

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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FULFILLING RESPONSIBILITY

David Spinks

Luke 2: 46-49; 3: 21-22; 4: 1-15

2 Timothy 1: 8-10

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DS I wondered, dear brethren, if we might get some help looking at these scriptures in relation to man as set on the earth in responsibility. It was God's intention from the beginning. It tells us in Genesis that God blessed them; He said, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it", chap 1: 28. So that God's intention in setting man on the earth was that he was to be here in responsibility, and was to be here to fulfil righteousness, and was to be here as giving honour to God, as the top-stone of God's creation. Man failed in the garden, and, as failing, sin has come in and death has come upon man. Man has no right therefore in that regard to walk on the earth because he cannot fulfil righteousness and is not one who is subject to God. There are many who came in in the Old Testament but it awaited the Lord Jesus in order that that matter should be fulfilled; the One who "loved righteousness and hated wickedness" (Ps 45: 7), the One who "magnified the law, and made it honourable", Isa 42: 21. In the Old Testament we see these were two things that were given for man to fulfil on the earth, and he failed in both. One was seen in the garden and the other was seen in giving the law to Israel; and both were fulfilled perfectly in our Lord Jesus.

I do not mean to go into any depth in these scriptures in Luke but just to draw upon them to see the perfection of the manhood of Jesus; it is something every heart should ponder. This is the Man who honoured God; this is the Man who fulfilled righteousness; this is the Man who was morally superior to everything the enemy brought upon Him. This is the Man who knew about the Father's business, and the heavens opened upon this blessed Man. Man forfeited his right to walk on this earth, but in the other two scriptures in Timothy there is a means by which we can be brought back to fulfil our responsibility, and to walk here not according to flesh, but according to God. It is a wonderful thing to see what it brings out in verse 10 of 2 Timothy 1 that the Lord has "annulled death, and brought to light life and incorruptibility by the glad tidings". The believer lays hold of this by faith; it is an initial thing for the believer that he or she trusts in the Saviour, but there is far more on the path. I believe that as light comes into his soul, the Christian finds he is

to walk in life, walk in what has been secured in the death of Christ, that which is incorruptible, that which the enemy cannot touch! How wonderful a thing it is to see that the believer can walk on the earth here now as righteous, and the enemy cannot touch him! So that in such a condition there is “now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus”. Man has the power of the Spirit, and he is free, and he is walking according to the Spirit, and he is taking on the character of another Man! How beautiful these features are. I just wondered if we could get some help to see the fulfilment of man on earth in his responsibility in order that we may enjoy what is heavenly.

DAB I was thinking that maybe we tend to think of this life down here simply as a phase in which we are prepared for heaven, because we understand our portion in heaven is eternal and therefore greater in every way than what we have here; but it is helpful to see that we have a distinct calling here on earth, do we not? God said, “Let us make man in our image” (Gen 1: 26); so that he had a responsibility to represent God, and that was to be for God's pleasure, that He was able to have something in His creature that was like Him.

DS Yes. Man was not set in heaven; man was set on the earth, and as a responsible creature man has been put there in order to exhibit the features of God Himself. It awaited the Lord Jesus, as in everything, to show us the beautiful and even character of a Man who was suitable to walk here, to fulfil righteousness, who was subject to His parents, who was morally superior to the enemy; and the enemy could never touch such a Man. It is food for our souls to ponder that order of manhood as we see failure in every other man.

DAB Your first scripture refers to a boy of twelve, and we know that Adam was never a boy of twelve. Does that rather suggest that God was looking forward not only to the full development and expression of manhood here, but that there were certain things as the Lord brings out that marked a person at that stage of life, which are part of the picture which God had in His mind that our young people should seek to fulfil?

DS I think that is very helpful. What you are bringing out is that, right from childhood, for every stage, we have enough in the word of Scripture to give us a picture of Him, beautiful features of the Lord Jesus. Adam was a man, but the Lord in childhood, in boyhood, and in manhood was perfect in that growth. You see Him as one who was asking questions. Think of Him, such a Man in His glory and majesty, in His Person none other than God, but here as One who was asking

questions; that is something to ponder!

DAB Yes, and we read about Timothy: “from a child thou hast known the sacred letters”, (2 Tim 3: 15); he had his mother and his grandmother who were concerned, or exercised to bring into expression even in Timothy as a boy what was for the pleasure of God!

DS I think that is a very helpful remark to bring in. We have that we should learn the Scriptures from a child and that we should be acquainted with them, and it is a test to us all because we all lead busy lives. But we should see as we are brought up the manner of man that God finds suitable to His presence, and as a child there should be what is honourable to God in childhood, what is honourable to God in the one who is subject to his parents.

PJW The Lord could say prophetically,

thou didst make me trust, upon my mother's breasts.

I was cast upon thee from the womb, Ps 22: 9, 10.

I wondered if the feature of dependence goes along with your suggestion as to responsibility.

DS Surely that must, because the Lord as a child showed that feature, did He not? He was dependent on His parents and He was dependent on His Father in that regard. So again there is a beautiful balance seen in a Man who was here according to the will of God.

PJW I was thinking as to your third scripture in Luke 4; the devil would seek to take Him out of that line of dependence; that was his effort all the time, whether it was in the wilderness or at Gethsemane, to turn Him aside from absolute dependence on Another. I wondered if that was a feature that would help us in fulfilling responsibility, that we cannot do it in our own strength.

DS There was nothing that the enemy could do; he had no inroad in this Man; and that is something to ponder. We have corruptible features and the enemy can break us down in many different ways, but he had no inroad into this blessed Man! And I think it is something to ponder, that from whatever angle the Lord was attacked by the enemy, He could never be broken down. There is perfect manhood seen there and it is something that we are to ponder.

RDP-r Was the thought of God that man should be His representation? So that it is not a matter of ourselves representing

ourselves; it is in view of God being represented by man walking in dependence and faithfulness before Him.

DS Surely; I think that is exactly what it is, that God made man in His image and after His likeness in order that what was seen here were the characteristics of God Himself. But that all awaited the incoming of this blessed Man, and every feature we see was pleasurable to God; a beautiful blend was there! “Grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ”, John 1: 17.

PM Would it be right to say too that this was brought out in relationship: “occupied in my Father's business”. No man had ever uttered those words in that way before? It was manhood but displayed in a boy, was it not?

DS I like what you say; I think that is very helpful. This is worked out in relationship: “I ought to be occupied in my Father's business”. The Lord could say in John 17, “I have glorified *thee* on the earth, I have completed the work which thou gavest me that I should do it”, v 4. The Lord completed the work on the earth; and not only did He complete it but He glorified the Father in doing that.

PM Was there intimacy there? What He was, was the expression of what the Father was! I am thinking that if we are to get the gain of this we have to know and understand something of these relationships, do we?

DS Surely, in the dispensation in which we are, because God has revealed Himself in Father, Son and Spirit, and to get the benefit of the understanding of the Father's heart we must walk here as subject to the will of God. We must walk here as those who are pleasing to the Father; so there is a demonstration not only of one who is subject to the will of God, but one who is in relationship, in sonship, with the Father.

