

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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MOVEMENT IN THE SERVICE OF GOD

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AM I was thinking of the occasion that we experienced this morning. We were led on, and all the way it was love. We started with a hymn to the Lord Jesus that contained the words:

Living and ever precious is Thy love! (Hymn 318),

and we sang that hymn with the emblems before us, the tokens of His love. That love has once been tested and proved, and for the last two days we have spoken about the circumstances in which that love was tested. It needs to be tested no more; it has been proved, and proved abundantly. How great that love is! But we gathered together in the light of that love, and with confidence in the love of the Lord Jesus, that He would come and we would have some sense of His presence. This passage in Song of Songs comes to mind:

The voice of my beloved!
Behold, he cometh
Leaping upon the mountains,
Skipping upon the hills.

There is no obstacle from His side that would prevent Him from coming to His own where there are those who are waiting for Him, who desire to be here in accordance with His own will.

But in this passage He is moving on, and the Lord is moving on, and the service moved on, and we came to another realm. Ephesians 3 came to mind because we are brought into a realm that is characterised by love. A brother referred to a universe of love; that affected me. There is a sphere that we have been brought into, and Paul turns to the Father in order that we should be able to apprehend these things, "that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts, being rooted and founded in love" and that we should "know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge". The title here is "the Christ"; it is not exactly to know the love of Jesus, but it conveys to me that there is a sphere which takes character from Christ and it is permeated by love, and we are to know what it is to have part in such a scene, "to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge" and, as having part in that, we would have to say to God, "to him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages".

The verse in Zephaniah speaks about the wonderful culmination, that God has found His rest: “he will rest in his love”. There is nothing to disturb that rest. He finds His rest in the Lord Jesus, His Son, but eternally “he will rest in his love”. Wonderful to think of what that means! The expression of that love and the result of it, the fruit of it, is what He will rest in. But we have the love of God, and it seems that the majority of the references in Scripture to the love of God are brought to us in connection with our need; God comes in in relation to our need. But it is a great thing to get through to divine love beyond a scene of need. Love at rest, the love of God, is something we are brought to appreciate.

But first we have the love of a Man. The love of God has been expressed in Jesus, but we have His own personal love. We have His love for the assembly, and His love for each one of us, and I thought we might begin with that. That is how we began this morning, that there is a living Man, a glorious Man, who has overcome everything and His love is 'Living and ever precious', and is always for our enjoyment.

NJH Do we need to come to some conscious experience that divine love dictates movement in the service of God? In Ephesians it is, “to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge”. You might say it is out of our reach; it is entirely on the basis of divine love proceeding. Is that right?

AM That is right. Movement in the service of God is under the direction of Christ. He is the “minister of the holy places” (Heb 8: 2), and it is under His headship, and His love would ensure that the Father receives an adequate portion. The love of Jesus is not selfish. He receives from the saints what gratifies Him, and He finds in the assembly what is uniquely for His pleasure, but it is not a selfish love; love is never selfish. He has the Father before Him, and the movements of divine love would lead us to the Father.

WMP You said there is no obstacle to love on His part; that is something to lay hold of. Would that then exercise us that there might be no obstacle on our side?

AM Absolutely. It must do, must it not? Am I always in the enjoyment of the love of Christ? Have I always found that there are no clouds? Why would there be? The clouds do not just come in. Any hindrance to the enjoyment of His love is entirely on my side, and He feels it.

TJC John lived in the consciousness of the love of Christ: “To him who loves us”, Rev 1: 5. It was not a historical matter; it was a current matter with John, do you think?

AM I am glad you say that, because we were referring earlier in the weekend to references in the gospels that there was a disciple “whom Jesus loved”, John 13: 23. Now that was here in flesh and blood conditions, but when John wrote the Revelation he saw the Lord Jesus completely outside this order of things altogether, and it is still the same: “To him who loves us”. It is in the present tense.

TJC It is wonderful to come up to the Supper with that knowledge in mind. We are coming to remember One that we love, but His love is ever towards us.

AM That is good, and that is right, and we do love Him, but what can we say about our love? You look at the emblems and you feel you cannot speak of our love for Him, can you? You see His love, you see the extent to which it has gone, but it is still operating, living: it is the 'Living and ever precious' love, and it is still operating towards His own today.

RDP You made a distinction as to “the love of the Christ”. This seems to be very personal, personal affection, and Ephesians is His relation to a whole sphere of things: “in order that ye may be fully able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of the Christ”. “The Christ” is a great title, is it not? I am wondering if “the love of the Christ” embraces almost a greater area. The personal love of Christ is known here, but also in relation to His great offices.

AM That is what I wondered. Do you think the distinction was right to make?

RDP I am asking.

AM It is just the way it seemed to me. Think of all that “the love of the Christ” secured for God, and it all takes character from Christ. “To know the love of the Christ”; whatever you look at, whatever aspect you take account of of what is secured for God has that stamp upon it. Do you agree with that?

RDP I was just wondering that. It is the same Person, of course, but “the Christ” is a very expansive and extensive title, is it not? This is a subject so great that Paul has to break off from ministry to pray, and he

is envisaging the saints strengthened by the Father's Spirit that they might "know the love of the Christ". It seemed to me to be a very great thought that it is Christ not now so much in relation to His personal love - that would always be there - but in relation to the great area of things over which He presides. I am asking.

AM That is the impression I have. If as you suggest someone like Paul might say, 'I cannot minister this', then we are in deep waters, are we not? We have to be careful, but it seems to me that "the love of the Christ" embraces the whole sphere that has been secured for the pleasure of God, and there is One who is at the centre of it, giving character to it. It is all for God's pleasure.

NJH Did Paul's prayers in Ephesians therefore bring him into this sphere of divine affection? He evidently felt the need of it. In a certain sense, it goes beyond the ministry by itself, but he is brought into that area of divine affection.

AM That is right. The prayer in chapter 2 is that we should understand our status, that we should come into the knowledge of that. Again that seems as if Paul is saying, 'There is only one way; I cannot tell you about this; I can pray'. But in chapter 3 it is actual experience: "to know the love of the Christ".

QAP It says, "who is the head, the Christ"; "the Christ" is the anointed Head of a whole vast system for the pleasure of God.

AM Yes, that is right: He is. There is the title that applies to the Lord Jesus personally, His title Lord Jesus Christ, but "the Christ" is wider. The whole tabernacle system was a figure of "the Christ". I think I am right in saying that. It is everything of which He is the Centre personally.

RG Would you say something more, please, about the distinction you are making as to "the love of the Christ" being active, but apart from need?

AM Well, we think of divine love acting towards us: "God commends *his* love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us", Rom 5: 8. Divine love has acted in compassion: "God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love wherewith he loved us", Eph 2: 4. Now, He secured us on that basis, but then love does not cease. He has secured us in order that we might come into the full enjoyment of His love and He should have a sphere of love in which He can rest, a sphere where there is no need. What would you say?

