meek; none of us is. Naturally we love to try and justify ourselves, stand up for ourselves, our rights, prove ourselves right. That is what we all are naturally. But Moses did not say a word; he was marked by meekness. We learn meekness from the Lord Jesus; He is the perfect example of it. What made Moses meek? Moses was forty years in the wilderness. What experience he must have had in the wilderness for forty years, experience with God, learning what he was in himself! As you have to do with God, you learn what you are in yourself, and that helps towards meekness, helps towards meekness in relation to others. Paul says, "Brethren, if even a man be taken in some fault, ye who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest *thou* also be tempted", Gal 6: 1. We had mention in the reading, "But I myself, Paul, entreat you by the meekness and gentleness of the Christ" (2 Cor 10: 1), and that was in Paul's militant ministry; "in meekness setting right those who oppose", 2 Tim 2: 25. How effective the spirit of meekness in persons is! It is a mature feature, not a natural, fleshly feature. Moses was much in the presence of God, on the mountain forty days, and again forty days, and he had access to God's presence; how great God is! He is everywhere, knows everything, all-powerful, almighty, the supreme Object of worship. He is so great! In the presence of God you realise how small you are; there we learn meekness.

So Miriam was made leprous. How attractive it is that Moses prayed for her; although she was the one who was not right he prayed

for her! There is maturity in manhood in the power he had with God to bring in healing, and he was also faithful. The Spirit of God's comment about Moses was, "But the man Moses was very meek, above all men that were upon the face of the earth". Jehovah's comment was, "he is faithful in all my house". What another necessary feature, faithfulness. The first part of the word for faithful is "faith" so there must be a link with faith in being faithful. Faith is light in the soul from God, and faithfulness is that you are true to that light. You are true to what you have learned of God, your knowledge of God, the light you have. So Moses got the light of the tabernacle system and he was faithful in relation to it. Everything was made according to the pattern, without deviation. When they made the molten calf, Aaron got involved in it as he did here, Exod 32: 2-4. Moses was *faithful* to God in that setting, and we can all be marked by faithfulness. It is not something in the way of gift; it is a feature of manhood according to God. Now what Moses did was "took the tent, and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp, and called it the Tent of meeting. And it came to pass that every one who sought Jehovah went out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp", Exod 33: 7. Moses did what was right in God's sight. He was not told to do this but he knew the rightness of it. He pitched the tent "outside the camp, far from the camp". "And it came to pass, when Moses entered into the tent, the pillar of cloud descended, and stood at the entrance of the tent, and Jehovah talked with Moses" (Exod 33: 9), God came in and confirmed what Moses did, giving him the sense of His presence. He pitched the tent "outside the camp". Moses went into the camp and we know there were prophets in the camp and some said they were prophesying. Moses said, "would that all Jehovah's people were prophets" (Num 11: 29); and there is no indication that the manna ceased to fall around the camp. I think there is something in that for us. I have spoken to one or two who have had experience that I have not had, in going to other Christian companies, and what they noticed was that there was some food there, but also there was great error. I think the manna fell round the camp; God did not withdraw that. Finding there is food in another Christian company does not mean it is the place for you. The place for you, dear believer-friend, is "outside the camp". I think there is a lesson in it. We are very thankful the Lord is good to all His people, but Moses had a sense of God's presence as he took the stand outside what was displeasing to God: there was faithfulness.

I read in Peter because I think this is maturity again. It says "in your faith have also virtue". It is one thing added to another, and

another feature added to it. It is like putting sugar in liquid, it sweetens it; it is blended together. That is the thought here: “in your faith have also virtue”, and every believer has faith. Light in the soul from God is faith, but as you have that light, it is similar to what I have been saying about faithfulness, and you have to be true to that light. “Virtue” might be a difficult word to explain, but I am thinking it is moral courage, and that is needed. You have light from God as to what is pleasing to Him and you have moral courage to abide by that, and be regulated by it. And it also says, “in virtue knowledge”; that would be the knowledge of God. How important that is, the knowledge of the truth, the knowledge of what is pleasing to the Lord! In your moral courage you are to have knowledge also. And “in knowledge temperance”: that is, you are regulated. You do not just do as you please, a free man to do your own will. You are marked by temperance, that is self-control. The fruit of the Spirit includes “self-control”; and “meekness”, which we were speaking about, Gal 5: 23.