DSB I was thinking of that scripture you refer to in John 17, “I have completed the work”. I had always thought of that in relation to His service to man, but it would include His responsibility as Man, and glorify God in it?

DS To me the matter of glorifying God on the earth brings in, especially in John's gospel, the thought of the relationship He has with the Father; and then in that matter He glorified God in expressing what the Father was, and who the Father was. But I think we can carry through it all the fact that there was a Man here for the will of Another,

but in that demonstration One who loved His Father, and drew everything from Him as He grew up; “a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground”, Isa 53: 2. He loved the will of God, and He fulfilled the purpose of God, and we can get help as pondering that Man.

DAB Yes; to glorify God is not simply to pour out the truth that He is great, but to bring features of God into expression. How blessed it was that those features were brought into expression in a world full of sin! So the compassions of God and His love were shown. We were dwelling on that recently, that there are things we have learned about God in the way that He has responded in the intrusion of sin.

DS I think that is helpful because when man was put on the earth initially there was no sin there, but how wonderful a matter for the glory of the grace of God that, in an area where sin abounds, and where death abounds, where everything immoral abounds, there is one Man who fulfilled the will of God, and showed it in every matter. What sustained Him in doing that? Well, it was the fact that He was about His Father's business.

DAB Remarkably, that was His food, John 4: 34. Adam was given plenty of things to eat, everything that was pleasant to the eyes and good for food, but here is a Man who is feeding on the will of God!

DS It is a beautiful contemplation because this is the order of Man that is suitable to God. God has a Man in His presence now who is of the order that will fill His presence eternally, taking character from that order of Man!

PM Is it affecting that He says in John 17, “I have glorified *thee* on the earth”, and He says, “glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee” (v1); that was ever His object, whether it was on the earth or whether it was as exalted, that the Father should be glorified.

DS That is very helpful: “I have glorified *thee* on the earth”; the objective was that in everything that the Lord in the relationship of sonship should be, the Father should be glorified, and as going back into glory there is something surely now and eternally for the pleasure of the Father.

JRW As you remarked, it says of Him that He “loved righteousness” and “hated lawlessness”; those two sides are put. You might think it was sufficient to say He loved righteousness, but the Spirit of God records that He hated lawlessness. Do you think it shows the moral

features that shone out in Him?

DS I am sure that must be so; not only did He commit Himself to righteousness, but it was something that He loved, and everything that was lawless was hateful to the Lord Jesus. So what He found in man as after the flesh was deplorable to the Lord. What He found pleasurable was to do the will of God and to draw men out of this world and fit them for His own world so that they were taking the same character as Himself; He loved righteousness. That is foreign to me as a man.

JRW I think that helps. I was linking on with your thought, and what was brought in as to His motive, that God was to be glorified, and that is really the way in which God is glorified, is it not?

DS I think that is very helpful. Not only did He fulfil a purpose because it was laid upon Him, and because, speaking reverently, He was the only Man who could work this matter out, but He had the affections to do so. He loved to do it, to fulfil the will of God, and it was His food to do the will of Another. In doing it He glorified God, and that really is the order of Man who is suitable to work things out here on earth to the pleasure of God.

PJW Relationships were mentioned. He says that “whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in the heavens, he is my brother, and sister, and mother”, Matt 12: 50. I wondered if that confirmed your thought that it was what the Lord was looking for, persons who did the will of His Father as He did.

DS It is helpful what is being brought out, that the affections lie behind this matter. Those who commit themselves to do the will of God are not doing it because it is a matter of force, or is something that they have read it in a book, but it is something that is in their affections. And, as I challenge myself as to this matter, I see that I love it the more because, as I commit myself to do the will of Another, I have the Spirit, and I take on the characteristics of the Lord Jesus, and the thing becomes something to me in my affections, and the enemy has no inroad into that order of man whatsoever.

JSH Speaking about these relationships, it speaks in your second scripture about having been baptised and praying; is the matter of prayer a very important thing for us? We can be so near to divine Persons when we are praying, and as coming from the presence of divine Persons we can be helped in our pathway, do you think?

DS The Lord gives us an example of the order of man that is suitable to walk here, and I think it is brought out here in these two passages we read, but there are others that could be brought forward. I think again it is Mr Coates who said a praying man has power with God, Outline of Genesis, vol 1 p216. I think that is a wonderful thing to ponder, that in an attitude of dependence upon God, I am given direction to move in whatever circumstance may come upon me, and I will be given the grace to work the matter out. These things in the world are looked upon as weakness, but with God this is the thing that will help us.

MRC Does prayer lead to communion? I was thinking of your scripture in chapter 3. There is an immediate response, "Thou art my beloved Son". It is not one way, is it? You have a deep sense that the relationship is being enjoyed here, is it not?

DS Yes, again that is a helpful remark; that as I am in communion with the Father, in that sense I instinctively understand His will. There may be circumstances which come up, even for those who are younger at school, or college, or work, or wherever it may be, but if they know the will of God they will decline to do certain things because they understand, if they are in communion and are faithful persons. They will be kept in relation to the will of God; they will not deviate. And with God assessing man in the beginning, that was His objective, putting him in a place where he would be dependent on God, and glorify God in being so.

TJH Does the prayer in this setting have in mind the Father's business, or the things of the Father? It is not just what I may want at this minute. We have to bear in mind the things of the Father, do we?

DS Yes, that must be so. I think a prayerful man does not primarily consider for himself, and I think the Lord Jesus again would show that trait, and it is a beautiful trait. We often go to the Lord or to the Father when we are in need; when I have come to the end of my own resource, and I have nothing to rely on in myself, I turn then to God. A prayerful man is more than that; I only say that even for the help of the young because I find it in myself. But if this is the attitude of each one of us as we pray to God, as we get up in the morning, as we read and as we pray, and as we go to bed at night, we should do likewise because a prayerful man finds resource, he finds direction and he finds what is the mind of heaven in relation to whatever it may be.

DAB Is that what we understand by meekness? It is carrying God's things without considering my own interest in it. It is not a characteristic which marks man in the flesh; people may imagine it does, but it does not. It is only seen in scripture where the man has been with God.

DS Yes; that is why the Lord says in John 17, "I have glorified *thee* on the earth". The Lord never glorified Himself; He never considered for self, and that again is something that we have to learn, do you think? Again, it is something that may take us a long time to come to, and some of us never come to it! But it is wonderful to see it because we see the pattern in the Lord Jesus.

DAB The first temptation related to something legitimate; it would not have been wrong to eat, but the word of God prevailed, did it not?

RDP-r So the Lord said, "seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you", Matt 6: 33. So a prayerful and dependent man does not need to consider for his own need because the Father cares for us, is that right?

DS Speaking reverently I think God likes us to test Him! Divine Persons like us to test them because the resource is there! I am independent naturally and that is the way with most of us, but if you rely on the resource which comes from God, and have subject hearts, and we are dependent and prayerful He will give us every resource that we need to move here to overcome.