RG I am enquiring. The verse that has come into my mind speaks of the gold fitted on the wood, 1 Kings 6: 35. There was not exactly a requirement in that sense; the wood was perfect and complete, but gold was fitted. Do you think divine love in its activities, apart from need, would bring out something of the ornamental side of things?

AM I think that is good. As experiencing divine love in this way, apart from how it relates to us with all our need, we really are experiencing what is most profound, are we not, in the presence of God Himself, to know Him in His own presence?

RG So really that would lead on to what we speak of as worship. That is, I am not now thinking at all of myself or my nature; they have all been met, but I am enjoying the sense of being loved by Someone who is in a restful condition.

AM That is good. I am glad you refer to worship because it is total absorption with the object.

DMC You spoke over the weekend about God's need. Do you think the effect of Christ's love operating in the saints has found an answer to what God needs and what God delights in?

AM In the satisfaction of His own heart; I think that is the object of it all. God is working to that end, is He not? Why does the gospel go out? In order that God's heart should be satisfied, should be filled.

KW Is what you are bringing before us about knowing the love of Christ in His circumstances something precious? I was thinking how we have been taught that in the Song of Songs the first chapter, up to perhaps verse 7 of the second chapter, is His circumstances, knowing His love in His circumstances. There is something precious about that. In chapter 1 there is that wonderful verse: "We will remember thy love more than wine", v 4. The love of Christ is so precious, more precious than anything natural, but it is something that we can touch as we enter into His circumstances, into a realm we touched this morning. There is something precious about that word.

AM That is very good. I was thinking about the earlier part of chapter 2:

He hath brought me to the house of wine,
And his banner over me is love, v 4.

It seems to me that that is a restful sphere, His own circumstances. The banner is there; in that sense it is a rallying point. The banner might be

seen in a military setting, but the banner there is in a scene of rest, a scene of enjoyment, and it is for His own enjoyment.

PAG Is there a connection between “the Christ” dwelling, “through faith, in your hearts” and knowing “the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge”? “The Christ” dwelling “through faith, in your hearts” must be now because faith will not apply in eternity; but does “the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge not bring us into the sphere of what is eternal?”

AM I think so. It does not exclude what is now, but I think that will be our eternal portion, “to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge”. Ephesians 3 takes you to a sphere which gives you the full extent of divine thoughts, “the breadth and length and depth and height”. What is it: “breadth and length and depth and height”? Well, it is all filled with “the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge”. We, in our conditions, are so limited, and we will always be limited, and yet there is that which is infinite in “the love of the Christ”, and we are brought to know it. The illustration has often been used of the basket in the ocean, JT vol 55 p164.

PAG As we respond to the Lord's word, “Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away!”, we move away from time. We move away from the scene of the earth by faith, and we move into what is eternal.

AM So the Lord comes in. We have come together in physical circumstances. The young people have probably heard us say many times that we break bread in the wilderness; quite simply, we break bread in the circumstances in which we are. We turn up, and we meet one another, and see one another as we are, and there is a testimonial aspect to the breaking of bread; we are there. But the Lord comes. You get a touch in your soul and you say, 'That is the Lord', and immediately in your spirit you are transported, and we respond to Him personally, to His personal love as His brethren and as His bride. We respond to Him personally. But He says, 'There is more. There is movement onwards and upwards'.

RH So He comes to us with alacrity, and it behoves us too to be responsive in an alacritous way, that we might move with Him into this sphere of which He is the Son and Centre.

AM I think this passage in Song of Songs shows the energy of love:

Leaping upon the mountains,
Skipping upon the hills.

It is the energy of love. Just to be clear, we apply the Song of Songs to the relations of Christ and the assembly, but the Song of Songs actually, in its teaching, relates to Israel, and you will see if you read through the book, the bride is conscious of deficiency most of the way through, and the bridegroom is reassuring her of his love. The book really shows us how Israel will be won. But we apply it to the assembly, and Christ coming in with all the energy of affection. In the next chapter she has been lethargic. She says,

On my bed, in the nights,
I sought him” (chap 3: 1),

and He was not there. Well, you do not find Him in such circumstances. He is coming in with energy and, He is looking for alacrity on our part.

RH He comes a little later on. He says, “I am come into my garden” (chap 5: 1), “a garden enclosed”, chap 4: 12.

AM That is very precious.

RDP I was just thinking about this question of movement. The first chapter of the Song is His circumstances. He is moving into His circumstances. There is a certain felt lack:

Mine own vineyard have I not kept.
Tell me, thou whom my soul loveth,
Where thou feedest thy flock (v 6, 7);

and

Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, v 8.

There is a movement into His circumstances. I was thinking of what our brother said, that this is not just something that happens casually; it involves moving into the circumstances where He is to know the fulness of this, and from then on it seems the experience of the love of the Christ is continual movement.

AM That is good. He comes to us in order that we should move into His circumstances; that has marked divine ways all along. He has come to us in the gospel. He comes to us at the Supper in order that we should be brought into His circumstances, and there should be a movement Godward. Think of what is in His heart!

DCB Chapter 4 brings in, “Come, look from the top of Amanah”. That is 'firmness' or 'constancy' (see note 'a'). Is it coming to look with Him from the mountains?

AM Say some more about the 'firmness' and 'constancy'.

DCB Well, you are taken entirely out of this sphere that is characteristic of us, which lacks 'firmness' and 'constancy', to be in His environment, and to see what is firmly in the purpose of God.

AM Yes, and if we want to find constancy, we find it in His love:

Living and ever precious is Thy love!

It never fails.

PM There are two references, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away", one in verse 10, and then in verse 13, "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away!" I was wondering why there are two steps, if you like. One seems to relate to what is outward: "For behold, the winter is past". We have been speaking about the cross and the effect of it. I wondered if we are to take account of that first, and then the next section, verses 14 and 15, really is more personal and intimate, do you think?

AM I think that is very good. There is what is past; there is what is finished:

For behold, the winter is past,
The rain is over, it is gone;
The flowers appear on the earth.

There is that which can be taken account of. Certain exercises have been gone through, and there are results from them. But then He says He wants to be occupied with herself: "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice". That is a really personal and intimate matter. Say some more.

PM He is interested in her, in her love: "Rise up, my love". You have something that only you have. Nobody else has it in that sense. He is not giving up. He is releasing her from her circumstances just to be for Him, "in the covert of the precipice". It seems to me that it is an isolated, or a more insulated, area that He desires her to come into.

AM That is good, and that is His own sphere. He is looking for her affections and her joy to be in Him. I have often been struck with a statement that was made in a letter. Lady Powerscourt wrote dozens of letters, and in one of these letters she said, 'Love will never be satisfied unless it is confident that its object is satisfied'. Now, when you think about that, the Lord's love is constantly active. He is looking for our

satisfaction to be in Him, for our occupation to be Himself alone.