“In temperance, endurance”; how important “endurance” is, just patiently going on with what is right. As you have light from God, you have faith. You appreciate how God has made Himself known, and you therefore have the truth which has been made known in Christ, and you go on and on with endurance, and that includes endurance in relation to others, patience with others. You might find the pathway difficult, but you continue. “In endurance godliness”: piety and godliness, you might say, are different words for the same thing, but I think that if you use that word, it must mean being like God, *godliness*. So you are marked by features of endurance and godliness. You take on the character of God Himself, “godliness”. You relate things to God; you bring Him into matters. You are thankful towards God, have a right attitude towards Him in reverence, but you are marked by the features of God Himself. What features mark God; how you have learned God in mercy, grace, goodness, long-suffering.

“In godliness brotherly love”, how attractive “brotherly love” is. There is a sweetness about that that is very encouraging, “brotherly love”. That means you can support one another, encourage one another. You can see there is a distinction between brotherly love and love. You cannot link brotherly love with God Himself, but “God is love”, 1 John 4: 8. I think when Peter says “in brotherly love love”, love underlies right brotherly love. “God is love” must underlie brotherly love because brotherly love, while it is sweet and very precious, can

lead to the possibility of being attracted more to one than another. Now, that is not true brotherly love, and it is also possible to consider your brother in brotherly love more than God, but love underlying that prevents that, because if there is something a brother is going on with that is not right or he is diverted for the moment, it would not be brotherly love just to ignore that; so love as seen in God Himself underlies true brotherly love. "For these things existing and abounding in you make you to be neither idle nor unfruitful as regards the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ". I thought these things all blended together is maturity in manhood; not just one feature, but taking account of different features and adding one to another.

Then I read in 1 Samuel 6; it is a very affecting scripture. There were these milch kine, and they had young, and the calves were shut up at home. How they must have felt that! The instincts of these milch kine would be to be with the young and care for them but they went against their natural instincts. I thought that was another feature of maturity. "And the kine went straight forward on the way to Bethshemesh; they went by the one high way, lowing as they went". I feel at the present time there are many, all of us, but some more than others, "lowing" as they go. They feel very much the present situation in the testimony, very much what we may be passing through in households and individually, and they are "lowing" as they go. They are feeling in their spirits, but yet they go. We can do nothing else but go on in this pathway for the will of God. That is what these milch kine were doing. They must have felt it so much; it was absolutely unnatural for them to leave their young. That is why they were "lowing as they went", and that is a feature of the present testimony, persons going on with what is right, what they know is right, but they are "lowing" as they go. How that must cause pleasure to divine Persons! It would remind them of the Lord Jesus. What He felt in His spirit, in His pathway, but He went straight forward; He did not turn to the right or to the left! If you turn to the right or to the left, you do not know where it may lead. Go straight forward in what you believe to be the path of God's will for you, and you will receive blessing. There will be something for God in it as there was at the end of this, but these are right instincts related to the work of God in our souls. The work of God knows what is right and immediately links on with it. We as believers have intuition which is a further thought than instinct. Intelligence is linked with it. We have the knowledge of the truth and we have intuition as well. You know what is pleasing to the Lord, and you go on whatever cost there might be to yourself.