RDP-r So if we put His things first He will care for us.

DS Surely! The only disappointment we find as believers here is when, after we trust in Christ, which is a wonderful thing, we then move on an independent path, and seek to do things as we will. That is where sorrow comes in; that is where failure comes in: and as someone has said, the most miserable person is a believer who does not have his trust in God.

DJW Chapter 4 as to the temptations brings to mind the word that the Lord says of Himself, "for the ruler of the world comes, and in me he has nothing", John 14: 30. Now that could not be said of anybody else, could it? But at the same time we have been occupied with the dependency of His manhood. Chapter 4 starts, "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit". We are in mixed conditions, but does the scripture in Romans 8 bring out the power of the Spirit that is in us, that enables us to be here in that way!

DS Yes, that is right. I read that scripture to encourage our hearts that there is a means by which I can fulfil righteousness! And I can come out in a Christ-like manner! The Spirit of Christ comes into that chapter. There is a change in a believer who is working here morally. He is prayerful and dependent, and is taking on another character; and that must surely make heaven rejoice. We are in an atmosphere where there is sin abounding, and where Satan is doing his work; you look outside and you see everything that is contrary; but then you see men that are working in the spirit of Christ; is a wonderful triumph for God! It is wonderful to see!

Then just to touch verses 21 and 22, where the Spirit rests complacently on this blessed Man! That had never been seen before. Every other man has failed, but there is one Man on whom the Spirit can rest complacently. Help us as to that please.

DJW I think we have touched on that - everything that God desired of man He found in Christ; therefore there was nothing that was repulsive in any way. As we have said, He was perfect! Therefore He is a model to us in that He did things by the Spirit.

DS I think we see that here from the moment He was baptised; it shows the going down mind of the Lord Jesus that He was baptised. He was in subjection, and the heavens opened upon this blessed Man. If the heavens can open upon Him, so can our hearts! We can ponder this blessed Man, who was full of the Holy Spirit. He does not go independently, but He goes out in the power of the Spirit, a dependent Man who has moral power to overcome everything that the enemy brings against Him.

TJH Men speak of love and peace, but this is really the true picture of love and peace, the Holy Spirit descending as a dove, and then the Father's voice, "*Thou* art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight". Is this love and peace truly?

DS I think we see something in this of being satisfied by one Man. Here the Spirit comes and the Father's voice is heard; it is as if we see the Godhead in operation, having been satisfied with this blessed Man and this Man was moving now, the One in whom God has found His delight and on whom the Spirit was resting complacently. The Godhead is opened up here in relation to this one Man.

BDW "For in him all the fullness of the godhead was pleased to dwell", Col 1: 19. He is praying, and His baptism is one of committal, is it not?

And we have the matter of prayer, and the condition is just right here for the Spirit and the Father, and the Lord all coming together as one. This was unity of purpose was it not?

DS I think that is very helpful to see that. This is the means by which God is going to recover everything for Himself by this blessed Man. The Godhead is opened up here in relation to the delight They have in this blessed Man, the One who is going to fulfil everything for the pleasure of God; and He moves from this standpoint to recover everything which had been broken down by Satan.

PM Earlier in chapter 2, He had gone down; it says, “he went down with them”; here He is baptised, He goes down; in chapter 4 He meets the one who exalted himself.

DS That is beautiful. Again, what can we say? It does every heart good to ponder this, this order of manhood, and it is put in the scripture for us to ask the Spirit to give us the grace and help to understand it because this is another order of man. This is not natural to me, but I think as we come on to the grounds of what it says in Romans, that we have the ability to ponder this Man, and to feed on His character, and to walk here like He does; that is a man who is giving God glory on the earth.

PJW Could you say a little to help us as to the way the Lord uses the Scriptures in meeting the temptations of the enemy? I was thinking of the earlier comment as to Timothy as a child having learnt the Holy Scriptures.

DS The New Testament was not given at this time, but it brings out the importance of the word of God for a dependent man. The Lord uses Scripture to bring out what will throw down the enemy. He is going through in the power of the Spirit, and He is going out as using the word of God. Are they two things that go together?

DAB The Lord Jesus does not say that He had come to *keep* the law, although He did; but to fulfil it. It is as if, in the penning of these scriptures that we have here, that God had a Man in view; you might say He is describing Somebody who would be in the scene of responsibility for His will.

DS That is a beautiful way of putting it, I think. He “magnified the law, and made it honourable”, Isa 42: 21. Is your thought that that is fulfilled in these scriptures?

DAB These verses do not cover the scope of the ten commandments but we have also noticed that, if you look at the ten commandments, some are directed to a man's links with God - which of course were seen perfectly in Jesus - and others relate to man's relationship with his fellow. We see from here on in the gospel that was also fulfilled in perfection.

DS Very good, but I think it brings out the perfect balance that was seen in the Lord Jesus Himself.

DAB It becomes an exercise in Christian fellowship that God's thought as to man here in responsibility was that he should have not only the relationships with Himself that we have spoken of but relationships with his fellows, the children of God. Does that help us to hold fellowship at the right level, seeking to be here as the Lord Jesus was for the pleasure of God, and making room for the incoming of the Holy Spirit?

DS It brings out the two sides there as One such as the Lord Jesus coming out from the Father and going out in the power of the Holy Spirit. As loving the law of God, and having as His food to do the will of Another, He moved out in relation to man in order that men should be brought into the good of what He enjoyed Himself.

PJW Have these three temptations not been linked with John's epistle: "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world is passing, and its lust, but he that does the will of God abides for eternity", 1 John 2: 16-17. Do you think that may be these three temptations?

DS That is very good, and it is confirming in my exercise, that what is brought out here is something that is giving wonderful pleasure to God Himself. It is not the pride of life; it is not anything that the will of man would seek to do, but it is something that brings glory to God.

AAC We were speaking of the way in which the Lord Jesus uses Scripture here. Satan also uses Scripture, but I was thinking of what you have been exhorting us in, in subjecting ourselves to the will of God, and that includes subjecting ourselves to the Scriptures. The Lord Jesus was acting in holy accord with the divine word, and I wondered whether that brings in a difference. We use the Scripture, and if we conform to it, and submit to it, we submit to the will of God, and we submit to the Scripture; that was the utter contrast here.

DS That is very helpful. What was seen in the Lord and what is said by different scriptures was in accord with each other. The Lord could say of Himself, "Altogether that which I also say to you", John 8: 25. Satan used Scripture, and I think it has been said that Satan himself had a wonderful understanding of Scripture, and he uses it to twist things and to turn men away. But here is a Man who is in accord with Scripture, One who did the will of God but in doing it He showed by example, He brought out the Scripture Himself, and His food was to do the will of Him who sent Him. Think of Him, "morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed", Isa 50: 4.

AAC I was thinking for the young ones; sometimes you come across someone who quotes Scripture, but we need not be afraid of relying on the Scriptures that we know, especially if we desire to be subject to them.