NCMcK Is it helpful, therefore, especially for the younger ones, to see that this love is known and experienced in definite relationships, which are eternal? They are relationships which came from purpose and belong to eternity, and therefore their love is beyond; indeed, as we have said, it belongs to divine purpose, and therefore we are in a fixed relationship in regard to that. It is a very stable thing.

AM It is. Tell us some more about the relationship.

NCMcK Just what you have been saying about the thought of movement. It is known largely through what we know as being the brethren of Christ. These relationships are for the pleasure of divine Persons. Then the assembly, the bride of Christ, what *she* is to Christ, and then our link with the Spirit and the Spirit's service in that way, and then sonship in the Father's presence. The service moves and it moves in relationships of love which is according to divine purpose.

AM That is very helpful. The Supper and what follows is an extraordinary time, because we enter joyfully into what is for divine Persons. Each phase, if we may speak about phases, flows. We want to be careful not to have rigid definitions of how we behave in the service, but it flows from one glory to another, and each glory is for the pleasure of divine Persons, and each one relates to what was in God's thoughts before time was.

CS The word here is,
,,, let me hear thy voice;
For sweet is thy voice.

There is a response to that love that the Lord appreciates. We had remarkable contributions this morning from quite young persons, and if that is special for us, it is special for Him.

AM Yes, it is. That is what was in my mind. He is looking to get this response and He loves to see the countenance:

Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice.

It is what He sees and what He hears. The Lord is a Man - and I speak very carefully and respectfully, but man has senses. He can hear; he can see; he can taste; he can detect fragrance. Think of what the Lord has from the assembly, each sense, speaking carefully, finding its answer in the assembly. Sometimes we sing

All that delights thy taste
Doth here abound. (Hymn 361)

The voice is peculiar because that is so personal.

NJH I was just thinking of what has been said. Predestination is for Christ first and then for us: “that he should be the firstborn among many brethren”, Rom 8: 29. In one sense He entered in immediately as having “been raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father”, Rom 6: 4. That whole area of love now opens up to us in these relationships.

AM That is right, and these relationships are entered into on resurrection and ascension grounds. That has to be. You commented this morning that love was involved in the resurrection, “the glory of the Father” involving His love, and it provides a basis on which these wonderful relationships should be known.

WMP What is your impression then of this expression “being rooted and founded in love”? Does that imply that if that is the kind of rootstock, if I might use that word, then the whole matter is to be permeated with love?

AM It seems to be. “Being rooted” includes also the thought of drawing resource, and really all our springs are in divine love. “Founded” is stability. There is that which is stable in divine love, “rooted and founded in love”. Love is permeating the whole thing, is it not?

RT That seems to spring from the Spirit in this chapter.

AM Help us about that.

RT Scripture just says that: “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”. God is love. It is always there. Mr Darby says:

If clouds have dimmed my sight,
When passed, eternal Lover,
Towards me, as e'er, Thou'rt bright. (Hymn 51)

That is the effect of the Spirit being in us and with us.

AM That is very good. The Holy Spirit in the believer is providing substance in love. We speak of the Holy Spirit as power and that is right in His many services, but God is love, and the Holy Spirit is here.

RT Jude, in a broken day, says, “keep yourselves in the love of God”, v 21. It is always there. That is by the Spirit to bring us into the enjoyment; it is always there.

AM Yes; that is good. As you say, Jude says that in a broken day, and John records at the end, in the last of all the Scriptures to be written, that the Lord Jesus said, “abide in my love”, John 15: 9.

RT It is not only in the meetings this happens. It is the life of the saint that God has revealed Himself in a Man, and has come so near to us to meet our guilt and to bring us into the enjoyment of His constant love.

AM Yes, that is very fine, and to know it in His presence!

GBG “Strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man” that would be “that the Christ may dwell, through faith”. We each have an “inner man”; so we each know this, but the end of man is the same in each one.

AM Say some more about “the inner man”.

GBG Well, we each have an “inner man”. There is no difference, so we each know this inwardly by the Spirit, but the “inner man” is the same in each of us. Therefore we move together in this.

AM Do you mean it is the product of divine work, “in the inner man”? I like that thought that we move together. There is what we can experience at any time. There is what we can experience as going into the service of God as we did this morning. These things should colour us, but there is a consistency about it all.

RH Are the service of God and the gospel inextricably linked? The preaching really has in view that these precious things that have been rehearsed amongst us this afternoon should be entered into.

AM The preaching is in view of the service of God.

BWL I was wondering if you could say something about union. The Lord comes in, and we recognise His presence, but then, as united to Him, we move with Him. Could you maybe say something as to that?

AM Well, I think what you say is something very important, that we are united to Him. You can say that as a statement of fact: we are united to Him. Now we enter into relationship with Christ in the service as His bride. The assembly is united to Him as His bride, but we move forward as united to Him. We have a hymn addressed to the Father that brings

in the thought of union:

Here Christ and the assembly
Are seen in radiance bright
Man in Thine own blest image,
For ever Thy delight.

His love, though passing knowledge,
For her, His spouse so fair,
Is known as we in union
With Him in glory share.

(Hymn 441)

We move in union, but we never cease to be His brethren, and as we go into the Father's presence we are the Father's sons, but it is all a united company, is it not, all one with Christ? What do you say?

BWL That is helpful. Does it lead on to “glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus”?

AM Yes, indeed. So it is the same personnel: the Lord's brethren are the sons of the Father; the assembly, the bride, united to Christ, is the assembly in which there is glory to God; and that is what this leads up to. Paul is taking account of the wonder of divine love and his heart breaks out in this doxology: “to him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages”.

NCMcK I was wondering, is that what you understand that “the assembly in Christ Jesus” involves union?

AM Yes. Is that right? I would like some help. It has been stated in the ministry that union is one of the least understood things among us (JT vol 37: p531). I think “the assembly in Christ Jesus” must involve union. It is Christ and the assembly and there is glory to God in this wonderful concept: not only a concept but the realisation of it.

GAB Does it help to get these things into perspective that we are in conditions of time now? So we have to view them one perhaps after another. Eternally that will not be so.

AM “Now I know partially”; we have to learn things in parts because our minds can only contain a part at a time; so you have, for example, the kingdom and the new covenant and reconciliation and eternal life. Mr Raven took these up as separate subjects (vol 12 p390), but then Paul says, “then I shall know according as I also have been known” (1 Cor 13: 12), and that is that you see that the whole divine system of operations, and all that has been done, and all that has been secured,

is one great entity, and it is all for the glory of God.

NJH We could not touch the highest thoughts without union.

AM Say some more about that.

NJH It is so essential. If we do not experience something of union with Christ, we can hardly proceed further.

AM No, we could not. If we do touch them, we touch God's rest. We had very much a sense this morning of God's rest: "he will rest in his love". That is, to me, He has secured a scene through His love, which is characterised by His love and which is responsive to His love, and that whole is a scene in which eternally He will rest.

