

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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CONTENTS

**“Bringing Many
Sons to Glory”**

Page 1

Holding Fast

John Spiers

Page 19

“I Know”

Rob W McClean

Page 23

Learning From Affliction

Harold J Klassen

Page 30

“BRINGING MANY SONS TO GLORY”

Romans 8: 28-30

Hebrews 2: 5-10

Philippians 3: 20-21

JL I wonder if we all fully appreciate one of the most marvellous things that is taking place on the earth at the present time, and that is that God is bringing many sons to glory! He is preparing sons for glory, and that is my thought for today. Despite the conditions in the world, the concept arose in the divine mind before creation existed and the climax of its results will subsist for all eternity. It is a very marvellous thing! That does not detract from the great conception of the assembly because it runs entirely parallel with it. What the assembly is femininely will answer in a full way to the affections of the Lord Jesus, but as a vessel of divine praise the personnel of that vessel are sons who will be entirely in accord with the coming glory. I have an interest to enquire about glory. Why is God bringing sons to glory? Is glory a condition? Or is glory a place? Why does God not transfer us instantly into that sphere of glory if His interest is so great in it? These are things for us to enquire into. It is very clear that God is pursuing, without deviation, His great intent to bring His sons into conformity to Christ, and to fit us for that eternal sphere of His own happiness.

In Romans, it might be of interest to note that it is somewhat put in the past tense; “whom he has justified, these also he has glorified”. In the epistle to the Hebrews it is something that is taking place currently; he is “bringing many sons to glory”. And in the epistle to the Philippians it is something that has yet to take place; He “shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory”. It is clear that all these things have a bearing upon the sons of God and they are all connected with glory, which I believe to be a divine necessity in view of the satisfaction of God. God will not dwell in circumstances anything less than glory.

RT The passage you began with says, “has foreknown”; that is where we start, is it?

JL Yes indeed, and that takes us back before creation. It takes us back into the purpose of God, does it not? I have this very precious impression that it is a divine conception that arose before time began. To me it is a most marvellous thing. The world around us is in turmoil, that is plainly obvious, but God is pursuing something that arose in His

own mind by way of purpose, and according to His counsel it is being worked out now in view of the culmination in glory, is it not?

DCW Does the Lord's prayer in John 17 have a distinct bearing on all of this? The Lord spoke of the glory that He had with the Father before the world was (v 5), but then He says, "the glory which thou hast given me I have given them", v 22.

JL That is very helpful and a good reference to bring in. It is true to say, is it not that we shall behold those glories of His that we are able to take account of, and our hearts will be held in adoration because of it, but we too have to be participators in glory, have we not? What do you say about that?

DCW So part of His desire was that we might see His glory, v 24!

JL We will! We will see those glories of Christ that we will be able to take account of. I am sure we all acknowledge that the creature will never penetrate into the essential glory of Deity, but we will behold these glories of Christ as Man and the glories that God has given Him too. But then my thought is that we shall be transformed and brought into suitability because God will eternally dwell in glory.

NJH "His Son" will determine our relationship, will He not?

JL Yes, I agree with you.

NJH It says, "conformed to the image of his Son". There is reference to the sons of God being active when the glory of creation came in before them, (Job 38: 7) but that was no link with "his Son"; our sonship relates to "his Son": is that right?

JL Yes. There will be nothing less in the thought of sonship for the saints of the present family than conformity to Christ in glory. I think for us to be failing in interest in regard of this subject would almost be like an insult to the Father's love. It is such a prime thought in the Father's affections that it must be delightful to heaven for us to be occupied today in looking into it, do you not think?

NJH In the parable it is "at last he sent to them his son, saying, They will have respect for my son", (Matt 21: 37), but this is a further thought in the divine mind, that we appreciate the relationship of sons.

JL Appreciate it, and grasp the thought that we shall be brought into conformity with all that God has in mind in glory.

RG Is there something to learn from the fact that in 2 Corinthians 3 we are “transformed ... from glory to glory”, (v 18), but here we are “conformed to the image of his Son”. Transformation is almost immediate it would appear but conformation takes time, does it not?

JL It takes time, and has the added thought that it brings in finality, is that right?

RG Yes. I wondered about this being in the section where the Spirit is made much of. Does it not only direct our minds to the presence of the Spirit down through the dispensation but also through our spiritual lives, so that there should be a result becoming obvious and evident in us, that we are being conformed to the image of His Son, and therefore being prepared for glory.

JL Very good. My understanding is that the saints are glorified through the gift of the Holy Spirit. What does God clothe with glory? Certainly not flesh! He clothes His own work with glory, and the witness to that is the gift of the Holy Spirit. I would like to arouse the interest of the brethren in relation to the several references to what was covered with gold in the Old Testament both in the time of Moses and in the time of Solomon, because I think these things will give us further suggestions to show that God is intent on dwelling amidst glory. There were four woods that were overlaid with gold. They all speak of Christ in some way, and of what is of Christ formed in the saints. That stands connected with your thought about the gift of the Holy Spirit, does it not?

NJH The wood and the gold are to be considered together. The woods speak of an order of man that could be overlaid with gold.

JL I also have this thought that the wood was not overlaid with gold to cover up what was unsuitable below, but it was because of God's appreciation of what these various woods spoke of, as making manifest features of Christ. It seemed delightful to His heart, and resulted in them being clothed with glory in view of His dwelling place.

GBG The word “image” is used and also in 2 Corinthians 3; does that include likeness? “Conformed to the image of his Son” takes time, as was said, but image would be a complete, full thought. If a thing is like enough, does that equate with image?

JL Yes. There may be at times just the thought of representation, but it is more than that here. Likeness involves some correspondence, and that is what is in your mind, is it? There is some correspondence to

what is of Christ, and that is what is formed in the saints and is clothed with glory. The gift of the Holy Spirit is given to us in order that He might reside in our hearts in relation to that work of God that is already in our souls; "but whom he has justified, these also he has glorified".

RT These are the lessons learned in Romans. They are steps of majesty, are they not? Does that go along with glory, it is majestic? Everything must give way to it, and bow.

JL I like that thought! What characterises this world is degradation, but what marks the work of God is increasing steps in glory. It brings to my mind a reference in Mr Raven's ministry where he made mention of the section in Revelation 21 where God says, "Behold, I make all things new", v 5. Mr Raven said, 'I cannot pretend to say what He makes, but I have no doubt there is an ascending scale of blessing', vol 19 p592. That is just like Romans here, is it not; an ascending scale of glory?

RT It was at the beginning of Abraham's history that the God of glory appeared to him, Acts 7: 2. It would leave some impression upon him, on his spirit, that nothing was going to stand in the way of that. I would encourage our young brethren to get some impression of this to begin with early in their history, as Romans contemplates.

JL That is a good thought. Nothing can stand in the way of it. I have carried this impression all week, that since the Spirit of God has been here there never has been a day when the work of God has been left in temporary suspension! That may seem an abnormal thing to say but it is a valuable thing because, while there are burdens and difficulties amongst the saints, the Spirit of God has not ceased to work on account of that. The work of God is progressively going on all the time in an ascending way in view of final glory. God cannot be hindered, can He?