DS Again I think a believer has power. A young believer would have power to say something at school or college, or wherever it may be, if he knows the Scripture and walks by it. Then the enemy cannot touch him, and there is power in a believer to do so, and it is an encouragement for us all to do it.

RMB As to the first temptation: why would it be wrong for the Lord to turn the stones into bread? Being practical about it, most of us would feel that if we were hungry we could partake of bread quite readily, and in this situation it might be said that the Lord was the Son of God, and that He did have the power to turn the stones into bread, and He was hungry; so why would it have been a wrong thing to have done so.

DS I think again it would bring out that the Lord was dependent on the word of God; that was His food. In who He was, in the might and majesty and glory of His Person, He could have turned the stones into bread; He could have commanded anything and it could have been brought to pass. But it brings out the dependency of the Lord in manhood as under the hand of the Holy Spirit to seek to do the word of God. That is a simple thing, but I think it is an attractive thing to see it in One who is here, who shows it by example.

RMB So would it be right to say then that it would have been a sin for the Lord to have done this, because He would have put His own pleasure before the will of God; and is that not, in a simple way, what sin is? It is when we do our own wills instead of the will of God; but how testing that is. If we might refer to the spirit of the age of the present

time, persons think it is right to please themselves. So what would you say that would help us on that? How do you reach that point when the will of God becomes more important to us than pleasing ourselves?

DS I think for myself from the little I know about it that we are drawn into this matter by attraction. We see it in the first section in the Lord Jesus. A man after the flesh cannot commit himself, and cannot fulfil this. But the reason I read the other two scriptures is to show that I have the means to do this, that the Lord has annulled death and brought to light life and incorruptibility by the glad tidings. I can now live not only as a saved sinner, but I can live a life here that the enemy cannot touch. He cannot break me down, he cannot touch me, because I live in the spirit of another Man; I live in Christ Jesus, and I need the power of the Spirit to walk here. And if I desire to do so the Lord will give me the grace to fulfil that matter; I will work the matter out, and I will overcome. If I take it on once, God gives me the grace to work it out. And if I do overcome I think it stabilises your heart to see that there is a resource outside of yourself to take it on.

JRW There is a scripture in John's epistle that came before us in the week which is sometimes hard to understand. It is 1 John 5: 18: "We know that every one begotten of God does not sin, but he that has been begotten of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him". I wondered whether we could, with the help of the Spirit, identify the work of God in our souls, and that does not sin. It does not mean that I do not sin, sadly I often do, but if we sin "we have a patron with the Father" (1 John 2: 1), which is a comfort; but we can identify by the Spirit's help the work of God. Would that help?

DS I think that does help in the enquiry. The believer here that loves the Lord and has the Spirit can identify the work of God in his own soul. And that is a stabilising thing as we walk through the world, that the enemy cannot touch the work of God in your soul, and if you can identify that it is a stabilising thing; and if an exercise comes up, and you ask the Spirit to help you and the Lord to help you, They will do so, and you will overcome the enemy, and that is a triumph in your own soul! And you will use that means, speaking carefully, when the matter comes up again.

STE Do you think that, if we are victorious Christians, we want to walk in the power of the Victor, and not the defeated one! I am just thinking that we must keep close to Christ; He has already defeated Satan, so that is the victory we could be walking in.

DS That is why I read that scripture, because He has annulled death and He has brought to light life and incorruptibility. It is not for Himself, but for us, and it is by the glad tidings. These things have come to light as a matter of Christ going into death, breaking its power, arising and ascending into heaven; and the gospel is coming forth not only to save me but to give me the power that I can walk now in the light of life and incorruptibility; that can never be put on the first order of man and I think the victory is there.

DAB I was going to say as to the stones becoming bread that we might think we can use the power in an intervention like that for another step independent of God. We take an independent step, and it is the means to a second one, but the Lord was on a path of dependence and obedience to the Father's will.

DS I think what is being brought out is very helpful: that the Lord in His Person, and as loving righteousness and hating lawlessness, and committing Himself to the will of God, would never deviate outside of it. We might, and we do, and one step is a step in the wrong direction, and we are found on that slippery slope, but the Lord maintained that right through His pathway here, and glorified the Father.

DAB I was thinking that the Holy Spirit came upon Him, if I may say simply, knowing that in every subsequent step the Lord took the Holy Spirit could be with Him in it.

RDP-r As to ourselves it says, "for ye have been bought with a price", 1 Cor 6: 20. So we no longer have a right to a will to decide that we do this or we do that, if we accept that is the position to which we have been brought.

DS It is good to remind ourselves that we have been bought with a price; expenditure has been laid out in order that we may be brought to God, and brought to the Saviour; but, sorrowfully and sadly, we all have our own wills. It is good to see that there is One on whom the Spirit could rest complacently, and be with Him on His pathway here, and every step of His journey. It would be a tremendous thing for the believer to walk here every day with every movement in the power of the Holy Spirit, because if I do so I am coming out as Christ was, and there is glory to God in that.

RDP-r Paul says, "seeing that also I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus", Phil 3: 12. So if we are to move here, we move here as bondmen, do we not? We look to another for what to do.

DS Yes, “taken possession of by Christ“ is again that I belong to Him, and I am subject to Him; that is a wonderful thing!

PM The Lord Jesus said, “I do always the things that are pleasing to him”, John 8: 29. That even included when He ate and when He did not! He did everything to please the Father. He could not do anything else, because of who He was and the enjoyment of that relationship. But would not the Spirit in us help us that, in the enjoyment of the relationship, we would not desire to take ourselves out of the place of dependence?

DS I feel for myself as I get a little older that, as you take a place in dependence, there is something given to you that you find nowhere else, and it helps you to fulfil the will of God. It strengthens you, and it gives you inside something that is beyond this world. Sadly we quickly fail, but there is One here who never failed, and it is wonderful to ponder this order of manhood. The failure is in myself, but there is the means to sustain the believer; is that right?

PM I am sure, and it is the same Spirit that came upon Him that in wonderful grace indwells us!

DJW I was thinking of that reference in verse 13 that “the devil ... departed from him for a time”. Do you think he returned in intensity at Gethsemane? He says, “Father, if thou wilt remove this cup from me:—but then, not my will, but thine be done”, (Luke 22: 42), and then, “being in conflict he prayed more intently”, (v 44); everything for God was at stake! But He stood the test!

DS That shows the attitude of the Lord right throughout His pathway here, that from His public service as a praying Man He goes on, and at the end of that service He is a praying Man! That is something that surely heaven must have taken great delight in, that there was a Man here in the order that God sought to find!

CHS The answers that the Lord gave as to why He should not do certain things are helpful, are they not? He moves under the direction of the Father. It was not a question of whether He was being asked to do something that was legitimate or not; that was not the direction He moved by, and that was not in accord with Him.

DS I think it is a wonderful thing to see that we not only do the will of God, but we hear the Father's voice; there is a protection in that, because we might do the will of God just because it is the thing to do,

and we might fulfil righteousness in doing it, but as hearing the Father's voice there is relationship and affection in the matter.