PJW Is that all contained in Paul's expression, "the full knowledge of the mystery of God"? I was thinking of what you said about knowing in part, and then knowing as we are known; would it be right to say that "the full knowledge of the mystery of God" contains everything that God has ever conceived in purpose to bring about?

AM That is Colossians?

PJW Yes, chapter 2: "to the end that their hearts may be encouraged, being united together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the full knowledge of the mystery of God; in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge", Col 2: 2, 3.

AM Yes, that really suggests bringing together everything. All divine ways, all divine work, have been brought together there, and it will be seen as a complete thing with no adjustments or anything like that needed. It is one complete and glorious thing that will be manifested in the eternal day.

Glasgow

16th August 2015

List of Initials:

D C Brown, Edinburgh; G A Brown, Grangemouth; T J Campbell, Glasgow; D M Crozier, Warrenpoint; G B Grant, Dundee; P A Gray, Grangemouth; R Gray, Grangemouth; N J Henry, Glasgow; R Hodge, St Ives; B W Lovie, Aberdeen; A Martin, Buckhurst Hill; N C McKay, Glasgow; P Metcalfe, Glasgow; W M Patterson, Glasgow; R D Plant, Birmingham; Q A Poore, Swanage; C Seeley, Glasgow; R Taylor, Kirkcaldy; K Walker, Dundee; P J Walkinshaw, Strood

“YE ARE”

Phil Brien

Ephesians 2: 1-22

1 Corinthians 3: 1-23

1 Peter 2: 1-9

Two words in these passages of scripture have captured my attention: “ye are”. The passages are very rich in what is indicated by “ye are”. I counted them. There are about seventeen, possibly more, and there are many other scriptures that may be referred to where the two words “ye are” are used. I read the whole of these passages because I find it helpful to see that “the word of God is living and operative, and sharper than any two-edged sword”, Heb 4: 12. It has a penetrating, living operation. I read the context of these scriptures because my eye cast through other parts beyond just the two words, “ye are”. I am sure the brethren will bear with me in the lengthy reading, so that these passages may speak to a person's heart.

A scripture was read in Calgary in Luke 9 where it says of the Lord, “*he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers before his face. And having gone they entered into a village of the Samaritans that they might make ready for him. And they did not receive him*”, v 51-53. He was turned away. The disciples were quite indignant about this. The Lord had a right to go into that village; He had a right to speak to people and He was rejected. The disciples were thinking for the Lord's sake that this was bad, and they said, “*Lord, wilt thou that we speak that fire come down from heaven and consume them*”, v 54. The Lord rebukes them and says, “*Ye know not of what spirit ye are*”. The brother was speaking primarily about the Lord stedfastly going on to Jerusalem; he had not read, “*ye know not what spirit ye are*”, but that is what caught my attention.

There are times when the Lord rebukes us. The Lord rebukes the disciples and it is uncomfortable. “*I rebuke and discipline as many as I love*”, Rev 3: 19. Undoubtedly we can see from Scripture that the Lord loved the disciples, and He loved those disciples that He rebuked, the “*Sons of thunder*”, Mark 3: 17. The Lord loves us, and we are very thankful for that. We are to accept that the Lord may rebuke us from time to time; it is because He loves us and He wants to adjust us to something better.

That is a passing thought that I wanted to preface my word with

of what spirit are we?

What has captured my attention in these passages is these words, “ye are”. These disciples in Luke 9 wanted to *do* something. They wanted to bring down fire from heaven to consume the opposers and cause some kind of retribution. It is our tendency to want to do something; and it is good to do things. Scripture teaches us that we need to do things: for example, “love one another; as I have loved you”, John 13: 34. I find it interesting to look through any scriptures for the active verb. If you look in the Scriptures for the active verb in a sentence, it is often an imperative to do something: “love one another; as I have loved you”; “this do in remembrance of me”, Luke 22: 19. These are actionable things that Scripture teaches us. “Strive earnestly” (1 Tim 6: 12); “keep the entrusted deposit” (1 Tim 6: 20) are other examples: these are things that need to be done. As these disciples were going into that village, they wanted to do something; it is our natural tendency to want to do something, but I find that there are often times when to do something is the question on our minds: what do we do? There are times when issues and situations may be complex, what do we do? In the Old Testament it gives an active verb that does not sound very active but it says, “wait”, “wait on Jehovah”, Prov 20: 22. It has captured my attention because it is an action word, “wait on Jehovah”. That is a good thing to do, especially as led by the Spirit. There are times when circumstances feel a bit overwhelming. There is a sense that we have to do something; it can be overwhelming when you just do not know what to do. Situations are presented where you will get criticised if you do this thing; you will get criticised if you do that thing. It becomes overwhelming. It is a matter for me, I have found, just to step back a little and, rather than thinking of *what to do*, is to think of *what “ye are”* - “ye know not what spirit ye are”. What is it that you are?

I was interested that what God *does* is what *He is*; it comes from what He is. It is trying to have to contrast what to do and what we are. It struck me that what we are then becomes what we do. What is it that the scripture says that we are? These passages are rich in things that “ye are”. It is also often put in the Scripture as, “we are”; a similar thought. I see some of the characteristics coming out of this “ye are” and “we are” as collective thoughts. The words imply what we are individually, but also indicate what we are collectively. There is a collective component to this whole list of things that “ye are”.

Paul says here, “ye are saved by grace”; “we are his workmanship”; “ye who once were afar off are become nigh by the

blood of the Christ”; “ye are no longer strangers and foreigners, but ye are fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God”; “ye also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit”. Here is a negative one: “ye are yet carnal”; more positive: “we are God's fellow-workmen; ye are God's husbandry, God's building”; “ye are the temple of God”; “the temple of God is holy, and such are ye”; “ye are Christ's”; “ye are a chosen race, a kingly priesthood, a people for a possession”.

When I read through all of that it just really struck me how rich it is for a believer, that what we are is to be viewed from the divine side. If we reflect on that and contemplate that it will ultimately shape and form what we do. I am not going to focus on what we do but simply on what “ye are”.

The characteristics of what we are can be summarised in three groups: what we are from a divine position, what we are from a possession standpoint, and then what we are from a purpose perspective; position, possession and purpose. You can look at the matter from those different characteristics; they are interwoven. Ephesians 2 highlights in my mind what “ye are” from a position standpoint. In verse 8, “For ye are saved by grace, through faith; and this not of yourselves; it is God's gift”; in verse 13, “but now in Christ Jesus ye who once were afar off are become nigh by the blood of the Christ”. How wonderful that is, the position we are in from a divine standpoint; it is nothing of ourselves but it is all of God, all of Christ. That position is one of nearness, “ye ... are become nigh”. “Ye ... are become nigh by the blood of the Christ”. If you reduce that to what our position is - nothing of ourselves - it is that we are near to God. From God's side we are near to Him because of the blood of Christ. That is our position: ye are near.