I read in Genesis. Jacob had an up and down life; he was a supplanter: that is what his name means, Gen 25: 26. But God was working with him all the time, and what an end he had! This is his end: "And Israel worshipped on the bed's head". He looked at his life in relation to God. He says, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God that shepherded me all my life long to this day", chap 48: 15. Jacob is a good example of the ways of God with a man, and that is the same with us all; God's ways enter into our lives. Jacob was looking at his life in that light here: "The God that shepherded me all my life long to this day, the Angel that redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads", v 15, 16. There is Jacob ending his life here as a blesser. He blessed Joseph, and he said, "the Angel that redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads". He is a blesser and he is a worshipper. Jacob had passed through much; he had disappointments; how his sons tested him! What a thing to do to their father, to say that Joseph had been slain! Yet the best years of his life are these seventeen years when he had Joseph again. But one thing that impressed me here is there is no bitterness in Jacob's spirit: he is a worshipper! He worshipped God. He ends up worshipping the One that shepherded him all his life long. What an end in a man's life, and it is not just to be at the end of our lives. The great preservative for all of us is to have a worshipful spirit, to have God before us. Whatever you pass through, have the Lord Jesus before you! God is over all that He passes us through; how much discipline there is and sorrow and suffering! But the Lord says to the woman in John 4 - the woman is speaking about worship - "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where one must worship. Jesus says to her, Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when ye shall neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what; we worship what we know, for salvation is of the Jews", v 20-22. The Lord linked salvation with worship, and it is a saving thing to be a worshipper, that you are occupied with Someone outside of yourself, not occupied with how things affect yourself. There was no bitterness with Jacob at all. What a life he had had with God, but he ends a worshipper! Worship is a reverence in your spirit towards God; what glory attaches to a person that is a worshipper. That is what God would delight to see in a man, in a woman, in a believer, that they are occupied with Him worshipfully; His blessedness is before them. What a God He is! We get on very well on Lord's day morning, but the spirit of worship is so important, that in your spirit you have God before

you. I believe this is a mature feature in Jacob that he ended his life as a worshipper.

Well, may the Lord encourage us in these things.

Glasgow

29th November 2014

RECONCILIATION

Norman J Henry

1 Timothy 1: 14-17

Acts 20: 18-21

Ephesians 2: 11-22

What impressed me today is that God is able to reconcile persons to Himself, and also He is able to reconcile persons together. It is amazing that God is able to do this. The basis of it is the Person of the Lord Jesus and His work. The preaching according to Paul here was to Jew and Gentile; he preached to both. It refers to “ye who once were afar off are become nigh”. Those that were afar off were the nations and those that were near were the Jews. He preached to both, the same glad tidings. God is looking for persons to be reconciled to Himself, and also for reconciliation between persons. That is the gospel; that is my message for you today. Persons who are not reconciled together have not reached the end of the gospel. Through the wonderful, powerful ability of God, He can reconcile us by what was done in Christ. Our responsibility is to lay hold on that work in faith.

It says in Ephesians, “that he ... might reconcile both in one body to God by the cross”; - that was in Christ - “having by it slain the enmity”. What enmity exists in this world: religious enmity; it corrupts the world, it makes it violent. Think of the violence in the world today: you hardly read a newspaper without some religious hatred, violence, murder; it pervades the world. It started in Cain; that is where it started, Gen 4: 3-7. It flowed out of an offering to God, which was from the ground; it was in a religious setting. Abel and Cain offered to God. You might say that was religious, that both were fine. One took from the firstlings of his flock, recognising that the coats of skin were on Adam and Eve; so death stands in the way to God, and Abel laid hold of that. But “Cain brought of the fruit of the ground” which was cursed, and what rose up in his heart was because God had not looked on him and his offering: so he slew his brother. That pervades this world; we are in the Cain world. That Cain world crucified *my* Saviour. That is what happened; the hand of a murderer took Christ and nailed Him to the cross. Satan has the most enormous history, and he is able to do what he can to make you insensitive as to your state before God. He blinds you; he blinds men today about their actual state in the eye of God. I want to tell you, God knows it; you might be blinded but God is not.