CHS There is example for us, is there? You spoke about man walking in responsibility. We find it there, do we not? They observed Him to the point where they said, “teach us to pray”, Luke 11: 1.

RMB Is it important to always keep before us one main distinction between ourselves and the Lord, that in our case, before there can be any carrying out of the will of God, there has to be a fundamental moral change in us?

DS Surely there must be; there did not have to be any change with the Lord Jesus. There has to be a fundamental moral change in order that I can fulfil righteousness, and I can walk here according to the pleasure of God. I am a sinner, and I need to be changed morally in order that I can walk according to God. I have no desire as after the man of nature by the first order of man to walk here in the will of God; is that what you mean?

RMB Yes; what would you say as to the moral process that has to go on in us before we can be here practically for the will of God?

DS I think we have to walk in the light of what Christ has secured in His death; that was my impression from reading 2 Timothy. We can get a little help together. As a believer in Christ, and putting my trust in Him, my eternal destiny is secured, but the gospel has far more in mind than that. What comes to light is life and incorruptibility. I think the believer is gaining this matter in His soul as something substantial, that he is strengthened to walk here in another power by another means in relation to another Man that the enemy cannot touch. This is another process, or another step in the believer's soul history, that not only am I saved but I have to walk here as righteous in the power of the Spirit of God.

RMB I think that is very important. You said about being attracted by Christ, and we need to have Him before us as an object, but that will not be sufficient of itself because the apostle said, “I delight in the law of God”, (Rom 7: 22); it says he delighted in it, it was something that he wanted to fulfil, but then he says, “but I see another law in my members, warring in opposition to the law of my mind”, (v 23), and, in the unfolding of the teaching of that epistle, we know that the practical power to be here for the will of God is in the Holy Spirit.

DS Surely, and again as I referred to earlier the most miserable of

believers are those who walk in their own will. They are not satisfied; they cannot find satisfaction in the world because they are saved by grace, and they know where they belong, but they go on in their own selfwill until they come to the man at the end of Romans 7, and can say, "I thank God". I need deliverance; I need to be taken out of self. I still have to fulfil righteousness, and I can never fulfil righteousness in the old order of man. "I see another law in my members", but it is wonderful to come to, "There is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus", chap 8: 1. That is me, not as in Adam but in Christ. What a status that is to the believer!

RWMcC I wondered if it links with the "*I myself*", in Romans (chap 7: 25), that we spoke earlier about, identifying the work of God in ourselves; and I wondered if that is one of the things that helps us in relation to what we are speaking of.

DS Yes, "*I myself*". I think what is being brought out is helpful, that I can identify the work of God in myself, and, if I identify the work of God in myself, what is taking place can be tested and it will stand fast. And I can rely upon it as that which will be pleasurable to God and it will be pleasurable to the saints likewise.

RWMcC You have referred to walking a few times; what does that involve? It says of Enoch that he walked with God, Gen 5: 21-24. Do you think that is really a characteristic that we should promote in one another?

DS Well, we all walk in some manner, and my exercise in taking up this reading is that we should see that God has set us on the earth, and that there should be a testimony to man on the earth, not the thought of man according to flesh, but man according to God. And if I have the exercise to do so, and I appeal to God in relation to it, and I have Christ as my Saviour, and the power of the Spirit, I have the means to walk here according to God. No believer can say that God does not give us the means to walk; if we look at Romans 8, and if I go through these exercises, it is not something I can take on or come to automatically, but if I do have the exercise, and go through the exercise with God, I will come out a better man for it and there will be something for God's glory.

RHB It says in 1 John 5, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous", v 3. That assumes a new nature in the believer, does it not, because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God?

DS I like what you say as to a new nature coming to light in the believer, and I think that again comes to light in Romans 8. If there is a new nature coming to light in the believer, and I am taking on by the power of the Spirit the spirit of another Man, that really is the operation of God, and what grace is in that matter. We who were afar off, and away from God, can take on God's nature, or the nature of the Lord Jesus.

RHB The will of God was not grievous to the Lord: He found His joy in it. The psalms bring that out prophetically,

The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places;
yea I have a goodly heritage, Ps 16: 6.

The Lord found His joy in the will of God, and the Spirit would lead us into that, would He not?

DS It was the Lord's food as we spoke of it earlier, and I think my nature becomes changed, so that I need this heavenly order of food, and this order of manhood, and to feed on that Man, in order that I become like Him. It is wonderful that we have the Scriptures in order to see the character which God delights to find.

AGS Is Stephen an example of what you are bringing before us, Acts 6, 7? He is full of faith, full of the Holy Spirit, full of power and full of grace! His face radiates what was within does it, what was in his heart really? Then he is given the wonderful sense that where his faith was centred, heaven, was open for him to view in actuality!

DS Yes, and he comes out in the spirit of his Saviour, in the forgiving nature! These things are foreign to us naturally, but there is something beautifully seen in Stephen even towards those who lead him away; he was not angry, but he committed himself to the law of God; whatever happened, even if men stoned him to death, that was the will of God. He fulfilled something in doing so, and he found the grace to do it.

PJA The "holy calling" (2 Tim 1: 9), would it be motivation for us, do you think? I was thinking of Abraham, he was called out, and it was a separate life that he had, and he received God's blessing.

DS Would it be right to say that every believer has had a "holy calling"? I think every believer here who trusts in Jesus, and knows Him as their Saviour, and has the power of the Spirit has a holy calling. God does not love you to leave you. He takes you out and gives you the sustaining power to walk here superior to your circumstances; that

superiority is seen in Romans 8.

MRC Could you help us therefore as to those that are “in Christ Jesus”; would that be as a result of the holy calling?

DS It is as over against those that are in Adam. In Adam all die, but in Christ Jesus, I think there is stability coming into the soul of the believer who is delivered from self: “There is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus”. This is a wonderful scripture, a favourite of mine; “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death”. It is a wonderful thing to think that as I am delivered, I am in liberty; the law of the Spirit of life has set me free from sin and death. I am set free and I am outside of my own resource, and I am not disappointed because I have divine resource that will strengthen me and give me the character of Christ Himself.

AAC Is it the only way that peace is known here? It just gives me that impression, that the result of it is peace in the soul, an inward peace which cannot be disturbed. It is one of the things which would cause us to reach after this, an inward peace which will never be disturbed.

DS This is a very practical thing. Christianity is practical; we sometimes say it is very 'highfalutin', and it is beyond us, but while Romans does not take the believer off the earth, if you read these scriptures, and work through them, if you work through this exercise and come to this matter that you are delivered, you are in liberty, and you have the power and grace of God's Spirit. You will surely come out like Christ, and that really gives you inward peace. And whatever you do, and wherever the will of God may take you, the enemy has no inroad in you whatsoever, and you overcome him: “greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world”, 1 John 4: 4.

PJW The Lord said, “Come to me ... and / will give you rest” (Matt 11: 29). We may think that is through knowing the forgiveness of sins, but then He says, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me and ye shall find rest to your souls”. I understand that to be in doing the will of God; that is how we find rest to our souls, do you think?