It struck me that all of these passages, written by the apostle Paul and the apostle Peter - Ephesians, Corinthians, 1 Peter and 2 Peter - are written to believers, they are written to Christians, they are written to followers of Jesus. I make the assumption that I am speaking to Christians, believers, followers of Jesus. That is an assumption, because I do not know everybody's heart in this room. I am thankful that God does because these scriptures are written to confirm us in the Christian way, to give glory to God. It would be a shame if there is someone in this room who does not know that nearness to God because they have not trusted in the blood of Christ. Now is the opportunity to know that Jesus died for you, He shed His blood for you, and you can trust Him. As a result, your position before God is in

nearness.

I say these things because we live in a culture, especially I have noticed in this area here, that I would characterise, in a general way as a Christian culture. In Calgary it is not so much that way. Canada was once considered a Christian country but it is now considered a 'post-Christian' country. It considers itself a pluralistic country. There are a lot of different thoughts, persuasions, and so; oftentimes, we live in a culture in which we interact with things that are not according to God, and are not near God at all. It could be that as we are growing up - especially the young ones here - you come into situations where you are brought up against things that are not Christian at all. I can thankfully say, as looking around all the young people here, that I believe all have been brought up in Christian households and environments. That is a very blessed thing but you need to own your own relationship with the Lord, and accept what work He has done for you personally, if you are to come into these blessings and know that nearness, the nearness that God has in mind. It is very important that you have your personal links with the Lord Jesus, and that you accept that you "are saved by grace, through faith, and this not of yourselves; it is God's gift"; how wonderful a gift it is. I trust that each person has accepted that gift and values it, and understands that their position before God is one of nearness as we have here - "ye who once were afar off are become nigh by the blood of the Christ". It is our position before God; ye are near.

In 1 Corinthians we have this idea of "ye are" - both as a characteristic of a position and a possession. It is all interwoven - position, possession and purpose. In 1 Corinthians 3, we have what really caught my attention, "ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's"; this sense of belonging, of ownership. We have been speaking about what is owned. There is a claim; "ye are Christ's" implies you are owned by Him, you are His, and you belong to Him. It is collective again; ye are, we are. It is nothing that we can claim in the sense of something from our side; it is all from God's side and we accept that and enjoy that. This possession; "ye are Christ's": what a possession to think that Christ values His saints so much that we belong to Him. He has given everything to get that possession. How valuable that is. How much we should appreciate it, and I am sure each person in this room does. How wonderful it is to be a possession, "ye are Christ's". As you contemplate it and let it enter into your soul, how it would affect us and shape us and it would cause us to give glory to God to be thankful to

Jesus. I hope that is the case with each one of us.

When we come to 1 Peter, I cannot say a lot about this, but I would rely on the Spirit of God to have the words, a scripture and the Spirit's actions in our hearts and in our consciences, to have us respond to such wealth and richness. It is what we are from a divine standpoint. In 1 Peter 2 we can see the idea of “ye are” as a position, and we can see things from a possession standpoint: “ye are a chosen race, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession”. But from here it really points to what our purpose is: “that ye might set forth the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness to his wonderful light”. It is a purpose which is collective: “ye are”. There is a purpose that we might show forth these great excellencies that God has bestowed, that He has allowed us into. He has laid claim to us, has given us a possession, that we “might set forth the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness to His wonderful light”, so that we might have our part in being a testimony to the God who has given so much in Jesus.

We have that little phrase in Ruth too, “Ye are” there - “Ye are witnesses”, Ruth 4: 9. It was addressed to the elders of the city, but later it says, “We are witnesses”; it was about the people also witnessing these great thoughts of redemption and what has been purchased. It becomes a testimony, a great testimony, “that ye might set forth the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness to his wonderful light”. In this position of nearness, in being a possession, a divine possession, it is so that we might be by purpose a testimony to His great light.

These are the simple thoughts about these wonderful passages of scripture. I read a lot, but it is simply the words, “ye are”, and that great list, that captured my attention. It is a great exercise to work through and see what other scriptures point out that “ye are”. It is not what we do, although there are many scriptures that say what we need to do and should do, but the emphasis is more on what “ye are”. It is a very blessed thing, for our encouragement and confirmation. The Christian way would be to give glory to God, from what “ye are”.

Wheaton

27th November 2015

THE WILL OF GOD

Terry W Lock

Acts 13: 22

Ephesians 1: 1-11

Romans 12: 1-2

It will be evident from the scriptures we have read that I desire to say a word in relation to the will of God. The will of God brings about everything that will ever be for the heart of God in a coming day, and those things are being formed now, on the earth, in persons. We sometimes think that the will of God is an onerous thing and a hard thing, but it is only onerous and hard if we step outside it. The will of God is the means by which God brings into effect the purposes of His love. It is a most remarkable thing to take account of the purposes of God, but you must see it first in Christ.

I therefore thought we should start in the book of the Acts. Prior to where we read, Paul was going over the history of the people of Israel to the persons in Antioch, speaking of the things they had done and proposed, until he arrives at the point where we began to read: "And having removed him". That was Saul, son of Kis. He was the one that the people chose, who was head and shoulders above everybody else in Israel. They wanted a ruler; perhaps they thought that if they had a ruler, they would carry on and be able to fulfil the will of God; but God removed him. After it was proved that Saul, son of Kis, was beneath the dignity of the people of God, He removed him. Then Paul then goes on to say, "he raised up to them David for king, of whom also bearing witness he said, I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who shall do all my will". Paul does not say that the Lord said only, 'I have found David who shall do all my will'. It is most important that he puts in there "after my heart". So you can understand by that that the love of God is brought into effect, and the purposes of that heart are brought into effect, by the will of God. "I have found ... a man, after my heart, who shall do all my will". What a thing it was for the heart of God to see one such as David come on the scene. If you follow David's history, you can see how God led him, and you can even see in his failures and subsequently his recoveries how David arrives at the will of God. But here Paul was speaking about the purposes of God, what He was going to work out for Himself by the man of His choice. It looked on to Christ. So it is quite a thing to think that God had a Man, who was

“after my heart”, and what a wonderful feeling it must have been for God to find Someone here like that. He had in mind, in working out His will by this blessed Man, that there would be many more men formed in heart to carry out the will of God.

I thought we would read that to begin with, but the primary scripture that I had in mind was in Ephesians. Ephesians is a wonderful book. The scope of the things in the purpose of God, and the elevation in which God holds things, maintains things and recovers things, are all found in Ephesians. But the first three chapters in Ephesians, as the brethren will well know, are what God does of Himself, for Himself, by Himself. So Paul starts here as the apostle, but he writes to them that he is an apostle by God's will. This is not just anybody speaking. This is one speaking on God's behalf according to God's will, in relation to the persons that were there at Ephesus, to make them see what God intended them to be. We can follow through the history of Ephesus and see where they fell down from this; but it is a wonderful thing that the will of God does not act according to the failures of men, but according to the purposes of his heart. The will of God is not reactive, but rather works according to His own purpose in relation to bringing about what satisfies His heart.

