

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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“I AM HE”

John 8: 21-30; 13: 16-20; 18: 4-9

PAG We have been considering together certain glories of Christ in passages where He says, “I am”. We have thought of food, “I am the bread of life” (John 6: 35); light, “I am the light of the world” (John 8: 12); and shepherding, “I am the door of the sheep” and “I am the good shepherd”, John 10: 7, 11. We thought this morning of features of life that emerged in taking account of Him: “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11: 25); and then “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14: 6); and then, “I am the true vine” (John 15: 1) and the fruit that came from that. Each of these features and glories of Christ, and the fruit gained from appreciation of them, relates to His coming into manhood; of course, we could not know Him otherwise. But this expression that we should consider together now, “I am he” brings His deity distinctively before us. Reference was made in prayer to Him as being “the Same”. There is a very close link between “I am He” and the One who is “the Same”, the self-existent One, who does not change, and that Person has come into manhood. The scripture in Exodus has been on my mind in thinking about this reading, “the place whereon thou standest is holy ground”, chap 3: 5.

This first section in John 8, “unless ye shall believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins”, is very sobering. He says to the Jews that unless they accept the Lord's Person - one might say in its entirety - “ye shall die in your sins”. He then goes on to say, “When ye shall have lifted up the Son of man, then ye shall know that I am he,” - that is one side, but then He says - “and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father has taught me I speak these things”. “I am he” is deity; “I do nothing of myself” is manhood. We cannot carry thoughts of His deity and His manhood simultaneously but we do see them side by side here, if I may use that expression. We see both presented to us, and it says, “As he spoke these things many believed on him”. They accepted what He said, and there was blessing in that. This is all in the setting of the rejection of His words, and yet He was going through to secure the glory of God.

Then where we read in chapter 13 He says, “I tell you it now before it happens, that when it happens, ye may believe that I am he”. We have referred previously to the scripture in the Acts where Peter speaks of “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”, chap 2: 23. Here He says, “I tell you it now before it happens”. Because of

who He was, He was party to “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”. He was God; He is God; and therefore nothing was obscured to Him. He says, “I tell you it now before it happens, that when it happens, ye may believe that I am he”. The Lord is referring in this context to Judas: he is not named, but nevertheless the Lord says, “He that eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me”. The Lord is going on with the purpose of God in the face of the fiercest opposition that Satan could marshal.

And then in John 18 the opposition comes more fully into view, “Jesus therefore, knowing all things that were coming upon him, went forth and said to them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus the Nazaræan. Jesus says to them, I am he. And Judas also, who delivered him up, stood with them”. Judas has now taken his place; he is standing with those who would put the Lord on the cross. “When therefore he said to them, I am he, they went away backward and fell to the ground.” The Lord's authority is unsurpassed, and never can be surpassed. “When therefore he said to them, I am he, they went away backward and fell to the ground”; not only could they not stand face to face with such a One, but they had to go back. Think of the time when it said, “What ailed thee, thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou turnedst back”, Ps 114: 5. There was a power there that could not be withstood.

But I want to leave us with this word, “As to those whom thou hast given me, I have not lost one of them”. Judas is not mentioned here. Elsewhere the Lord refers to “the son of perdition” (chap 17: 12), but that is now dealt with. His word is now fulfilled: “As to those whom thou hast given me, I have not lost one of them”. The One who says, “I am he”, the One who is “the Same”, “But thou art the Same, and thy years shall have no end” (Ps 102: 27), said, “I have not lost one of them”.

Can we enquire together?

JTB That is very affecting. The majesty of who He is really calls forth adoration and awe. The expression has been used 'His eternal personality', see C A Coates's Letters p191-6. In spite of His stoop into manhood, He remains the same; 'His eternal personality' remains. There used to be an expression, which I think had to be corrected, 'the unbegun beginning', but there was never a beginning to begin.

PAG No; “Before Abraham was, I am”, John 8: 58. We can only think

in time because of who we are, and God operates in time so that creatures such as we are may understand Him, but God is not a creature and He is not of time. He has come into it, but “from eternity to eternity thou art God”, Ps 90: 2. That applies to the One who is speaking here.

JTB I just wondered if you would say something about the fact that this passage in John 8 is essentially addressed to the Jews, “When ye shall have lifted up the Son of man, then ye shall know that I am he”. Why is attention drawn to the action of the Jews in relation to the glory of His Person?