JCG Do you understand that the conformity to His Son involves the greatness of what has shone out? Our brother has referred to the image, and that comes out in Hebrews 1, as to the effulgence of His glory, what was expressed in Christ, v 3. But there is the moral side in John's gospel where the Lord did certain signs and manifested forth His glory; is the model that we follow what was seen, and shone out, in Christ?

JL Yes, I am sure that is part of the fruit of the Spirit's present work

that these features of moral glory should be formed in the saints. I asked the question at the beginning, 'Why does God not instantly transfer the saints from earth to glory?'. Why do you think that is?

JCG I think you have got something in your mind about it, but it involves the moral process to arrive at what is spiritual and heavenly, does it not?

JL That is just the whole point. It reflects the wisdom of God that He forms the vessels through all kinds of circumstances, sometimes through discipline in our bodies, and there are saints here who know something about that. God passes us through a variety of circumstances, and sometimes difficult ways in our workplaces or in our families, but all that enters into the bringing of sons to glory, does it not? It is all part of God's way in forming the vessels in view of bringing them into finality and glory.

DJH Mr Raven said, 'I could not be too thankful that I was not taken to heaven when I was first converted', FER vol 5 p202. That is really what you are filling out, is it not? We are not taken immediately after conversion because of this process that is going on.

JL Yes. God is well able to do that if He should so wish, and He did it with one of the malefactors we refer to, but it has been according to His wisdom mostly to pass the saints through times of discipline and exercise in view of forming vessels that are suited to sonship's place, forming features that make manifest conformity to Christ and ultimately to His body of glory.

GAB According to Hebrews 12, the proof that they are sons is that they are chastened, v 7. Is that part of this process of bringing sons to glory?

JL Well, say more about that.

GAB It seems to fill out what you are raising as to why we are not taken to heaven immediately. There is something to be wrought formatively in us and that is by chastening. That is why we need chastening, so that we will be suitable for the place of glory which divine purpose has in mind for us.

JL That is very good, and brings about substantiality in the vessels. When the holy city comes down out of heaven, having the glory of God (Rev 21: 10), there will be nothing shallow or empty or in any way

insubstantial about it. It will bear the greatest evidence of the fulness of divine workmanship, and that is wherein the glory shines, is it not? It has no part in Deity, and never will, for it is a creature vessel, but it will come down out of heaven having the glory of God. It will express the excellence of divine workmanship, formed through these means that we are referring to.

DCW So Romans 9 refers to “vessels of mercy ... prepared for glory”, v 23. So these tribulations and tests all go towards being prepared.

JL Some have lived a much longer time in the testimony than others, but that is all part of God's wise ways in fitting us as vessels of mercy in view of having participation substantially in final glory.

DCW Yes, and of course we all feel there is much else to be done with us and in us, do we not? I was thinking of what John says “and we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father”, John 1: 14.

JL That is a very precious thought. Contemplation of the glory is part of the way that transformation is brought about: it is through occupation with the Lord Jesus.

RT Could you say some more about that? Is that not where God has intervened, and come near to us in a Person?

JL Yes, very good; and by the Holy Spirit established a link between ourselves and that blessed Person in glory. So that that transforming work cannot proceed apart from the Spirit's work either. Maybe you can help us more about it.

RT It is wonderful that such a thing has been demonstrated to us in a Man down here, in lowliness and grace. The world all against Him, Satan against Him, but He “has been raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father”, Rom 6: 4. There is a Man gone through in triumph, the great Model, and Leader of our salvation.

JL We have to be fitted and formed in view of becoming suitable to have part in that sphere of eternal glory, but Christ in all His excellence could immediately be glorified, and given that place of distinction and honour. He was worthy of it. God would keep Him before our view I am sure.

RGr When Moses spoke about the ark in Deuteronomy, God said to Him, “make thee an ark of wood”, chap 10: 1. Do you think there is

some sense in which as we appreciate the glory we learn to appreciate the Vessel as carrying the glory?

JL That is very good; that is one of the woods, the acacia wood. The ark was made of that wood, and covered over in every part with gold. The staves were made of that wood and were covered over with gold. What does that mean?

RGr Well, I have heard it suggested that the staves would represent the four gospels, but what is your thought?

JL The staves were to permit the ark to be carried. It shows that when what is of Christ is formed in our hearts we become suited vessels to carry these impressions of His glory and to be occupied with Him, do you not think? They were of acacia wood, and they were overlaid with gold.

RGr Is it interesting that in the tabernacle system it was the wood that was worked on; the gold then covered what had been made? It would bring out the side of the Lord's pathway here and the way in which He went through everything for the will of God.

JL Yes; that is a good thought, and bears on the work of God in the saints as well, forming vessels that can be clothed with glory. In the King James's Version, Isaiah 11: 10 reads "his rest shall be glorious"; that is fine and indicates that the condition governing God's rest will be glorious. But Mr Darby translates it as, "his resting-place shall be glory". That is finality! It is more than a condition, it is the completed work and that is where God rests, "his resting-place shall be glory". I carry a definite impression about that, because God will not rest, nor will His work cease, until finality in glory is brought about for His satisfaction.

RGr So it says as to the sabbath God "rested, and was refreshed", Exod 31: 17. When things were completed He found His own joy in that, do you think?

JL Men may sometimes have to rest in the sense of drawing things to a conclusion when the best for the moment has been done; that is not like the work of God. God carries His purpose through to completion, and the answer is glory.

TDB You referred to the sufferings of the saints. It says in 2 Corinthians "our momentary and light affliction works for us in

surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory”, chap 4: 17. Paul is speaking as one found in that condition.

JL Well, he is clearly drawing a valuable comparison, is he not? I suppose many of us here might not always feel it appears so light when we are passing through these things, but it remains a fact, scripturally borne out, that by comparison with the eternal weight of glory in the final answer, they are just momentary and light. It seems to emphasise the blessedness of what will subsist throughout eternity. I like to use that word 'subsist'; it suggests what bears no need of further change, and what will not deteriorate, but will forever continue for God's satisfaction, do you not think?

RG It says of the Lord that he was raised by the glory of the Father. Is that not explaining to us a little bit the power of His love, and the place that is our eternal portion? We will be living in the atmosphere of the power of that same love, the love of the Father for the Son, and we will be able to appreciate it as having been conformed to the image of His Son and respond to it eternally.

JL I am glad of your link with love. It is not merely an evidence of the wonderful wisdom and power of God that the climax will be glory, but the whole purpose that initiated it sprang from the love of God. His resting-place being glory involves love in complacency, having its full answer for God's eternal rest.

PAG You remarked more than once on the fact that God does not take us immediately to glory. Is He Himself glorified in that He brings glory out of adversity? He could have brought it out by command alone, but He brings it out of adversity, and that in itself glorifies God.

JL That is an interesting thought. The saints are glorified because there is need of change and transformation, and the work of God brings that about. When we speak about God being glorified it is not for that reason but it is because, just as God says Himself, “I will glorify myself”, Isa 49: 3. It is the fruit of His own work that glorifies His majesty, is it not?