DS Yes; it is like the steps of the believer in faith, is it? Not only do I find rest, but I find rest to my soul, inward peace, whatever may happen. There is great turmoil going on in the world; Satan has got great power, and he seems to be influencing everything around, but the believer has peace in his soul, and is actually walking in the light of this, do you think?

AJMCS The things that you are bringing before us must underlie the truth of the body, do you think? It is all very wonderful, is it not? Our local assemblies should be wonderful places!

DS I think what you say is very true, because if every individual believer walks in the light of this, there is something collective here in testimony which is pleasurable to God, in each and every place; there is that. But there are young brothers and young sisters coming forward asking for fellowship, finding their place in the local places, and that is a joy to the saints; it must be a joy to heaven, and I think it is known as walking in the light of Scripture. You see young ones even in their young tender years who will tell someone at school that they are a believer in Jesus; I believe that even in our early years we have some sense of what it is that “There is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus”.

PM Could you say something as to the “Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”?

DS I would like you to help me on that, but is “the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” another order of man coming to light?

PM Is it another order of man in another order of life? And it is that order of life that is fit to walk on the earth, is it? You spoke of one order that was not fit, but the Spirit is here to help me to walk in the power of the life which is in Christ Jesus, is He not?

DS That is helpful, and it should be very attractive to every believer. Not only do I have the means to walk, but I am actually walking here as Christ walked, and that must surely show that God has triumphed. God has the triumph over the enemy. He triumphed over the enemy when Christ was here, surely He did, but He triumphs over the enemy when saints walk in the light of what you are speaking of now.

KM You were speaking of Enoch walking with God. I have often thought about that. Do you think it is possible for us now in our day to walk with God? What does walking with God really involve?

DS If we said we could not walk with God it would mean, speaking reverently, that we thought God had failed, because we have the means to do so by working out everything through the moral exercises in life. The believer comes to realise what Christ has done for him, and that he can take on the characteristics of another Man, and can walk here in the power of the Spirit, and he can overcome every influence the

enemy can put upon him. That is a man who walks with God: he does not rely on self; he does not consider for self. And again, we must always go back to the Lord Himself because there is the pattern Man, a Man who walked with God. I think there is the means here. We look around and see failure and breakdown so much, but we must look at things from the divine perspective, and see there is the resource here to walk with God. What would you say?

KM I have often found it very attractive, and I have often spoken to the Lord about it, to walk with Him, and sometimes I find it difficult to know what to talk to Him about! I talk to Him about Christ, well, that is a wonderful thing, and I wondered sometimes if it were possible to do so, because my thoughts are often concerned with my own ways and my own things. I like to do what I do; I think I cannot really walk with God and think and talk the way I am at the moment, but I find it very attractive to walk with God.

DS I think what you say is right, and if we are honest we do have a tendency to do our own will. I think we see something with many of the saints, and we see it especially in the older generation, but in younger ones too. A man who walks with God does not consider for self. That is something that I have to learn in my own heart, that if I am here for the will of Another, I do not consider for myself, and if I do not consider for myself I will have the resource to walk here pleasing to God Himself, and pleasing to the Father.

JSH In verse 13 it says, “but if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live”; if we are living in that way we would be walking with God.

DS I think that is again the resource to do so, if we “put to death the deeds of the body”; there is the means to put to death the deeds of the body; there is the means to live. It is not just that I come to a standpoint, and wonder where I go from here, but the believer has the means and the power to walk here in the Spirit.

DJR So I do not try to do it in my own effort.

CHS What has been said as to Enoch is very attractive; he walked in faith above the earth that he might not die in it; he was translated, was he not? I wondered if there was something of that in Jude's mind when in speaking of Enoch he went on to say, “But to him that is able to keep you without stumbling”, (v24); we cannot limit faith can we?

DS No, we cannot limit faith; I need to have faith, and I need the power of the Spirit. Christianity is sustained in the believer in these two elements; faith in me and what is in the power of the Spirit. These enable the believer to walk here without stumbling. There is something attractive and powerful and resourceful in a believer who is kept without stumbling.

London

26th November 2016

List of initials:-

P J Alexander, Twickenham; D S Bodman, Dorking; R M Brown, East Finchley; R H Brown, East Finchley; D A Burr, London; M R Cook, Folkestone; A A Croot, London; S T Eagle, Dorking; T J Harvey, East Finchley; J S Hutson, London; A J McSeveney, Twickenham; K Marshall, Colchester; P Martin, Colchester; R W McClean, Grimsby; R D Painter, Yeovil; D J Roberts, Strood; A G Smith, Sidcup; C H Smith, Chelmsford; D Spinks, Grangemouth; J R Walkinshaw, Maidstone; P J Walkinshaw, Strood; B D White, Spaldwick; D J Wright, Tunbridge Wells

THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S HOUSE

Harold J Klassen

Zechariah 1: 18-21

We have just heard about Priscilla and Aquila being those who ministered to the edifying and building up of the saints. I thought of this portion here. It is quite interesting to read the whole chapter, where we get the different coloured horses. There are things that have to do with the red horse in verse 8, and then, the “red, bay and white horses” follow. They each have a meaning. And then, what is interesting is that the nations were at rest: they had succeeded, so they thought, in subduing Jerusalem. But the Lord says, “my house shall be built in it”, v 16. And now, where we began to read, we find that there are the four horns. Four speak of what is universal; one speaks of power. So Zechariah says to the angel, “What are these? And he said to me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem”. Think of that, the power of the enemy to scatter God's people, to destroy the centre! Jerusalem speaks of the centre. It is interesting that God mentions those three names: Judah suggests to me man in responsibility; Israel man in sovereignty; and Jerusalem the centre. All this had been destroyed by mankind. It is interesting when you think of the work of the enemy today seeking to destroy what God has built up in the power of the Spirit since the day of Pentecost.

Then he says, “And Jehovah shewed me four craftsmen. And I said, What come these to do? And he spoke, saying, Those are the horns which scattered Judah, so that no man lifted up his head; but these are come to affright them, to cast out the horns of the nations, which lifted up the horn against the land of Judah to scatter it”. Now, I would say that what we have heard about Aquila and Priscilla would refer to the craftsmen, or as the note says, 'carpenters'. It is really easy to destroy things. I could destroy a building easily, but when it comes to the craftsmen to build it up, that would be a lot more of a challenge to me, to each one of us. And another thing that is interesting is that it takes a lot longer to build up than it does to destroy!

So I thought of this, that God takes note of everything. It looked as if God was resting or asleep, if you want to say that in a reverent way. The nations were at rest because Jerusalem was not being built, and yet God is watching, seeing everything; and He has those carpenters, those craftsmen that He is going to use to build up what the nations

around had destroyed. Destruction is the work of the enemy and it is the work, you might say today, of the religious world, to destroy what is really of God, the apostle Paul's ministry as we have had before us. But there is power with the craftsmen. He says, "Those are the horns which scattered Judah", and, as I said, man in responsibility and man in sovereignty, they were all scattered; and Jerusalem. But God says, "my house shall be built". That is so: when God comes, when Jesus our Lord and Saviour comes to take the assembly home, there will be a testimony for Him. There will be those going on that He will have great delight in. It is not that He does not have delight in all the redeemed - I do not want to be taken wrongly on that - but there will be that which is answering to Him when He comes, I do believe. Some of the psalms would bring that out.