PAG This would, as you say, relate to the Jews; it was their responsibility. We have referred previously to chapter 3 where it says, “thus must the Son of man be lifted up” (v 14); that was a divine necessity. And in chapter 12 on the other side of this, you might say, the Lord says, “I, if I be lifted up out of the earth” (v 32); so He becomes the Object, the gathering-centre as “lifted up out of the earth”. But in between God's necessity and God's gathering-centre, there is man's responsibility, and the Jew represents that here: “When ye shall have lifted up the Son of man, then ye shall know that I am he”. John presents the matter thus in his gospel, where it says, “When therefore Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished”, chap 19: 30. “It is finished”; none but this One, “I am he”, could have said that. The Jews had never seen anyone crucified on a cross who could say at the end, “It is finished”. In every other circumstance, the person who was crucified was finished, but in this circumstance, the Person on the cross was the One who finished the work. That would be the difference; but help us more as to how the Jews would know.

JTB They “shall wail because of him” (Rev 1: 7) when they see their Messiah. It will dawn on them then, I suppose, that the One who was lifted up was One who is God Himself.

PAG So the Lord is entitled, as far as the Jew is concerned, to look past this dispensation: “and they shall look on me whom they pierced, and they shall mourn for him ... every family apart”, Zech 12: 12, 14. In that sense they will accept their responsibility in relation to this. “Ye shall know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself”. They will recognise their Messiah as the One who was the sent One. They may not have come to it now, but nothing of what God has purposed is going to fail because it is all in His hands.

TJC Can you help us as to why in each expression the “he” is in brackets?

PAG I suppose it is added, no doubt under the direction of the Holy Spirit, for completeness, so that we may see the link to what was prophesied. It is interesting the number of times that this name “I am HE” comes into the prophet Isaiah. In chapter 41 you get it once (v 4); in chapter 43 you get it three times (v 10, 13, 25), and it is later on in chapters 51: 12 and 52: 6 as well. It is something that laid hold of the prophet as to the One who is the Same. It is a name of God; so that name, which Isaiah knew, as a result of the Spirit of Christ which was in him, is now here in reality, “I am he”. What would you say?

TJC I just wondered as to the expression, “I am”. What a thought that is! It just brought to mind Mr Darby's expression, 'In His existence eternal - in His nature divine - in His Person distinct', JND Synopsis on John's gospel p294. I wondered if it drew attention to the glory of the Person, the One that we know as the Lord Jesus.

PAG Yes, and here He calls Himself this name, “I am he”. In the Old Testament that comes in, but “the Same” is more an ascription by others so that is rendered 'Thou He' (Ps 102: 27 note), but here He says, “I am he”, and He alone is entitled to speak these words.

JCG Do you think this is brought out in the expression, “I am from above”? He does not exactly say 'I am from heaven' at this stage, but “I am from above”. Would it bring out His superiority and uniqueness?

PAG Yes, and I think it is also standing athwart the challenge of Satan when He says, “Ye are from beneath”. He does not say, 'Ye are from below'; He says, “Ye are from beneath”. Below might merely refer to some lower level, but Satan having fallen, “from beneath” suggests to me that which has its origin in “the depths of Satan”.

JCG In Psalm 114, which you referred to as to the sea and the Jordan, it says, “Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord”, v 7. It is to draw out reverence; the presence of God is to draw out reverence. James says, “*Thou* believest that God is one. Thou doest well. The demons even believe, and tremble”, Jas 2: 19.

PAG As I would understand it, this is John's way of presenting what the Lord said in Matthew that “hades' gates shall not prevail”, chap 16: 18. Hades' gates are really what is “from beneath”, and we see later on in John 18 where we read that it is organised. Hades' gates suggest

something organised, an administration of wickedness, but it is not prevailing.

NJH This revelation of Himself is holy ground, as you said earlier. You referred to Exodus where it says, "I AM THAT I AM", chap 3: 14. Now the "I am" is here, and those of the assembly have that holy ground available on which to gather.

PAG Yes; so the name of Jehovah was given there, and it was a name of relationship, and Moses was able to tell them that "I AM hath sent me unto you", but now He has not sent Moses to tell them; the "I am" is here.

GBG Linking on with what you said about the Old Testament, in Nehemiah the note to "Thou art the Same" (chap 9: 6) says, 'Thou art He'. These persons in John 13 did not appreciate this Person. Do you think the Lord appreciates persons that appreciate this glory of His, 'Thou art He'?

PAG Yes, that is right because John says in his first epistle, "Ye are of God, children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. *They* are of the world; for this reason they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. *We* are of God; he that knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. From this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error", 1 John 4: 4-6. This is the speaking of God in the presence of the speaking of the world, and the Lord is distinguishing between "the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" for His own. God greatly values those who take that up; "many believed on him".