TWL Would it help to refer to Stephen, and how he ended, because it says, “he saw the glory of God, and Jesus”, Acts 7: 55. He ends with that fine testimony to what had been wrought in him in relation to seeking mercy for the persons who had treated him in such a manner. There was adversity in the extreme, but it was because he had seen

“the glory of God, and Jesus” that he could so intercede for them.

JL I find that passage interesting because in once sense the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus; that is where the expression of divine glory is, “in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 4: 6), but it says there he saw “the glory of God, and Jesus”; what do you make of that?

TWL It has come into expression in a Man. That Man, speaking carefully, is the perfect exponent of what God is Himself. Reference was made to the Son “being the effulgence of his glory”, Heb 1: 3; He was the complete expression of what God is Himself. God's dwelling place, and what He creates and forms, are absolutely in accord with Himself. Would that be right?

JL Yes, that is very good. It is a very precious thought that what can be known of God has been declared and made known by a blessed Man. Clearly there must be an eternal link between the glory of God and Christ the blessed Man in whose presence we shall be eternally and through whom we shall enjoy such favour.

JCG So that believers “were first called Christians in Antioch”, Acts 11: 26. Now that is a challenge for us, is it not? What features of the glory of Christ do I carry as I move about in testimony? Quite clearly they were seen to be persons who were like Christ, a Man in the glory, and that would be the work of the Spirit, I suppose.

JL That is a very searching thing. I am quite frequently asked by persons, ‘so you are a Christian, are you?’ I normally say, ‘Well, I am a believer and I love the Lord Jesus’. I trust in some way I exhibit features proper to Christianity, but I am slow to claim that. Christ is Himself so glorious we are measured in the degree in which we are formed after Him, are we not?

JCG I did not mean to imply that we should claim it, but we should act and be like the One in whom God finds so much delight, in heaven, so that men can see a testimony of that.

JL Yes, I understand your thought, and that is just exactly what came out amongst those that you have referred to at Antioch, and it is what we see among saints here, is it not? The work of God is here; that is what God clothes with glory, is it not? The work of God in His saints is indestructible. Exercises may bring about difficulty, and may test us too in our relations with one another, but the enemy cannot destroy God's work in the saints; and therefore we need to value it while we are

working things out.

DCW So Peter uses the term “Christian”; “but if as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but glorify God in this name”, 1 Pet 4: 16. And then it says a little before that, “the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you”, v 14.

JL I have the impression that that passage involves not only Christ-like features, but a spirit such as marked the Lord Jesus, suffering as a Christian. It is coming out in some measure in the spirit that marked the Lord.

DCW I was thinking that Paul speaks about filling up “the tribulations of Christ”, Col 1: 24.

JL Yes, he does.

MC The Lord took the three up to the mount of transfiguration, and they saw His glory; “the fashion of his countenance became different and his raiment white and **effulgent**”, Luke 9: 29. I was thinking that this would have an effect in our souls, to bring about growth and an appreciation of who He was. I wondered if it is worked out in Peter, because we know how Peter describes it later when he speaks about “being with Him on the holy mount”, 2 Pet 1: 18. So the substantiality was something that was wrought in him as a result.

JL That is excellent. If Moses did not have the privilege of going into the land with the people, he had the privilege of reappearing on the mount with Christ in glory; what an answer to his faith and interest. O that we had the energy of faith to look more brightly towards the climax of these things and pursue them. We need to keep our eye on the glory, do we not?

PAG We have referred more than once to the verse in Hebrews 1 as to Christ being “the effulgence of his glory and the expression of his substance”. I am enquiring genuinely whether that is complete representation?

JL I think my answer is yes, but I am hesitating in this respect that Christ is not only *like* God, He is God. That passage goes beyond likeness in that respect, since being the expression of His substance would remind us that He is no less in His Person than God and therefore fully capacitated to give expression to all that God is. Do you follow my thought?

PAG I do, and I was asking because I had in my mind the fact that Christ goes beyond us in every sense because of who He is. Nonetheless, I wondered whether as to us there ought to be not only the image of God, for man is made in God's image, but the thought of some expression of who God is, ought to come out in us; but Christ is and was and ever will be God.

JL Yes, I think we must seek to protect that, because He remains an Object of worship for our souls, and is clearly pointed out to be so in Hebrews 1, is He not?

RT Would sonship not be worked out in the saints and be the answer to all that? Through love and mercy, and in His ways, He has brought about persons who are sons, having the glory of God resting upon them.

JL That is exactly right! That is one of the thoughts I have been enjoying much. To me it is a wonderful thing that God is proceeding with that now, bringing sons to glory. That is a marvellous thought, is it not? Who knows about that in the world around? It is a secret work of the Holy Spirit that is incessantly going on.

RT They are already glorious in sonship, are they not? But then they are brought into the position of glory in bringing many sons to glory?

JL Perhaps you can help us then about one of my earlier enquiries: is glory a condition or is it a place? What is your thought about that?

RT I think it is a condition, and it is a place as well!

JL That was my thought, it is both.

RT I thought about that. Men put Christ upon the cross, but God placed Him at His right hand in glory. Christ was glorious, but He was brought into the position where glory is at home, at the right hand of God!

AB I wondered if in Exodus 25, where the staves were to be overlaid with gold, and the ark was to be overlaid with pure gold, there is a sense of what belongs to Christ personally, do you think?

JL Yes. The Spirit of God always serves in protecting the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus. I am sure we never err in seeking to protect that amongst ourselves. We shall be brought into conformity to

Christ in glory, but He will ever be unique and distinctive. But the Father's thought is no less than that we should be expressive of Christ before Him. Everything in that scene of glory will reflect Christ.

RT Well, it is a place, but it is a home, is it not?

JL Yes, it is a home! And while it is the Father's resting place it will be the home of glory for the saints of the heavenly family to which we belong, will it not? That is greater than Israel's portion.

JP In Chronicles, when the ark was brought into its resting place, it says "the glory of Jehovah had filled the house of God", 2 Chron 5: 14. Would that happen today?

JL Glory filling the house?

JP Yes. In Chronicles it says, "the priests could not stand to do their service because of the cloud; for the glory of Jehovah had filled the house of God".

JL Do you not think we sometimes have impressions of that? We sing, 'Glory, glory, glory', hymn 420. I am sure the saints are brought into a foretaste of eternal glory. We feel we are brought into conditions characterised by glory and a foretaste of the home of the resting place where God's love will find all that answers to Himself. The whole of that scene in Chronicles was overlaid with gold, the floor, the walls, the cherubim, the ark, the altar; the whole scene was glorious, nothing to detract from it.

JAB You have just answered the question I was going to ask about Hebrews 2 verse 10. You commented at the beginning that this is going on now and God is bringing many sons; now I am interested in what you have said. That is going on now, but the 'to glory' is not just glory by and by, is it? What you have said about what we touch now is a foretaste of what we shall enjoy, but it is the substantial thing itself, even although maybe only glimpsed. But it is still the substantial thing; is that right?

JL Yes, I am sure the saints are brought into present enjoyment of that. I have said this before, and I believe it to be true, that the work of God in us is not yet complete otherwise we would not be here, we would be taken to be with Christ in glory, but at every stage that work is perfect, because I cannot attach imperfection to the work of God. It may not be fully complete, but it is perfect at the point it has reached, and that bears on your enquiry just now, because even as we are being brought along

the way we are touching what is holy and perfect according to God's own mind through the service of the blessed Holy Spirit, are we not?