So the question is for my soul, am I the one that is destroying and scattering or am I a craftsman like those who have been brought before us? You think of Priscilla and Aquila. I think they are mentioned six times in Scripture, three times Priscilla is first, three times Aquila is mentioned first; so it was a household that was in balance. You might say, 'What can I do? I am just one brother; we are just one household'. Well, you could probably do a lot more than you think you can do. A brother once said if no one else is going on, why not just go on yourself. That would be the greatest testimony you can have. But Priscilla and Aquila had a home where the saints were welcomed, and they ministered to their needs. It says in Romans 16 that the assembly was in their house, v 5. That is where they had the meetings, perhaps the breaking of bread and so on, as we would say. Well, I think it is interesting to see that God has a way, has a plan, for the preservation of His house. These are the craftsmen and, as I said, Mr Darby's note says, 'smiths', 'carpenters'. There are those who can build up. We have all seen some of the beautiful work that a craftsman can do in building cabinets, for example; it is beautiful! I could tear them apart a lot faster than he could build them, and make a mess of things. I think it is interesting how it does not take an intelligent person to destroy. It takes an intelligent person to be a craftsman and to bring forth what is constructive and helpful for the preservation of Jerusalem and the Lord's people.

And so these were shown to Zechariah. God said, "but these" - that is the carpenters - "are come to affright them, to cast out the horns of the nations". Well, how would that be? It is by being constructive. It is by building, dwelling on what is positive, and *building on that*. And so

that is how the carpenters affrighted them and “cast out the horns of the nations, which lifted up the horn against the land of Judah to scatter it”. It would be a sad thing to me, as I have found out through the years with the brethren, to think that I might have been involved in scattering some of the Lord’s people. If you just think of that for a minute: if you really love your blessed Saviour, if you love what He loves, the testimony, think what it would be to have to give an account for scattering His people! I say these things for encouragement that we might each see, and build upon the foundation that we have had before us. A carpenter, smith, craftsman, whatever, would build upon that. As I said, it takes a lot longer to build up. We have a word in my office that one word can destroy ten years of building friendship, and I think we have all seen that and experienced a little bit of that; let me ask again, what would be edifying? What, if I may use the expression, would look nice in the building? What would be attractive that I could put in there? I think the household of Priscilla and Aquila was an attractive household. I believe that we can each at least have that in our lives, in our home. We may not think of it as a great thing but as we had before us recently: we are not to despise “the day of small things”, Zech 4: 10. God is doing a great work, and what a privilege it is to be among that. It is only His grace that can keep us; we cannot keep ourselves. We may think we are pretty good; we may think we are spiritual. Do not be overcome by that; do not think that way! That is the thinking of the enemy. Commit yourself to the hand of God and to His saving grace, His keeping grace, so that we might be able to minister to the needs of one another. And it is not only that, but the other side is, am I willing to be ministered to by my brother, not to be offensive, but to seek to learn what God teaches, through our fellowship together? There are a lot of precious things that we have, many more than we know. God would have us to enjoy them, enjoy the beauty of them, the beauty of that which is going on in divine communion with our Lord and Saviour. He is Lord in the assembly and how wonderful it is!

I hope that we can be encouraged in these things because it is not a legal thing at all, and if we take up with legality, seeking to be technical in the things of God, we may destroy. If we take up with what is of grace, which is beautiful and constructive, it will be for the glory of God. May we be encouraged and strengthened for His Name's sake!

Aberdeen, Idaho

29th March 2017

THAT WHICH CAN BE DONE

A John E Temple

Judges 6: 11

Ezra 8: 27

Psalm 4: 1

I have read these few verses, beloved, to give us encouragement that, even in times of testing, times of restriction, times when we may not know how matters will work out, (and assuredly Gideon could not have known how things would work out with all the oppression of the Midianites,) nevertheless there is that which can be done.

Firstly, we read about what Gideon did. In one sense I have not much to say beyond calling attention to the fact that this *was* done, that Gideon *was* acting in this way, although there was a time of oppression. Why was there a time of oppression? Because God's people were not being true to Him and God allowed oppression to come upon them. Just before, it says they "cried to Jehovah because of Midian" (v 7), and God had sent a prophet saying, after reminding them of what He had done for them, "But ye have not hearkened to my voice", v 10. That was the background God allowed. But there is a man here, Gideon, the one who overcomes the Midianites. In the verse I have read I do not think he had any sense that he would be used to effect deliverance in the way that he was. That is not my point but that he is doing what he could.

We love the Lord's own words in another instance in Scripture, very similar, very blessed, "What *she* could she has done", Mark 14: 8. Think of that woman who anointed Him, who provided for Him at a critical time. What appreciation He had! That word was precious, actual, personal from the Lord Jesus, "What *she* could she has done".

Now although the setting is different, what Gideon is doing he is doing for God's people, maybe in a limited way for a limited number of them, although I think his outlook would have been far greater, but he is doing what he could for as many as he could. He is threshing wheat in the winepress. How many times we have heard it said that it is a restricted area. Think of even the unpleasantness, I suppose, of threshing in a winepress, a restricted area, but Gideon would do that so that there was food, the wheat that he had that could be processed and become food: food, I suppose, for his family, food maybe for the neighbourhood around. I suppose he had limitations simply because

of the amount that he could do, but what he could, he did, and, of course, God took him up to do far more. It is not that he is already a great man here. It is not even his own area. The terebinth was his father's: the angel came to "the terebinth that was in Ophrah, that belonged to Joash the Abiezerite. And his son Gideon threshed wheat". He was not waiting in this instance for his father, but he would get on with what he could. Beloved, when there are testing times, let us be encouraged to do what we can! We may feel it is little, but he would do this, and I feel that he would have also in mind that what he did would lead to others being able to do something. He would secure the wheat; others would process it further; others would take it so that it would become bread for God's people, food for God's people, something that is very vital at all times and especially so in times of testing.

In Ezra chapter 8 we have another verse that is well known to us and is a verse that we love. We always visualise, do we not, these "two vessels of shining copper" and we look again at the note. I tend to think of them as 'bright shining', but the note actually says 'good shining' (note 'b'), quality shining in that way, shining evenly all over them. There was something that was inherent in the copper, but I think of the way they had been brought to shine. Someone had taken interest, taken care, and I read this too because of what has often been said, that there is no reference to these two particular vessels going into the captivity. This is a time of release, and these vessels are a product, we can take it, made in the land of the captivity: not as with Gideon, when the enemy oppressed them in the land, but when God's people, for the most part, had been carried away by overcoming forces and put elsewhere. God decrees these things. God allows them. He appointed a time for captivity, and He ensured that it came to the end according to the word that He had set as to how long it would last, seventy years. This is not the first return but it is now the time for a further going back to Jerusalem. This time these vessels, which are formed vessels and which are suitable for God's praise, are being taken. They may well have been used in God's praise in the captivity, and they will continue to be available when they reach the house of God.