So, did it affect the will of God when sin came in? No. Did it affect the purposes of God? No. God had it all in the Man of His choice; it was already there. As it says in relation to Adam in Romans, “who is the figure of him to come”, chap 5: 14. Who was that? That was Christ. He was going to work out His will in the Man of His choice, and He was going to show men that, up until the time of Christ, there was no one able to carry out the will of God in completeness. So he says here, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ; according as he has chosen us in him before the world's foundation, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love”. That is the character of the persons that are according to Christ. Now, beloved brethren, in all of these things we must be sure that, yes, we can see this in Christ but, when we take account of the greatness and the excellency of the descriptive language in Ephesians 1, it should raise exercise in us to see the glory of what God has in mind according to His will in us. You can never work up to anything, nor can you ever maintain anything unless you have the object first. That is why the Spirit presents things as He does in Ephesians. He presents God's Man first.

What a thing it is that God, “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”, has given us this view of His Man and the operations of His will, by this Man, to bring us into conformity to that Man.

So Paul says here, “he has chosen us in him before the world’s foundation, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love; having marked us out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.” That brings in the heart of God. It brings into effect the things that God chose to do because they were pleasing to Him. What a thing it is to think that you and I can be pleasing to God, satisfying to His heart. What a thing that is: through the operations of God, and because of the way in which He has operated according to His will, He is able to bring about *in us* something suitable to Himself, and He brings us *to Himself*, as the scripture says, “for adoption through Jesus Christ to himself”. That is much greater than what it is just to be saved, because here are persons formed according to the purpose of God. The eternal day will be filled with saved persons. That is absolutely right, but it will be filled, it will be inhabited, and it will be responsive, by persons who are characteristically like Christ. That is what the will of God does.

So He brings us to Himself. How could you get there unless you were like Christ? If you are ever to understand what is pleasing to God you must see it in Christ, and to understand your place you must see it in Christ. You must see what Christ is to God to ever understand the fulfilling of the purposes of love according to the will of God. You must see what Christ is to God, for the sake of God’s heart. You will never understand the greatness and the scope of what God has in His mind if you do not see what Christ is for God.

So we go through then, “to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has taken us into favour in the Beloved”. This is a description from God, by the Spirit, a description which God gives of Christ because of the fulfilling of His will. It is the character of the Person. What a wonderful thing that is that God gives us that view - His Beloved. He has taken us into favour in the Beloved. The note there is very interesting. It is not just that He was the One by whom God did things. It is not, also, just a place, but it is “in the Beloved”. It is the character of the bringing to God. It is the character of the persons who are brought there and the manner in which it has been done. What a thing it is that God would bring us to Himself, in the Beloved, the One whom He chose to mark out with such a title.

Well, this was David's title. That is what his name means: "in the Beloved" brings into view the One who carried out the will of God, who had operated according to the heart of God. So "he has taken us into favour in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of offences, according to the riches of his grace". There will never, ever be anything in the presence of God that is contrary to Himself. So the offences had to go. But sometimes we tend to settle down, thinking that if God has saved us that is enough. It is not enough for the heart of God, and it is a paltry answer to such a will and such a love that we should think that all we had to do was carry on in a world down here, beneath the dignity of what the Beloved is. God never had that in mind. The will of God would raise the saints according to the glory of His grace. Grace does far more than meet your need, friend. Grace raises you to the level that God intended you to be according to the purpose of His love and the actions of His will. That is what grace does. We sometimes think that grace is something that just meets a bad state. No, wrong! That is not glory! The glory of the grace of God raises you to the level that God showed in Christ, the One He calls His Beloved. That is what grace does. Anything beneath that dignity is beneath the dignity of the purpose and will of God.

So Paul goes on, "according to the riches of his grace; which he has caused to abound towards us in all wisdom and intelligence". There is one thing to be said in relation to the will of God and its operations: the manner of the doing is to make us intelligent persons, not intellectual persons. You will never arrive at the will of God by study. You will arrive at the will of God by spiritual intelligence, but it takes contemplation of Christ to arrive at the intelligence of the will of God. It is formative. Intelligence is something you get by the hand of God and it comes by revelation. It comes by what God does Himself in choosing to make things formative in you. Take account of the operations of God; take account of what He has done. If you want to understand the will of God, take account of what He has done - by Christ and in Christ. "Having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself." Men in the world do not understand that the will of God is towards them and would raise them to the level of what Christ is to God. Do we understand that? Do we understand the operations of the will of God? When something comes along that is contrary to what you like, or when something comes along that is contrary to what you want, do you think you must have done something wrong? We should not think like that. What God does in

making this mystery known is to change the persons. We said at the beginning that there are times when we may find the will of God an onerous thing. But it is an onerous thing if we do not understand that it was bringing about the purposes of His love. And if there is anything that is beneath that, or anything that is outside of that, anything that is not at that level, God allows circumstance to change the persons so that they come into conformity to His Beloved. He does that and it is the exercise of His will.

Now that is sometimes a very difficult and hard thing to understand. We have a brother local with us who says we do not always understand the ways of God, and we do not. We do not always understand those ways, the way He works out things according to His will, but what a most blessed thing it is to understand the God whose ways they are; to understand the God whose will it is, who fulfils the purposes of His love. So, He has “made known to us the mystery of his will”, things that have been hidden all through the ages. We can see, for instance, Noah’s pleading with men, Enoch walking with God. These are things that you can see, as the Lord said in Luke’s gospel, “having begun from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them ...the things concerning himself”, chap 24: 44. All of that is in relation to the will of God. What a wonderful thing it is to take account of what that will was. Did the will of God mean that all He was going to do was to relieve men? No. The will of God is that He, God, would have persons for Himself eternally, characteristically like Christ.

So, He has “made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself for the administration of the fulness of times; to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth.” The day will come when the culmination of the will of God will be seen in all its grandeur, when Christ comes out and every knee bows to Him and everyone recognises that the will of God was carried out by Him, and that He is the Man of God’s choice.

It tells us in the Old Testament of the people of Israel, and you might think how badly they failed - I am using this as an analogy. Some would say that the people of Israel are not the same as us, but I want to show in the people of Israel how the will of God comes into effect. If you read through the Old Testament - and you can read through all the things that the people of Israel and how far away they got from God; you can read all that happened at the time when Solomon began to fail after

David at the end of his life - and it gets worse, and it gets worse, and it gets worse. And you may ask how this is ever going to work out according to the will of God? Then you come to a point in the Old Testament where it says in the prophets, "and they shall look on me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him," Zech 12: 10. What is that? That is God bringing the people that He purposed for Himself, bringing them into accord with Himself and His Beloved, and He does it by His own will. When they look on Him whom they pierced and wail because of Him, that is because the operations of the will of God have brought into effect repentance in the people of Israel, to acknowledge that the Man of God's choice was their Messiah whom they crucified. That is the will of God.