JAB You spoke about these steps in this ascent, and we have spoken about the moral process that is involved in what we are speaking about, but it is not just the moral exercises of the pathway, is it also an accumulation of experience of glory which is, as it were, built in us. That which we speak of as the work of God in us, is something that is being accumulated under the Spirit's touch, and will then be complete. Is that right?

JL Yes, I think that is true. It may be difficult for us to express some of these thoughts but I believe that the substantiality that will find its display in the city will not just be something instantaneously wrought, but it will be the product of so much that has entered into the experience and formation of the personnel who compose the vessel.

RG So that from time to time we have the blessed experience of that fact that the hymn writer spoke of:

O the sight in heav'n is glorious!
Man in righteousness is there;
Once the Victim, now victorious,
Jesus lives in glory fair! (Hymn 212)

Each Lord's day morning that is something that we should experience, is it not? And that affects you, forms you for the week that is to follow in your responsible life, as true enjoyers of where glory is and that we have been privileged to have part in it, do you think?

JL That is a very precious thing, and a very real enjoyment that we touch. We do not gather in glory; we gather in the wilderness. That is where we gather in order to celebrate the Lord's supper, but the worship of God proceeds in the realm of glory, and that is what we are brought into.

WMP You made reference earlier to the holy city: "the length and the **breadth** and height of it are equal"; that is what the Spirit records, Rev 21: 16. Does that confirm your thought that what is worked out in the time period is actually equal to what God had in His mind, what was in His eternal purpose for us. There is a working out that is in accord with that, which is very glorious, is there not?

JL It has been described as a cube; it has equal length and breadth

and height; that is the substantiality of what God is working out in glory. And, while figuratively it is presented as a city, we have to bear in mind that it is representative of the personnel who are sons brought to glory.

DCB We sometimes speak about moral glory. Is that what is worked out and displayed at present, moral glory, which is going in due course to be displayed in the glory that is seen in the city?

JL Yes, I think that is something that is very fine. I quite often reflect over that expression 'moral glory', and the brethren will pardon me if I have said this in the hearing of some before. When I was a teenager, I was in a reading when a brother asked what the expression 'moral glory' meant, and the answer given was that it has to do with good and evil. But there was an older brother there who said, 'Yes, quite so, except if you are speaking of the moral glory of the Lord Jesus then I would prefer to say perfect good in the presence of all evil'. That stuck to me, because when we are speaking of the moral glory of the Lord Jesus, it is not just vaguely something to do with good and evil; it is the perfection of all that God found in that blessed Man in the midst of all that was so unsuitable. That is God's standard, and it is conformity to that blessed Man that is being brought about in the saints, finally through the closing act and the salvation of our bodies, but now by the process of bringing the sons to glory, do you not think?

DCB I was thinking that if you look at Stephen, as has been referred to, from a human point of view there was not any glory; it was a disaster. You have got to see what is the divine view of glory, and that in the present scene is moral glory. In due course there is going to be a body of glory for each one of us that conforms to what there is formed in substance that has been delightful to God.

JL Is Stephen not said to be a witness, Acts 22: 20? Was he not in some way bearing testimony here, in those closing moments, to what his eye was fixed upon in glory above? It may be to a casual observer it was an outward disaster, and the man lost his life, that is true, one of the martyrs, but the work of God was there in such a marvellous way! It bears on my thought that, in the midst of all the circumstances down here that seem to be characterised by turmoil all around, what is morally glorious is being formed in the saints for God's delight.

TWL Would it be right in relation to this to say that God is not exactly bringing things about to arrive at glory, but the things of God subsist in glory?

JL The two thoughts run parallel. The conception is glorious in itself and the things of God subsist in glory, but He also operates to bring it about through His own work, does He not?

TWL Yes, I was just thinking that. He is working in saints to bring them into accord with what already exists.

JL In that respect we come back to the divine standard set out in Christ Himself, and we are brought into conformity to that and we are transformed as occupied with Him. These two expressions 'transformation' and 'conformity' both indicate that there is a process being worked out, but it is in accord with the divine standard of perfection, set out in the Object of God's love.

TWL Yes. So, going back to the references we had earlier in relation to the service of God, is it important for us to understand that the service of God subsists in glory.

JL Yes; say more about that for it is an interesting thought.

TWL Well, you made mention that we break bread in the wilderness, which is true, but then we have a change of scene; we have movement, and we move in relation to what subsists in glory.

JL In that sense we are in the sanctuary, under the touch of the minister of the sanctuary.

TWL Yes, exactly. So in your affections when you touch that, you are not touching something that has been in any way intruded upon by what is contrary to God, but you are moving in relation to what subsists in what God is Himself.

JL Yes; someone may then say to me, 'Where is the sanctuary?'. It is the presence of God known, is it not? Essentially there must be glory there, where God dwells.

GAB Aaron's sons had garments for glory and for ornament; Aaron's garments for glory and ornament were of course unique to him, Exod 28: 2, 40. I was just thinking of the fact that there is One wearing these garments of glory and beauty and ornament in heaven, but there is something down here that corresponds with that.

JL Yes, that is interesting. I am glad of your reference to that, because these garments were not merely functional, they indicated that God had something glorious in mind in relation to His service under the hand of Aaron, the high priest. It bears on the enquiry that has been

raised as to the sphere in which the service of God proceeds, does it not?

RT In the midst of being reproached it says, “for the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you”, 1 Pet 4: 14. The Spirit having been with us has really brought the atmosphere, and the quickening really brings us into a touch of glory, does it not?

JL Very good, and is that part of the significance of the passage in Romans 8 “these also he has glorified”?

RT I thought that. I wondered if we are missing part of it, the Spirit coming here having brought everything with Him, and the saints as accepting the reproach of the Christ, the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you; “on their part he is blasphemed, but on your part he is glorified”. We are brought into a condition through the Spirit working in us, made room for in us; we touch these final conditions.

DCW The incoming of the Spirit depended on the Lord's having been glorified. “The Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified”, John 7: 39.

JL That is true; say more about the significance of that.

DCW I was just thinking that it is from that realm that the Holy Spirit has come.

JL Yes, and as if to indicate too that the standard and the perfection of all that God had in His mind is set out there in Christ above, and the Spirit has come to bear witness to that; and indwells the saints, in order that we might be formed in accord with it, do you think?

DCW Yes, so that it was a consequence of the Lord's being glorified. I would take it that He is glorified as Man for one thing on account of what He has done?

JL Yes, that would be right to say, because as God He is the possessor of glory; as Man He has been given glory.

NJH He already has a body of glory.

JL Yes. We do not know much about that. What we do know, and it is sufficient for the moment, is that our bodies will be brought into accord with that body of glory. What characterises Christ at present, according to 1 John 3, we have not yet seen, have we? But the very thought of it is something that exercises us, and bears on our enquiry

today, that we should be found increasingly in moral accord and readiness for entrance into the final conditions.

RT Is that not brought about on account of His Spirit which dwells in you?