The verses in Timothy struck me: the apostle refers to himself when he says, “the grace of the Lord surpassingly over-abounded with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus. Faithful is the word, and worthy of all acceptance”. He comes to the point, and says, “Now to the King of the ages, the incorruptible”; how could an incorruptible God take up sin in the creature? You think of it: “to ... the incorruptible, invisible, only God, honour and glory to the age of ages. Amen”. I would say, “Amen” to it. For such a God, an incorruptible, invisible God, is so determined in His desire for the sinner to be saved, to be separated from his sins. He points to the cross; that is where you can be separated from your sins; that is where the Saviour suffered for sins.

Ephesians deals with the greatest questions in the universe. It begins with what is in the heart of God, when there is nothing to draw His love out. It refers to “God, being rich in mercy” (Eph 2: 4), and what He did for Himself. Where we read it comes down to what He is doing for you and me; and for Gentile and Jew, to reconcile them and bring them into a company. It was never God's mind to leave you as an individual. There is no scripture that tells you that those who go to hell will have company there. I do not believe they will, and if you found company there it would be the most awful company you could ever get, with consciences being restless eternally; under conviction of sin, without release: what a horror to spend even a moment there! I know in my own life, a moment of conviction of sin brought me to my knees, and every brother and sister in this room that has it can say 'Amen' to that: that they were under the conviction of sin; and where can you get release? Will you get it in the world? Never. They do not know how to address the matter. Will the newspapers help you? They do not know how to address it. The blessed incorruptible invisible God has got the solution; it is in the work of the blessed Lord Jesus that you can be delivered from sin. Sin has a terrible domain. Satan holds men in it, in bondage and the fear of death; he wields that power, friend, and he holds men in bondage. The incorruptible, invisible, only God has the answer and that answer is in Jesus. What a Person He is.

Solomon was known for his intelligence; he could have spoken about anything creational. Job too had an amazing knowledge of the creation. With the Lord Jesus it is His perfection, His obedience to His Father's will, His simplicity; the simplest Person to draw near to is the Lord Jesus, the image of God. That is what He is; the invisible God come into manhood. God is a Spirit, but in Christ He came in in

manhood to express Himself and draw near to man. God came into manhood Himself; “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us”, John 1: 14. There was and is a circle of persons who appreciate it.

The apostle says, “But for this reason mercy was shown me, that in me, the first, Jesus Christ might display the whole long-suffering”. What was that for? Was that merely for himself? No, it was for others. Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul, is “a delineation” - a setting out to you - “of those about to believe”; not those who believed beforehand, but those about to believe. If he could get salvation, have the Spirit and come into the assembly, then you can have it. That is a great point in Paul. He is a delineation spreading out to “those about to believe on him to life eternal”. Think of having that wonderful promise of blessing, promised by God, that you might come into life eternal.

In Acts 20, Paul is preaching to Jew and Gentile, and he is setting out the groundwork for salvation. He says to these elders at Ephesus, “Ye know how I was with you all the time from the first day that I arrived in Asia, serving the Lord with all lowliness, and tears, and temptations, which happened to me through the plots of the Jews”. Did that weaken the glad tidings? I think it enhanced it. The more the persecution, the more the light shines; that is what Christianity is. There were “the plots of the Jews”: plots mean they are trying to trip you up; they are setting a snare for you. They are plotting in their counsel and they are going to try and get you somehow. The glad tidings still go out; Paul says, “how I held back nothing of what is profitable, so as not to announce it to you, and to teach you publicly and in every house, testifying to both Jews and Greeks”: even those who were plotting; the glad tidings was for them. That is wonderful. He says, “repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ”; those are the two things that I would like every person in this room to know, since they are the groundwork. If you do not start there you have not started at all. You might come to the meeting, thank God you do, but unless you start with repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ you have not started at all; that is the groundwork.