Now God is working on the same line with us. What a thing it is that God gives us the ability - and not just the ability, He gives us the intelligence and the spirituality, to be able to see the Man of His choice, enthroned in glory, waiting to come amidst His holy myriads to the very scene in which He was rejected, so that all men should recognise the Man of His choice, and what He has done in Him and by Him. He gives us that, but do we know that?

So then we go on here, "to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth; in him, in whom we have also obtained an inheritance, being marked out beforehand according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his own will". The counsel of God's will is a remarkable thing to take thought of. The counsel of God's will is the manner of the working. It is how the will was going to be brought about. In Hebrews it says, "Lo, I come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do, O God, thy will", chap 10: 7. That is counsel. Prior to that reference, "Lo, I come to do thy will O my God" is what Christ is for the heart of God, but when He says, "Lo, I come (in the roll of the book it is written of me)", that is counsel. That was how God chose to operate. You have both of those things there in Hebrews. You have not only the Man who did it but you have the operations of God in relation to that Man and how He would do it.

So we have in Hebrews as well, "by which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all", chap 10: 10. That is the 'how'. That was according to the counsels of God. You look at the Old Testament in relation to Joseph, and what he was in relation to God. Was he the one that was to rule? Yes. Was he

the one that was going to, to push the peoples together, Deut 33: 17? He was going to gather them all. His name means, 'he will add', Gen 30: 24. All those things were there in Joseph, in purpose, according to the will of God. His brethren delivered him up, went back to their father, treated him as dead. He spent thirteen years in captivity. You might wonder how any of this was according to the will of God but then he is raised up. That is according to the will of God. That is the will of God operating in relation to the purposes of His love. Before that, he had had a dream as to what he was going to be: "my sheaf rose up, and remained standing; and, behold, your sheaves came round about and bowed down to my sheaf", Gen 37: 7. Then "the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowed down to me", v 8. How great are the purposes of God according to Christ. Did his brethren understand this? No. That did not stop God. Joseph spent thirteen years in captivity, and he comes out the other side of that, and he becomes a leader indeed in relation to Pharaoh and all that was under Pharaoh's hand; the whole administration of Pharaoh under his hand, chap 41. Well, that is like where we read a little earlier on in Ephesians. But then what follows? Joseph makes himself known to his brethren, and what does he say? "God sent me before you to preserve life", Gen 45: 5. That was the will of God active according to the purposes of the heart of God. And then Joseph says, "to save a great people alive", chap 50: 20. That was according to the purposes of the heart of God as well, His will operating in relation to that. You ask how that could be so. Joseph was special. It says in relation to Joseph - and it is figurative of what the Father sees in Christ - that "Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons", chap 37: 3.

When you begin with the generations of Jacob you begin with Joseph, v 1, 2. He is at the front of everything. Christ is the beginning of everything for God and He gives character to everything for God. What a Man He is! So in order to understand how God has blessed you, you need to know Christ, and you need to know Him not just as He was here upon the earth, and what He did as a work, but you need to know the character of the Person. You see, the work served a purpose; the work served an end. But in eternity you will not be taken up with the work; you will be taken up with the Person who did the work according to the will of God. What do you know of the Person of Christ? What do you know of the Beloved? What do you know of Jesus? What do you know of the One who has done the will of God according to the purposes of His love to bring about for God's sake all the things that were in His heart? What a Man He is; what a Man Christ is!

To think that God had in mind that He would raise persons like you and me and establish us in glory in the Man of His choice! It is a very interesting thing here, and I meant to make reference to this earlier, that it is very important to see in Ephesians that it is not 'by the Beloved' and it is not 'by Christ', it is "*in* the Beloved" and it is "*in* Christ". It is not just an operation of power; it is an attachment of affection. That is how God operates. So He does not just operate according to power to bring you there, but He brings you in the affections of the Father for the Son and establishes you there. What a wonderful thing that is. That is what God does because that is what His will has purposed. What a thing it was for God to sanctify us. What a cost it has been for God to be able to express His purpose and to operate His will. It does us well to take account of that. It does us well to take account of what it has cost God to have His will operate according to His purpose. It is more than we will ever comprehend. We will see the fruition of it, but we will little fathom the cost that lay behind it.

Well, then we come to the other side of this matter. We have spoken of what has been from God's side. We have spoken of the operations of His will according to His purpose. We have spoken of those things and what He has done, what He has established and how He has established it. And it is unshakable; that is another point to understand. It is unshakable because it exists according to the relationship that exists between the Father and the Son, the things that God purposed according to His will exist and can never be altered or changed. In order for them to be altered or changed, the relationship that exists between the Father and the Son would have to be altered or changed.

Well, now we are going to come to Romans 12. And that is a case of being like Christ for God's sake. It says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the compassions of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your intelligent service". We spoke earlier on in relation to intelligence and how it is formative. Well, your intelligent service in relation to what you should be for God, your intelligent service as to what you should be is, "holy, acceptable to God, which is your intelligent service"; intelligence includes that we understand what is due to God. It is not only just what is due to Him, but what is acceptable to Him. And how do you arrive at that? You arrive at that, not by what Christ has done only, but by what Christ is. If you ever want to know if what you are doing is according to

the will of God, if you want to know if what you are doing is acceptable to God, if you want to know that what you are doing is in accord with His will, look at Christ. Look at what He is. Look at the operations that were carried out by Christ for God according to His will. Look at what they are. We hear a great deal in the day in which we live of people saying, 'Well, I am wondering whether it is the will of God'. I would say this, if it is at any point in time ever beneath the dignity of the glory of God, it is not according to the will of God. A most important thing; or we sometimes tend - and I do not mean in any way to lay anything on anybody else, that I have not thought of and have to work out myself - to seek to do the will of God without holding it according to the glory and the dignity of what God is. It will make a huge trauma among the people of God. Now the proof of that was seen in David when he became a king and wanted to return the ark to its place. Was that a right thought? Yes, it was, absolutely. Was he zealous for God? Yes. Was he zealous for the heart of God? Yes. What happened? He was zealous for the heart of God but he forgot about what was due to God, and he made a new cart, and persons went to bring it up that should not have brought it up, persons who were not intelligent in relation to the feelings of God. And so, although what he wanted to do was right, the manner of the doing was wrong, because it was not according to the will of God; and somebody died. That is very, very solemn; so much so that it upset David and the ark went away. Rather than having its rightful place, it went away and was put aside for a time, until it moved the heart of David to proceed according to the order established by God.