JL Yes, very good; you are bringing us back again to the importance of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

RT Everything depends upon it, and Him being made room for. He does not glorify the flesh, but He quickens, and He gives us a touch of what is final as He is made room for. The question was, "Wilt thou go with this man?", and she went on the journey, and she was soon at home with Isaac, Gen 24.

JL I am glad of these references.

DS Does the message given to Mary in John 20 show that the Lord was going into glory and was leaving a company here who would understand, and be able to receive, something of that One. "I ascend", He says, John 20: 17. Was a company being left here who were able to appreciate the One who was going there?

JL Yes, very good: He is presented at that point as the ascending Man. Later in the Acts we are told of the actual ascension of the Lord Jesus; He ascended up into glory (chap 1:9), but in John 20 He is the One who is ascending, and it shows that that upward movement into glory was immediately before Him, and His worthiness to be in that sphere.

RG Can I ask at this stage what effect this reading is meant to have on us?

JL Preparation for glory!

RG And bearing testimony to the God of glory?

JL Yes, no doubt that would be a consequence, but if there is anything that has been in my heart for today it is that we might become increasingly prepared in view of entrance into final glory. I do not think the time of that entrance is far away. It would be shame upon us if we were not prepared and ready for entrance into the coming glory. Scripture rather seems to indicate that the final thing that has to be carried out is the transformation of our bodies, as if the preparatory work and the formative work wrought by the Holy Spirit has already

been brought about, and it just remains for this final act to be carried out. How far have we progressed? If I am occupied with worldly things I cannot very well read that verse in Philippians “*our* commonwealth has its existence in the heavens” (chap 3: 20): I am not there and not living in it. But if I am, then I am occupied with the things of glory that belong to this sphere where Christ is, do you not think?

RG Paul was taken up as far as the third heaven and into paradise (2 Cor 12: 1-4); you might have said that must be glory, but he was not allowed to remain there, he had to come back again. Why? Because, as he explains to us at the end of Corinthians, it was necessary for their sakes. That was why I was really asking, because I thoroughly believe the time is short, as you have said. How are we going to utilise our time that is left? Some of us have much less than others even in the normal course of things, but if there is going to be anything from our appreciation and experience of the glory, and the greatness of the One who bears the glory, it should be that there is a testimony rendered so that the saints, like those at Corinth, would be brought into conformity.

JL I think that is a good word for us. If the Father is bringing sons to glory, I would not like to be going in the opposite direction. I would like to be in harmony with the Father's activities in love, and the Spirit's operations now, and the transforming effect of being occupied with Christ, who is already there, the glorious Man in God's presence.

Kirkcaldy

7th February 2015

List of initials:

A Buchan, Kirkcaldy; T D Beveridge, Kirkcaldy; D C Brown, Edinburgh; G A Brown, Grangemouth; J A Brown, Grangemouth; M Cowan, Kirkcaldy; G B Grant, Dundee; J C Gray, Grangemouth; R Gardiner, Kirkcaldy; R Gray, Grangemouth; N J Henry, Glasgow; D J Hutson, Edinburgh; T W Lock, Edinburgh; J Laurie, Brechin; W M Patterson, Glasgow; J Pye, Kirkcaldy; D Spinks, Grangemouth; R Taylor, Kirkcaldy; D C White, Londonderry.

HOLDING FAST

John Speirs

2 Kings 1: 2-4, 7-15

Nehemiah 6: 1-4

1 Kings 21: 1-3

Revelation 3: 8, 10, 11

I was confirmed by the line in the hymn we sang which refers to “they who still abide” (Hymn 289), and I have also been thinking since the weekend about the importance of holding what we have as believers. Satan's objective is that believers should give things up; he tries different tactics, and he keeps trying. The persons in these different passages did not give up. I had not really looked at this first chapter of the second book of Kings in any detail before, but a reference was made recently to Elijah going with Elisha in chapter 2, and when I read the chapter before it I was struck by the way that Elijah did not give up. Elijah was on the hill, and he was not willing to come under the authority or the command of anyone other than God Himself. He was not going to accept direction from this fallen, wicked king, Ahaziah. What a shameful thing that a king of Israel should fall in this way: he “fell down through the lattice”. What moral degradation has come into the church publicly, but there are still those that cling to the principles of God, and own His authority and the authority of Scripture alone, to direct them.

It is interesting how persuasive Ahaziah is. He sends these fifty men. Satan would seek in an arrogant way to usurp the authority of God. Think of how he did that from the very beginning: he says, “Is it even so, that God has said ...?”, Gen 3: 1. He would seek to undermine the authority of God's word. God's word comes to us, and we are thankful for that. We proved it at the weekend in a distinct way. Think of the authority that it carries! Are we going to listen to something else? Are we going to act on another word from another source, from a source that is corrupt? Beloved, let us hold fast to God's word, the authority that it carries and the principles that are included in it! I think that is what, as I understand it, Elijah represents here, one in a position of power, moral authority. He was not going to give up his position; he was not going to go at the king's command. The first captain said, “the king says, Come down!”. No, Elijah was not going to give up his position. God had not given him the command to do so. He was not going to listen to the king. Another thing about holding on to the principles that

are contained in God's word is that heaven supports those who do so. You might find it difficult to stand - and how challenged I feel about it, standing in any small way for a principle of God - but heaven will support it. Think of this fire coming down from the heavens; it would confirm Elijah. You might say it is severe. Sometimes it might feel that way, but let us be reassured that heaven will support those who stand for the principles that are contained in Scripture.

Another fifty come, and the captain is more insistent. He adds "quickly" this time: "Come down quickly!" Think of Satan's persistence! Scripture says, "hades' gates shall not prevail against it", Matt 16: 18. Hades' gates will however keep trying to prevail. They cannot prevail because of the Holy Spirit's presence here in the assembly, but, at the same time, individuals are called upon to be faithful and remain faithful to the principles of God. How wonderful it is that God in His grace even uses a circumstance like this to secure servants for Himself through this third captain. It has been said that this man was like a leading brother who was willing to give up his reputation, give up his dignity, so that his company might be saved, JT vol 35 p27. What a wonderful attitude to take! He "fell on his knees before Elijah"; he recognised true authority. When the angel of Jehovah speaks to Elijah to come down, then he moves. Think of him patiently and dependently waiting on the word of God before he moves. It is interesting that the same message comes to Ahaziah three times; suggesting God's judgment as to what has come about publicly in the church; the ruin in the profession does not change and our judgment of it should not change either.

I read in Nehemiah because I think he too was one who was not going to give anything up. He was holding fast. One of the things that a believer has, as well as the Word of God and its principles, is a work to do, and Nehemiah recognised it was a "great work": "I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down". He recognised his responsibilities. A believer has responsibilities and he also has privileges. Nehemiah felt the responsibility here that the wall might be completed. It is interesting to notice the part in brackets: "I had built the wall, and that there was no breach left in it (though at that time I had not set up the doors in the gates)". You might say, that final element that would control entry into what was holy and keep out other influences that might come in to spoil, had not quite been finished, and it is at this point that Sanballat and these others come and try to tempt Nehemiah to gather with them in the plain, that is on a lower level, representing a level that is not according to the principles of Scripture. How can we gather on any other basis? If

we do there is the possibility of what is not according to the truth, not according to God, getting an inroad. How wonderful it is that he stands firm, and he says, "I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down". Beloved, let us realise that any small work that might be done for God is in His eyes a "great work". It may just be being faithful in a simple matter. There were persons here that were working; they had their sword in one hand and they built with the other hand, like those "fully fitted to every good work", 2 Tim 3: 17. Think of "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph 6: 17) being available to every believer. Do not give that up! Think of "the things which tend to peace, and things whereby one shall build up another", Rom 14: 19. Think of what the Holy Spirit would give us, wisdom and discernment and skill, not only to know what to do but *how* to do it, to do it in the Spirit of Christ, a spirit that would build up. It takes skill to build; it does not take much skill to knock something down. God would support those that stand for what is right and who have their part in the "great work"!