The waves of the world will not touch that ground; you are on solid ground if you have repentance towards God. How we need to express repentance towards God. The One who was offended was God; Adam disobeyed God. The very fact I have my own will was against the will of God. It is “repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ”, what groundwork. I am sure a believer

rejoices inwardly to think that that groundwork is solid ground. I remember one person saying to me, 'You will never ever be sorry if you commit yourself to the Lord Jesus'. Whatever the enemy says to you and tries to rock you, you can never be sorry because you are on ground that is wrought on and developed and secured by the work of Christ. That is wonderful. Paul says the same to both Jew and Greek; he is speaking to both. There are some religions today that are apostate. Yet God desires all to be saved and reconciled. Here Paul was speaking to the most prominent, and that was Jew and Greek. These two covered much of the known world then, I suppose, and he says this is what they testified. He loved Christ. Had he had a perfect life? No, he was probably one of the most self-righteous persons that walked in this scene. He probably was; that is not speaking against him as a man: he was blameless as to the law, he was a Pharisee, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a leading doctor of the law at that time, who was a very able man. In Acts 5 he says, "take heed to yourselves as regards these men ... lest ye be found fighters against God". He was a very ardent Jewish doctor of the law, and Saul was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel.

So Saul was not only after the believers, the Christians and lovers of the Lord Jesus in Israel; he was going out, and he was on his way to Damascus. He was on his way there with all the learning that he could possibly absorb in the Jewish system, and he was going out there with the letters of authority from the chief priests, and he was determined to pursue his course. Then he was arrested by the Lord; not arrested near Jerusalem, because he might have gone back to his friends and all his acquaintances in Jerusalem. He gets near to Damascus and the light shines out of heaven. Who was that? That was the light of a glorified Christ, the Saviour. Think of this wonderful expression of all that is in God, "the incorruptible, invisible, only God"; everything in Christ shining down on that dear man brought him down. He gives up his trust in all his learning; God was going to bring him to the knowledge of Christ and put it into his heart; that was what Jesus did on the way to Damascus. He secured him and here he is testifying. It is wonderful. If he can be saved - he says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the first" - you can be saved too.

How truthful Scripture is: it does not gloss over anything. Dear young brother and sister, read the Scripture for its intense perfectness. It does not gloss over the sins in David; it does not gloss over anything

at all: it tells stark information and moral teaching that you need. Here in Ephesians Paul is speaking about what God did in purpose, and what He did in Christ; but now he is saying there are difficulties. Those “who are called uncircumcision by that called circumcision in the flesh”; he is addressing difficulty between peoples. Why is there such difference in the world today? There is difference between peoples, and a large element of it is religion. It plagues everywhere; the distortion of nations is because the Prince of peace was cast out, and when He comes back the world is going to be one. It will not be such as we know at the moment, but man’s government will be dissolved, and it will be the government of one blessed Man. It will be headed up in the Christ; what the world to come will be, friend! You will have part in it if you are saved; you will come out as reigning with Christ. What a privilege to be with Christ then, and here in the glad tidings He is seeking to secure persons.

In Acts 8: 27, the Ethiopian is brought in. How God covers the differences in the race; what a God He is! Now Paul refers to the nations, “ye were at that time without Christ”; that is where we were. We have nothing to boast in. It says, “ye were at that time without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel”. We had no right to the Jewish system; it was a closed system as far as the nations were concerned, but then God worked. Then it says we were, “strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world”. That is pretty hopeless, is it not?