Beloved brethren, the will of God not only involves the purposes of His love, it involves the manner of the doing in relation to the purposes of His love. To be intelligent in relation to that you must study *how* Christ operated; not just *what* He did, how He operated, and the character of the Person of Christ. We hear quite often about there being a lack of grace, or an over-insistence on truth; but beloved brethren, when Christ carried out the will of God (and grace and truth subsist through Him), there was never at any point in time anything in the operations of Christ that was beneath the dignity of what God is; and to try and connect grace and truth in Christ in any way that is beneath the dignity of God is not grace and it is not truth. Grace is the operations of God according to glory. Truth is the manifestation of the moral qualities of God in expression in a Man. Those two things go forward in Christ. If at any time there is an operation that is beneath that dignity, it is not an operation according to the will of God.

But here we have, “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your intelligent service.” But then it goes on, “And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Now Peter speaks about this. And we will just turn to it so that we get it right. “Christ, then, having suffered for us in the flesh, do ye also arm yourselves with the same mind; for he that has suffered in the flesh has done with sin, no longer to live the rest of his time in the flesh to men's lusts, but to God's will”, 1 Pet 4: 1-3. If you are seeking to do things according to God's will, and you are exercised in relation to that, the purpose must be God's heart. If you are doing it for a place, or if you are doing it for anything other than what is for the heart of God, you are doing it for the wrong reason, and it will not be according to His will. It is important to understand that. You do not carry out the will of God for any reason other than the heart of God, be it in you or be it in others. So he says, “And be not conformed to this world.” To be not conformed to this world means you must keep yourself separate. It means you must act in a manner that is in accord with the heart of God, the glory of God and the sanctity of what He has made and done for Himself by Christ. So you would not touch things, and you would not go to places, and you would not speak in certain ways, and you would not act in certain ways, that are contrary to that.

But he says, “but be transformed by the renewing your mind.” Now that is a very interesting thing. You will find quite often that persons decide to turn over a new leaf, or that they decide that they are going to set themselves for God, but by reforming what they are. This is not a reformation, brethren; it is a transformation: there is a massive difference. A reformation means that you are going to try and improve on the old thing to make it acceptable to God. You are going to try and take that mind which has been occupied with things that maybe it should not have been, in matters it should not have been, and you are going to try and reform it into something for God: impossible, absolutely impossible. It is transformation that is the necessary thing. If you are going to think for God you need to be transformed according to God as He is manifest in Christ. It must be so. There is no such thing as reformation in persons for God's sake. There is no such thing. “But be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God”. Now, this is where it gets very testing, because the goodness of God's will is what it is in its character. What it is as acceptable is what it is to us when we become subject to it. And what it is as perfect is seen in its results. Have we

proved that the will of God is good? Have we proved that?

Well, to illustrate that we will go to Jacob's life. Jacob in his life started out as understanding by his mother what his lineage was, and understanding what he was to be. When you look at the manner in which he moved, and the things that he did, and the way that he went, and the things that he took up, could you say that was all according to the will of God? No, it was not. Most decidedly it was not. But it is the most interesting thing that, when he was doing things according to the will of God, God helped him, and appeared to him and strengthened him. Now one of the things that comes into Jacob's life is on his way back to Bethel. God did not wrestle with him on his way out to Padan-Aram. God wrestled with him when he was on his way back after Joseph had been born and he was going to Bethel, Gen 32: 24. Now Jacob might say to himself that he was going back and doing all right now; because he was good and it was in his own power. What happens? He wrestles with God, and God touches the joint of his thigh and he limps, v 25, 31. He became despised of men because of his limp, but he was there according to God. He walked the rest of his life according to God. He comes to the end of his life, and worships on the top of his staff, Heb 11: 21. He becomes one who says, "the God that shepherded me all my life long to this day", Gen 48: 15. Was that the man according to the will of God? Absolutely. Now, how long did it take him to get there? Far longer than it ought - as with us - but, the point is he got there. Are you getting there? Am I getting there? Are we going to be here according to the will of God? Are we willing to do things not just according to what we know is right, but are we willing to do them God's way and in God's timing? That is the proof of the will of God.

So, if you go, for instance, to Job, you see the operations of the will of God. You might say he was an upright man at the beginning, and everything was in order. And on the outside so it was. Did he really know God? No, no he did not. He knew of God, and he knew what he should do, and he knew the way that he should govern his house, but he did not really know God. So the will of God in relation to the purposes of His love was to have Job know Him, really know Him. So he goes through deep suffering, and it is very, very deep suffering. And what comes out at the other end of it? Job no longer stands on what he is in all his outward demeanour, but the manner of the heart of Job would have been entirely different. Why? He says, "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee", Job 42: 5. And he

repented in dust and ashes. Is he a man now that is going according to the God he knows? Yes. Did it come about according to the will of God? Yes. It came about according to the operations of His love, although the operations of His love involved massive suffering for Job. Those are things we have to leave with God. Everybody knows what tests are when they come, some more than others. To ever think of them as being retribution is beneath the glory of the God that loves us. I find it very testing to speak of that, because that is the first thing that generally comes to mind, but God loves us too well to leave us as we were. He is going to operate by His will according to the purposes of His heart and sometimes it must be extreme to bring us into accord with what He intends us to be. What a God He is and how faithful He is. This is the God we know. Beloved brethren, by becoming subject to that will, to the operations of God, what glory there is, because that is what Christ was.

Now, I would just say one short thing in relation to the word "acceptable". In order for the will to be acceptable as we said, we have to become subject to the will of God. It is not subjugated by the will of God, or to be obedient to the will of God only, but to prove what is acceptable means you must be subject to the will of God. And to be subject to the will of God you need to love it, a most important thing. Christ did not carry out the will of God just by obedience. He was subject to it. He loved it. So it should be with us. So when we look on the will of God, and what it is, and the way it operates, and the manner of the doing in all things, do we love it? That is the point. If you are going to be subject to something, if you are going to be subject, in order for the will of God to be acceptable, you must love God, but you must love the way that God operates. You must love what He is arriving at and how He is arriving at it. Is that us, beloved brethren? Is that us? I find that massively testing. But if we are ever to find the will of God acceptable it must be that way. We must arrive at that in ourselves, that to be subject to God and subject to His will, means we love it and we carry it out because we love it. This is a necessity in order for things to go forward according to God.

But then we have the perfection of the will of God. We said right back at the beginning that you cannot operate and you cannot carry on in relation to the will of God unless you see the object. If you want to see the end of everything that has been done by the will of God, the end of 1 Corinthians 15, and Revelation 21 display it. You come to the

settled things that have been brought about according to the purposes of His love, by the will of God. Are they perfect? Absolutely. The holy city comes down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. That is the purposes of His love according to the working of His will. What a thing that is. What a thing to have part in that, what a thing to be clothed like that and have that testimony. Do you desire that? That is the point, beloved brethren. It is not just that there is something done legally; it is done because you have desired it thus. You have desired to bring yourself into conformity to the will of God; and that is a wonderful thing for you and for God.

Well, may we be encouraged. May we be exercised, beloved brethren, but may we be encouraged, because the will of God has operated according to His love to bring us to this place. May it be so for His Name's sake.

Chelmsford

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