In 1 Kings here is a man who has a vineyard and he is not going to give it up; it is his inheritance. Beloved, do you realise that you have an inheritance? An inheritance is something you may receive when a person dies. Well, you do not have to wait for this inheritance: Christ has died to secure it for you. It is yours to enjoy now. Do you enjoy it? If you enjoy something, if you value something, you are less likely to give it up. Do not give up the inheritance that God has secured for you through the death of Christ! It is like this vineyard which Naboth has. Another way that Satan tries to tempt us is with alternatives, but they are always inferior alternatives. Think of Ahab's arrogance to say, "I will give thee for it a better vineyard". Is there anything better than what God gives us, the inheritance, the enjoyment of eternal life, the blessing of sonship, the joy of fellowship and company with His people? Is there anything better? Is there a better inheritance than that? No! These things "have not come into man's heart, which God has prepared for them that love him", 1 Cor 2: 9. That is like the inheritance, what God has prepared for you. You have had no part in securing it, but God gives it to you. Do you value it? Are you willing to hold on to it? Well, Naboth was. It meant suffering, it meant death for him, and I feel very challenged as to that because I may try to avoid any suffering, but God will support us in it and God sees to it that Naboth is not forgotten. Ahab says, "I will give thee its value in money". How can these things be measured out in money? Think of their preciousness: "To you therefore who believe is the preciousness", 1 Pet 2: 7. Can that be valued with

money? It never could be, but these things are to be valued by us so that we might not give them up.

I read in Revelation because we get a similar thought there: “thou hast a little power”. That made me think of these other scriptures. These persons each had power; they were able to resist Satan’s temptation. How the Lord Jesus was tempted: “And the devil, having completed every temptation, departed from him for a time”, Luke 4: 13. Think of that, the ruler of the world coming and finding nothing in Him, John 14: 30! The Lord Jesus as a dependent and obedient Man resisted Satan in all the different ways he tried to tempt Him. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God”, Luke 4: 4. Think of Him even referring to the Word of God and its authority! Think of Him saying: “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God”, Luke 4: 12. Think of these things, beloved, and see a perfect Model of One who was able to overcome Satan as an obedient, dependent Man. Let us use the Holy Spirit’s power to follow that Model that we have, that perfect Model. May we be like those of whom it is said they have “a little power, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name”.

Well, let us hold on to God’s Word! Let us not be willing to give up what is due to the name of the Lord. Let each of us be one who “names the name of the Lord”, 2 Tim 2:19! We know what our responsibilities are. Separation is a *positive* thing. Separation protects what is precious to God and is necessary. “Hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown”. God gives us every resource to hold fast what we have. We are not able to do it in our natural strength. God gives us the power of the Holy Spirit to hold it, hold what we value, not give it up, not give up God’s principles, not give up the work, not give up any thing that is precious to us in the way of inheritance, “that no one take thy crown”. Think of how Satan always tries to degrade man, to take away his dignity. God always does the opposite for those that love Him. He dignifies them, gives them a crown, nothing that this world would recognise, but recognised in heaven. Let us hold fast to what we have, brethren, in responsibility and privilege, and we can be assured that God will support and honour it.

May the Lord bless the word!

Grangemouth

10th March 2015

“I KNOW”

R W McClean

Revelation 2: 2 (“I know”)

My thought was as to this expression, “I know”, and I wish to speak of the Lord's knowledge of every circumstance. Apparently the Greek word used here is '*oida*'. There is a very helpful note in the Darby translation to 1 Corinthians 8: 1, which says, 'Two Greek words are used for 'to know' in the New Testament - *ginosko* and *oida*. The former signifies objective knowledge, what a man has learned or acquired. The English expression 'being acquainted with' perhaps conveys the meaning. *Oida* conveys the thought of what is inward, the inward consciousness in the mind, intuitive knowledge not immediately derived from what is external', and the note goes on to explain this distinction. I seek help to speak of three examples of the Lord's inward, conscious, intuitive knowledge: firstly in relation to our individual lives, secondly in relation to our Christian lives, and thirdly, in the context of what is said in Revelation, in relation to the collective side, the assembly.

The Lord uses this word for inward, intuitive, conscious knowledge several times in John 8: for example, “I know him”, v 55. Think of those relationships between divine Persons; how blessed they are! The man in John 9, in that often quoted remark where he mentions things he does not know, says, “One thing I know”, v 25. That is the same word; he knew inwardly. He said, “One thing I know, that, being blind before, now I see”, v 25. He knew it in himself. He did not need anybody to tell him. It was what he knew inside himself. And then in John 10 the Lord says, “I know those that are mine” (v 14); He knows His sheep. So, you see, it is quite a common word, and I thought it was interesting that this is how the Lord knows our circumstances. He knows your personal life and mine; He knows when we are wrong: He knows our sins. Of course He knows our sins - He had to bear the penalty for every one of them on the cross.

He knows our sins, but I do not want to focus on that. I want to focus more on the side of how He knows the circumstances in which we are. We referred in the reading to a babe, and I was thinking of the way that it begins to respond, instinctively first, and then there is a bond of affection and intelligence growing together, and there comes a point when the child has to go to school, and the Lord knows about that. He knows the circumstances in which we find ourselves. We go through

school and meet difficult and easy circumstances. They vary, no doubt, as do our family relationships and other things. I am thinking on just a simple natural level; the Lord knows about all these things. There are challenges and there are difficulties and there are sorrows and sadnesses that come upon all men, and the Lord knows about them; He would say, "I know", and He would desire that you would seek His company in relation to them. How simple it is, really! The apostle Paul speaks to some, expressing his concern, that they were being "corrupted from simplicity as to the Christ", 2 Cor 11: 3. How simple it is that we can just turn to the Lord whatever circumstances we find ourselves in. We need not be embarrassed about it; He is not! The Lord exemplified dependence in every moment of His life here, a dependent Man doing only the will of the Father, and so He would have us be dependent too. He says, "I know"; 'I know about that circumstance, that exam that is coming up and is worrying you. I know about that'. It is not that we do not have to study and that we do not have to work. Perhaps you have a problem at work; He knows about that. It is not that we do not have to exert ourselves, but the Lord knows about it, and there can be a certain assurance and comfort in being with the Lord in relation to every circumstance of our life. I think that would relate to piety; piety is really giving due reverence to One who is greater. It has been said that where it speaks of the fear of God in the Old Testament, it is like piety; it is a similar expression, FER vol 9 p481. So you can bring the Lord in. And you are not bringing the Lord into circumstances He does not know about, nor are you bringing Him into a circumstance that He has no experience of. "He knoweth our frame" (Ps 103: 14); He has been in our condition; He has been a Man here. 'Well', you may say, 'He has not met this particular circumstance'. The Lord is able for every circumstance. There is no circumstance in your life or mine that He is not able for. And so we can be near to Him.