God is going to tell you that what you could not do He has done in Christ; “but now in Christ Jesus ye who once were afar off are become nigh by the blood of the Christ”. I love that, “become nigh by the blood of the Christ”. It not only meets my need, my sinnership, but it brings me nigh to God. What glad tidings; we want you in, friend! We want you near to God. The nearer you get to the world the further you get from God; that is what the god of this world wants. There are the two characters of the devil, he is “the ruler of the world” (John 14: 30), and then he is “the god of this world”, 2 Cor 4: 4. He is holding persons away from God, but it says “ye who once were afar off are become nigh by the blood of the Christ”. You are brought nigh to God, in an area of blessing and privilege; and then Paul says “*he*”, that is Christ, “*he* is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of enclosure, having annulled the enmity in his flesh, the law of commandments in ordinances, that he might form the two in himself

into one new man, making peace” - it was done in Christ. - “and might reconcile both in one body to God by the cross”. That was the means that the Lord Jesus took to do it, and then it says, “having by it slain the enmity; and, coming, he has preached the glad tidings of peace to you who were afar off, and the glad tidings of peace to those who were nigh”.

It is the same glad tidings; is that not wonderful? I suppose the Jew wanted blessing; they thought they had the right. They do not know that the apostle speaking here is speaking about the “both” and the “to”. It says, “through him we have **both** access” - that is Jew and Gentile - “by one Spirit to the Father”. There is nothing at all but being near to God, and brought near to one another. You need reconciliation to be serviceable to God. “Be reconciled to God”, 2 Cor 5: 20. The cross was elevated so that it could be seen; it was an object of ridicule in the eyes of the world, but it was by that means that God brought in reconciliation of peoples.

The present world will go on to doom, but persons will be drawn out of it and be brought in as it says here, “no longer strangers and foreigners, but ... fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God”. Are you going to be lonely now? No, you have all the company you wish, the best of company. That is the best company; does God's house not include the best of company? Show me anywhere else; you will never find it. You will be at home there, “no longer are strangers and foreigners, but ye fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God”. That is where you are brought to. You are brought from confusion into simple habitation in the house of God. It says, “being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the corner-stone, in whom all the building fitted together increases to a holy temple in the Lord”.

The final thing I would like to touch on is “in whom ye also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit”; a habitation of God: that is where God resides. That is what the house means. God has got a place to reside and it is “in the Spirit”; “a habitation of God in the Spirit”. You not only get the forgiveness of sins; you not only come into blessing and liberty with God: you are given the Spirit to enjoy the blessings. You are given the Holy Spirit to enjoy salvation and to enjoy God: that is the glad tidings. He is not a stranger God; He is known to you. It says, “a habitation of God in the Spirit”; that is a wonderful thing to arrive at. We are in the habitation of God in the Spirit; when we gather we are in the

light of that. It is something worth committing ourselves to. Do not treat it as any meeting, or that it does not matter. It is a habitation of God in the Spirit, and if God inhabits that place I want to be there. It is as simple as that. The glad tidings will bring you into the very centre of it and there is no distance between one and another; no enmity, it is all gone; "He is our peace". What a Saviour He is; He sees us through, friend. May we come into blessing; may every one of us come into the fulness of what God has in His heart for us. For His Name's sake.

Kirkcaldy

9th November 2014

'LOVE, BY ILL UNTAINTED'

John N Darby

John 13: 1

It is evident that Jesus addresses Himself particularly here to His disciples, but what this verse presents to us will attract to Him every soul in which the Holy Spirit acts. The only thing which draws the sinner and inspires his confidence *is what is in Jesus*, as we find Him in this verse.

I would desire to speak to you of the constancy and of the faithfulness of His love. Nothing slowed it; nothing weakened it. If we think of the three classes of people who surrounded the Lord: His disciples, His adversaries, and the indifferent, we find in them everything that could stop Him in His designs of love.

The adversaries are more particularly the children of the devil. Having seen that the Lord Jesus came to claim the kingdom so as to reign over everything, they said, "We will not that this man should reign over us", Luke 19: 14. In effect, one finds persons who, at the bottom of their heart, are sure that Jesus is the Christ and who do not want Him. The adversaries were able to get hold of the indifferent ones and influence them.