What a testing time it must have been for those who would have been uprooted from their homes, taken to a foreign land. One of them refers in the psalms to not being able to "sing a song of Jehovah's" in Babylon:

“We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.
For there they that carried us away captive required of us a
song; and they that made us wail required mirth, saying, Sing us
one of the songs of Zion. How should we sing a song of
Jehovah's upon a foreign soil?” Ps 137: 2-4.

Persons felt it, but that did not stop someone, or more than one (I suppose, there would have been more than one involved), making these vessels, vessels that could be used in an even fuller way when they were brought out of the captivity. Beloved, let us see what can still be made that is for God, vessels that can be filled, “two vessels of shining copper, precious as gold”. “Precious as gold” is like a comment of the Spirit Himself. How valuable they were! God sees what is produced for Him for His service even in restricted circumstances.

I close with Psalm 4. I just read one verse there. I know I am not able for the interpretation, or even application, of the Psalms. While there is in this psalm what can be blessedly applied to the Lord Jesus Himself, I just want to give it a practical application almost as to the literal words that are used. They are words of David. How many psalms he wrote and this is one of them, “On stringed instruments”. We can take that up again in regard of testing, maybe discipline, “stringed instruments”, meaning the strings have been tightened so that they might perform at their best. David says, “in pressure thou hast enlarged me”. Again, it is something which he has experienced himself, and he has put it into a psalm, and the psalm has come down to us in our day. Beloved, it is what God would do, the God of our righteousness. “When I call, answer me, O God of my righteousness: in pressure thou hast enlarged me”. What pressures David knew! I do not know if anyone has identified when this was written by David for he had many pressures. There was an accumulation as a result: “thou hast enlarged me”, enlarged him in his soul, enlarged him as to what God would do with him, not to make David great as to himself, but what God would do with him, “thou hast enlarged me”. Enlarged him, I believe, he would say, as having addressed the God of his righteousness, enlarged him in his knowledge of God and in his love for God. That is what results from the pressure. I suppose we might relate this to Hebrews 12 and the chastening of the Father yielding “the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those exercised by it”, v 11. David was one such, I believe, “exercised” by the ways that God passed him through, not to become disheartened, not to be querying with God about them, but to see what God was doing, and what he found was

that “in pressure thou hast enlarged me”.

Well, beloved, it is open to us. I just leave these simple thoughts with us that it might give us encouragement in these days and that that encouragement may work out to God's glory, for Christ's name's sake.

FOLLOWING IN HIS STEPS

D Andrew Alexander

1 Peter 2: 21 (from “for Christ”)

John 13: 1-5, 12-15

Luke 10: 38-42

It was as weighing over some of the remarks that came into our reading yesterday that this thought came to me. We referred to various parts of John 13 but, in thinking about them, I was led on to this scripture in Peter's epistle, “for Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you a model”. Often I have overlooked that section of scripture and taken more account of the following pieces about the Lord, of whom it says, “who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when reviled, reviled not again; when suffering, threatened not”, v 23. But I was just thinking of this matter of “leaving you a model”. It took my thoughts back to what we had in the reading last Thursday night, “The word ... and my Spirit, remain among you”, Hag 2: 5. I was wondering whether we may be able to link the thought of this model with the word remaining among you.

As considering it, I challenged myself as to how much I know of this Model; how much can I tell the brethren about the thought? I feel challenged as I speak: “leaving you a model”. Dear brethren, let us consider it and think about it. I thought of it as being really attractive, “that ye should follow in his steps”. I would suggest that these are not giant steps. I would speak with reverence, but these are not giant steps. These would be steps that each of us can fit our feet into, to speak simply. I just commend the thought to the brethren. Think of Jacob and the way in which God worked with him; when he was younger he would have gone ahead with giant steps, to use an analogy, but I think as God worked with him in his heart and in his affections, he became measured in his steps. It could be said of him, when Esau was

going on ahead of him, that he would follow at the pace of the little ones and of the cattle, Gen 33: 14. What an affecting thing to take account of, the way that God had worked with Jacob! But just think of the way that our Lord Jesus has left us a Model, that those steps are not too big for each one of us to take and to learn from.

I think perhaps something is set out in John 13 as to the Model, "leaving you a model". We might say, understandably on account of the glory and the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of us feel very measured, but I think it is interesting in John 13 to take account that whilst John would emphasise the glory and the greatness of the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, something of the blessedness of His humanity comes out in that chapter in the way that He would take things up, the way in which it says, "lays aside his garments". Think of the dignity with which the Lord would move among these persons, not in any official way, not in any way as being obligated to do things, but, underlying all He did was the motivation of love. It says here, "having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end". Think of that, dear brethren, the love of Christ. It cannot be measured; it cannot be bounded; it is beyond measure; but to think of it and the care that He would have had for His own! Think of the suffering that He was going through at the time in His spirit! The intensity of what the Lord Jesus was experiencing impresses me. We go from chapter 13 through to chapter 19, a very compressed period of time, and yet these chapters bring out something of the intensity of what was entering into the Lord's life, and to think of the way in which, in spite of all the pressures that were upon Him, His knowing that Judas was going to betray Him - it says here, "And during supper, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon, Iscariote" - He was going ahead to serve His own in an undistracted way!

It is interesting to take account of the Lord Jesus as going through John's gospel, the way in which pressures and trials came in. You look at chapter 8 and the test that was brought in there, and the way in which the Lord Jesus met the matter of the woman taken in adultery impresses me. He met that matter, even though it was raised with the intention of distracting Him, but it is interesting to take account of the way in which He continued with His ministry. He was not distracted from it. Think of the way in which here in chapter 13 He takes account of His own. He knew all that was ahead of them, but He is going to set an example. The way that He did it is something for us to consider and to take account of, "leaving you a model that ye should follow in his

steps". I feel very tested in speaking about this chapter, dear brethren. I think we all have to say we are tested by it, searched by it, *really* searched by it, but this is something the Lord has left among us as a Model. May we be helped in relation to it!

I read in relation to Mary and Martha. It says of Martha that she was "troubled". The Lord's observation is interesting: "thou art careful and troubled about many things". In my own experience, I know what it is to be "careful and troubled about many things". There may be personal circumstances, household circumstances, circumstances in the meeting; all of which may test us and try us. They do me, and I get the impression that others would identify with me in this, but it says here, "but there is need of one, and Mary has chosen the good part". It seems that she had made a conscious decision to sit at the feet of Jesus and to listen to His word, to learn from that One, the blessed Model, the One of whom Peter says, as we have read already, "for Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you a model that ye should follow in his steps".

May we be helped in knowing what it is to follow in His steps, for His Name's sake!

Words in meeting for ministry in Sunbury

12th September 2016