We spoke of affection and intelligence in the reading. Intelligence involves learning, and the Lord would desire that you might learn what He is for you in your circumstances because He would say in relation to them: "I know". You may think of Peter at the end of John when the Lord is probing him. Remember those three questions that the Lord asked him? He says: "lovest thou me more than these?" Peter says, "thou *knowest* that I am attached to thee", John 21: 15. We often use that scripture to explore the different words for love, but Peter also uses this word '*oida*', that we are speaking of, "thou **knowest** that I am attached to thee". He knew that the Lord knew, in inward conscious knowledge, that Peter was attached to Him. Then the Lord says,

“lovest thou me?”, and Peter says the same again, “thou knowest that I am attached to thee”, v 16. And then the Lord says, “art thou attached to me?”. He uses the same word for love as Peter, and Peter says, “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I am attached to thee”, v 17. The Lord knows your affection; He knows that you are attached to Him but He would still probe and encourage you in every circumstance, to show you that you have a resource to turn to in Himself. It is as if He says to Peter, 'I know'.

I thought about our Christian lives. The Lord knows about them as well, and again He knows how we fail and how we feel. Perhaps one of the experiences of getting older (I speak for myself) is that you realise how much time you have wasted in not really dedicating yourself to the Lord's things, and the Lord knows that. I was not particularly thinking of focusing on that, but I was thinking that if you love the Lord Jesus - and I trust you do - and you want to be here for Him, and to seek to be faithful to Him, then He may put you through things that you would never have had to go through if you did not love Him and did not seek to be faithful, and the Lord knows about that. He knows about the challenges you face simply because you want to be here for Him. Other people may not face them. I do not want to be fanciful or emotional about it. That might involve relationships: because you want to be faithful to the Lord, that might have an effect on relationships. I remember recently a young brother saying in my company that there was a gender imbalance in his age group amongst the brethren that we meet with. Well, the Lord knows about that, and He would desire that you might converse with Him, not just pray about it, but converse with Him about it and hear what He would have to say because He knows all about it. There are other things; that is just one example. Maybe even in work, because you do not want to be a member of some organisation, you suffer reproach, or you cannot progress beyond a certain level. The Lord knows about these things and He does not forget about them either. We might forget about them, but the Lord remembers; He treasures it. Every step, every stand, you make for the Lord, however small or insignificant it may seem to others, the Lord values, values very, very highly, where you have sought to be here for Him and been with Him in the circumstances He has arranged for you.

I remember a brother saying once that life consists in relationships; that is how we are. We do not live alone; we do not live as an island, as it were; we have relationships with our family and so on; and the Lord knows about all of that. He knows where His matters

might affect that, and we may have to make a stand. He says that in one place: "And every one who has left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit life eternal", Matt. 19: 29. The Lord knows about it and He has something in mind for you. He would desire that you would bring it to Him and converse with Him about it and listen to what He would say.

These things are testing - I am not pretending they are not - but James says, "the Lord is full of tender compassion and pitiful", Jas 5: 11. He knows all about it, and when you bring it to Him, He does not say, 'Well, it is all right. I know all about it'. No, He likes to hear your exercise. He likes to hear you express your exercise about it in order that He may come in for you. He may come in for you in a spectacular way, or He may not; He may choose not to. It may be that you do not think He has come in for you, but be sure that He has! For Saul of Tarsus, the Lord intervened in his life in quite a spectacular way, but then there are others that you read of who were converted just as soundly, though not quite so spectacularly, but that is no less reflection on the Lord. He may bring each of us, and He does bring each of us, a different way. I think we should be encouraged by that. You may think some brother did not have to suffer this, and someone else had it easy. Well, no, because, the Lord brought them a different way, and they went through different exercises, but the Lord was with them in it, and the Lord will be with you in your circumstances too as you go through them with Him. He knows all about them, and He loves you and He brings you through them for your blessing. If you want the blessing, if you want the best of the blessing in a right sense, then you must be with the Lord in them. If you kick against them, then He cannot bring in the blessing that He has in mind. He will surely not forget you or neglect you but how much better just to be subject to Him, to be dependent, and to find, in the Lord Jesus, One that knows everything, and has the answer for you, and who will be with you. He says at the end of Matthew, "I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age", chap 28: 20. You will never be without the Lord if you have brought Him into your life. I trust we are encouraged by that and stimulated too. I feel the edge of it; I am not pretending to be in the gain of all of this; you need to understand that. It says in one place, "the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of trial", 2 Pet 2: 9. He knows all the circumstances, and has chosen to pass you through them.

Then finally the third thought was in relation to the context in

Revelation where the Lord is speaking to the assemblies. He says to John, "Write therefore what thou hast seen, and the things that are, and the things that are about to be after these", chap 1: 19. Earlier in verse 11 of chapter 1 He says, "What thou seest write in a book, and send to the seven assemblies: to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea". Each of these assemblies we would be seen as progressive, representing the history of the church. We have been helped about that, and what does the Lord say to each one of them? He speaks to the overcomer and He has a promise to the overcomer; He speaks to those that hear; but He also says, "I know". He uses the same word, "I know", to each one of them. To some of them He says, "I know thy works"; to Pergamos He says, "I know where thou dwellest" (chap 2: 13); to Smyrna, "I know thy tribulation and thy poverty", chap 2: 9. The Lord knows these things. I was quite struck - some things are fairly obvious when people point them out to you and you think, why did I not think of that? - but it was recently pointed out in Grimsby that each of these seven assemblies got the same book, the same letter. They were all together: "What thou seest write in a book, and send to the seven assemblies"; so the whole book of the Revelation was sent to each of these seven assemblies, and they could all read about what the Lord said about each assembly. Do you think that was their focus? 'Oh, He is saying this about the saints in that place'. No, the Lord had something very, very specific to say to each of them. I just wondered, if the Lord said 'to the angel of the assembly in Edinburgh write', or, 'to the angel of the assembly in Grimsby write', what would He say? What do you think the Lord would say to any of our localities? He is writing to the place, as it were. Who would be included in that? Would you be included? I think it would be right to say it would be everybody in the place that claims to be the Lord's. It is not to a particular group of Christians; it is, "to the angel of the assembly in Ephesus", or wherever it might be. The Lord is not isolating, in that sense, a group of Christians, such as we may be. We speak carefully because we do not want to take a name or be in any way sectarian. The Lord knows what the situation is in a place, and He knows about the overcomer, and He knows about those that hear. Our place, if it is anything, is to be seeking to walk in the light of the truth. It is not that we claim anything. We must not claim anything; that would be pretentious. Mr Coates says, "I doubt whether the Lord would have us to look for a company which should be the true expression of the one body. I think this would be too pretentious a ground to take in the midst of all the confusion of these last days. I believe the Lord would have His saints to recognise the truth of the one

body, and every other part of the truth, and to seek to maintain consistency with it by following righteousness, faith; love, peace ...”, Letters p231. This surely would be our desire.