All that He found in the world was fit to turn Jesus aside from His work, but nothing hurts love more than *indifference*. By nature, we love sin and we use all that God has given us to satisfy our covetousness. Before this appalling state of the world, Jesus says, "How long shall I bear with you?", Matt 17: 17. We think as He does when we are in the light of God. But Jesus saw all this corruption of man, and it is this that led Him to come down here in grace. God saw all this; His compassion took knowledge of it. What does it meet? Indifference of heart. The heart of man sees something contemptible in Jesus; it does not want either to recognise his own state or to be obligated to God and to forsake it. Nothing repels love more than indifference.

Jesus has also met hatred. All those who held that God was absent, so as to be able to satisfy their own will, hated Jesus. Pride, conscience, will, all repelled God. "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father", John 15: 24. There was nothing in the defilement, the indifference and the hatred which could attract the love of Jesus. There was enough to drive love to despair, to see Oneself

betrayed by Judas. If a single man should betray us, we would be too much occupied with ourselves to think of those who were not betraying us. At the beginning of His course, Jesus pronounced the beatitudes; at the end, He says: "Woe to you". Iniquity has abounded; when Jesus shows all His love, His very disciples forsake Him. Is there not enough to reduce love to despair? Even those who loved Him were so selfish and so bound by the fear of man that it was impossible to rely on their hearts. Peter who loved Him would deny Him. That proves that the heart of man is such that, even when it loves Jesus, *this heart is worth nothing*. Jesus had to love in the presence of a hatred which never relented; He had to love us covered in defilement, indifference, hating the light, we who - a thousand times - have denied Him. He who knows himself the best can best know that this is his portrait. If you treat a friend as you treat Jesus, the friendship would not last a week.

In heaven, Jesus found the Father's love, perfect purity; so *His* perfect love could not manifest itself there. In regarding what He had left, He loves His own who are in the world, just as they are in their defilement. He is not repelled by it; they are the object of His compassions; they attract grace, for the object of grace is the iniquitous and the evil.

For Jesus, the indifference of His own showed the extent of their sorrow and the need they had of Him. The very hatred of man proved that he was lost. God came to seek man who was not even in a state to seek Him. How many things He has borne, what indifference, treacheries, denials! Nevertheless, nothing stops Him, and He "loved His own ... *to the end*". He acted according to what there was in His heart; and all that He saw in man was but the occasion to manifest what He was.

Jesus does everything that is necessary to restore the soul in its relations with God. Complete sinner that you are, grace comes to seek you. Righteousness and the law require that evil and wickedness be removed. John the baptist preached repentance, and it is a beginning of grace; but, in fact, grace, far from telling man to leave his state to come to God, comes to man in his sin. It puts its hand on the leper to put him in relationship with it, and so that God should be much more fully manifested than if sin had never existed.

Grace applies the love of God to the needs of our ruin. If Jesus knew the joy of the Father and all that is in the Father, it is to adapt it to

the needs of man.

What a consolation to know that Jesus is *all that is needed for all that we are!* That places us in the right and leads us to confess the evil in us, instead of hiding it: grace alone produces sincerity (Ps 32: 1) and truth. It makes us recognise that we are weak, infirm; that we would do exactly what Peter did, if we were not preserved.

“Jesus ... loved his own who were in the world”, through their pilgrimage, their circumstances, their sorrow, their selfishness, their weakness. All that Satan could do, all that was in man, was calculated to hinder Jesus from loving him, from loving His own, and yet He loves them to the end.

Can you say that you have part in this love, that, in spite of your weakness, you have understood grace, the manifestation in Jesus of the love of the invisible God for sinners? Have you recognised that it was *necessary* that Jesus should come into the world, so that you would not be cast where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth? Have we taken our part in recognising what we are? That is disagreeable and painful. That was the thorn for Paul, something which said to him unceasingly, 'You are weak'. It is precisely to this end that God had sent it to him. Is our flesh sufficiently judged so that we are happy that Jesus should be all and that we should be nothing, and that we should rejoice that the manifestation of our weakness should be that of *the power of God for us*? Jesus has not forgotten any of our needs: “having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end”.

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