He says to Ephesus, “I know thy works”. They look quite good to start with; everything was outwardly in order. They knew how to maintain things: “thou hast tried them who say that themselves are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars”, v 2. They knew how to apply the Scriptures; they knew the scriptures about withdrawing from persons and so on - I am not trying to belittle that - I am saying they knew that. But then the Lord has to say, “but I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love”. That is, the first church that He writes to had left its “first love”. Then, to Thyatira, the fourth one, although He commends them for their love, He speaks about adultery and fornication, leading finally to the lukewarmness and indifference of Laodicea. The Lord knew about those things. What a fall is traced in these letters! Not only had they left first love, but they had gone back into these dreadful things that love had nothing to do with. The Lord was no longer the chief object of their love, and He knew about it. He had something to say. And He may say to me, ‘What about your love?’. Mr James Taylor raises a question (vol 56 p93) about it: are we able to gain a brother, as it says in Matthew 18 where it speaks about a brother sinning: “If he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother”, v 15. Mr Taylor wonders if that was what was lacking at Ephesus, the love that would gain the brother. The Lord would know about that. I am not accusing anybody or any locality. That is *far* from my thoughts; I am just saying that the Lord knows. He knows the circumstances in every local assembly; He knows what is responsive to Himself, and where there *is* something for Him. There is a message for the overcomer in every place, and there is a promise. What is the promise? We may observe that the trend in the overall state descends, all the way down to Laodicea where the Lord has to be very challenging. He is outside, knocking on the door. They thought they were rich and had need of nothing and did not realise they had need of everything and they had shut out the One who could supply it. The Lord knows about the situation in every place, and He has a promise to the overcomer; that promise would no doubt be related to the state in the place. Before He speaks about the overcomer in those places, He would draw attention to all these things that He knows about concerning the conditions there. Then He shows His appreciation of the overcomer and describes the promise, and in the later letters He says, “He that has an ear”, after He addresses the overcomer, as if to say that if you want to hear what the

Spirit says, you need to be an overcomer. The Lord knows about that. It comes down to us: am I going to be an overcomer, so that I can hear what the Spirit says? Are you? Are you going to be an overcomer? There is much to discourage around; the Lord knows about that. The enemy would like to rob God; He has various ways that he would try to do that. He does not care about you, but he might use you as a tool and try and spoil your enjoyment of divine things. The psalmist says, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation", Ps 51: 12. He had been used by the enemy as a tool, but then he gets back to God. He overcomes, and the Lord would say to such, "let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies".

I do hope that we may be encouraged to be sure in our own knowledge, to be able to say, "I know". The apostle says, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded", 2 Tim 1: 12. You need to know the One that knows you intimately, knows you in every circumstance, intuitively knows what is going on even in your heart, even at this moment. You have come to Him as your Saviour, as I trust we all have, to own Him as your Saviour and Lord, but He would say, 'I know; I know about all your circumstances; I know all about what you may endure or have to face because you love me, because you want to be here for me'. He would know about that. It may be that you say, 'Well, other Christians might be free to do certain things'. That is not your matter; that is the Lord's matter. The Lord would say, 'I know. I know what I am putting you through. I am putting you through these circumstances for your blessing'; because the result, if you are with the Lord in them, is that there will be an increase for Him, and that is what He is looking for. And then He would say in all the exercises you might face, what we might call assembly exercises in various places, the Lord would say about that: "I know".

Let us be comforted and encouraged! Let us be overcomers and let us hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies. For the Lord's name's sake!

Edinburgh

30th May 2015

LEARNING FROM AFFLICTION

Harold J Klassen

Psalm 119: 67

It is interesting that this verse says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray". The Lord had His eye on the psalmist; and he says, "now I keep thy word". I have wondered - and I wonder if you have ever done so - to see in Scripture how the Lord takes up souls that have failed. We have just had Rahab before us; you think of David, of Abraham, of Solomon, or of Paul. You might ask yourself, why is it that the Lord takes up with those that fail? The answer is that that is all He has got to work with; that is it - everyone has failed. That is all He has to work with.

Some of the things that have been before us lately are before me. How do you feel about yourself? Do you feel that you have failed? That is good. Do you feel that you are unfit? That is good. Now, you are a vessel that God can use; He can work with you; He can bring you into something. Think of Job: it is said he was an upright man, Job 1: 1. Was he absolutely? We have all failed, either in deed, or in word; even in our thoughts. We have all failed. As I say, that is what God has had to work with. I used to wonder about that, but now what it does is to amplify the grace of God.

So, when something comes our way, some affliction, some difficulty, what do we do about it? The Lord uses it to bring us to Himself. The psalmist says, "Before I was afflicted" - so he was afflicted - "I went astray, but now I keep thy word". So, when things come our way - difficulties, trials, experiences - I believe that the thing God would have us do is learn by them. We had that before us on Lord's day.

You can learn not only by your own experiences and failures, but you can learn by those of others too. I think that is why we have so many instances in Scripture. We can learn by them. I just had that little thought about how we feel. We live in a day when we are taught to feel good about ourselves, and think highly of ourselves, to look in the mirror, and think of yourself and how wonderful you are - all these things; but, you know, that man that you are looking at is a man of failure.

But you can look at yourself as in Christ, as God sees you. Now you can see why God can take you up. He wants to take up each of us and use us for His glory, for His blessing. Think of the privilege of being able to gather together to break bread and enter into the service of God. God would use you and me in His service in that way. What a wonderful

privilege that is, that God could use us in that way. That is why it says, "let a man prove himself, and thus eat", 1 Cor 11: 28. It is really sad that there are those who stay away from the breaking of bread, because they do not think they are worthy. That is doing despite to the death and sufferings of Christ, because that is saying that He cannot make me worthy. Who sinned worse than the apostle Paul? He says he was "the first" of sinners, 1 Tim 1: 15.

So think of this side of things now. It is to learn the grace of God - even if you look at your own failures, which is a poor occupation, it will take a lot of your time: "but now I keep thy word". May these experiences that we go through in life work to this end, that they might bring us to Himself: "but now I keep thy word". We would keep the Lord's word, think of what He has done and be occupied with Him. What a blessed occupation that is, how wonderful that is! All these things are easy to say: Satan does not want any one of us to be in the enjoyment of what we have just said. He would rather we were in self-occupation, which makes us miserable, but let it only be the vehicle that brings you to the feet of Jesus, to be partakers of His grace.

May we be encouraged to go on in these things. We do not live in a day of great things, but think of what we had, that "The latter glory of the house shall be greater than the former", Hag 2: 9. Think of the glory that God would get today from those who would just be occupied with Him and what He has done, and answer to Him.

I just say these things for our own encouragement, because I know each one of us can get discouraged and cast down. We look around us and we see the failure on every hand. We look at the outward form of things and how it has fallen apart; but not the reality - God had something to say about what is internal; He said it is greater.

May we be helped in these closing days of the history of the assembly in this scene, to be occupied with these things and to be encouraged day by day; and to encourage one another that we might keep His word. For His Name's sake.

Aberdeen, Idaho

29th July 2015