EJM In Psalm 102 it says prophetically of the Lord,

"He weakened my strength in the way, he shortened my days.
I said, My God, take me not away in the midst of my days!"

Then the answer is:

"... Thy years are from generation to generation", v 23, 24.

Nations shall pass, "But thou art the Same", v 27.

PAG Yes, so is it not a contemplation for our souls that the One who can say "I am he" came into a condition in which He would take a place of subjection such that His strength would be weakened in the way? That would be His strength as Man; He would feel the weakness. We know that He was "wearied with the way he had come", John 4: 6. We

know that “he hungered”, Matt 4: 2. He felt these things and yet He remains inherently who He is. Do you think God would insist on that so that we would not in any way be led to devalue the fact that He became Man as though that was somehow a reduction in His place? He took a lower place; He took a place “some little inferior to the angels” (Heb 2: 7) but He always remains who He is.

DCB I was thinking of Philippians 2 which speaks of Him “subsisting in the form of God” (v 6); that is an eternal thought; it is the reality relating to His Person. Yet the way in which the crucifixion comes in there would affect us. The One who was “subsisting in the form of God” took a place of “becoming obedient even unto death” (v 8), but there is glory in the way in which He came into manhood.

PAG Yes; it should give us some impression of the extent of the stoop. You get in Ephesians 4, “He that descended is the same who has also ascended up above all the heavens, that he might fill all things”, v 10. How could He ascend “up above all the heavens”? Well, because He made them, and because of who He is, but yet the descent was “into the lower parts of the earth”, v 9. Now, that suggests to me that not only has He gone higher than any creature could, but He has also gone lower in the sense of meeting every question that needed to be answered.

DCB Everything from the depths to the height is under His control as Man. It is not only the fact that He is the Creator, but the fact that He has conquered death.

PAG Yes; He went into those depths. “He also descended into the lower parts of the earth”. Now, that is not the same as what is referred to here as “from beneath”. That suggests an area of corruption. He never saw corruption, but He went “into the lower parts of the earth”.

RB Should this presentation of Christ be part of the glad tidings?

PAG That is a very good question. We preach the word of God, and this would be included in the word of God, I would say. I would not constrain anyone by saying that they always have to mention particular things every time they preach, but what I would say is that the Lord says very explicitly here, “unless ye shall believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins”. I recall an incident when persons came to the door of my house, purporting to preach the gospel but they did not believe in the deity of Christ; that is not the gospel. Any preaching which sets aside or ignores the deity of Christ is not the gospel. The gospel involves that

He came from the glory of Godhead into manhood. He came into a condition in which He could die, and here He suffered and died for our sins and shed His blood and was buried and was raised again; and is now ascended to the right hand of God, and anything that cuts across that is not the gospel.

JL Is the acknowledgement of His deity not essential to His position as Mediator, and equally so in the acknowledgement of His manhood, otherwise that glory could not be fulfilled?

PAG Yes; so the thought of the Mediator, the “umpire” as it is presented in Job, is that He is one “who should lay his hand upon us both”, chap 9: 33. Now, please help us in the expansion of that.

JL Well, unless He was truly God, how could He understand what was essential to the satisfaction of the Godhead or come forth to bring into expression what was to be known of God; but equally how could He provide for man unless He became a Man and suffered and died as He has done? I do not presume to be able to expand it sufficiently. It is a marvellous glory that encompasses these two thoughts.

PAG So in Colossians we are told as to His present condition, “For in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col 2: 9); so He remains a man and yet the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him. He must thus be God. We do not need to prove it in that way. It is something that faith can lay hold of, but there is nonetheless a substantiality of evidence in the Scriptures as to His Person.

JL How essential then in relation to the glad tidings. Without the Mediator, where is the gospel?

PAG Well, indeed, because then there is no one to stand between man and God, and man is thus judged. That is not the gospel, is it? The gospel is that there is a righteous basis for man to be reconciled to God.

JD Is it so that atonement involves a Man having God's measure of sin? That Man must thus be God.

PAG That is helpful, because in the words that we have referred to in John 19 He says, “It is finished”; He therefore was One who was able to judge that it was finished, and judge it according to the standard that God Himself would set.

JCG Romans begins with “God's glad tidings ... concerning his Son

.... marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead”, chap 1: 1-4. That shows the greatness of God in His essential Being manifested in Jesus.

PAG Where we were reading previously in John 11, the Lord first says, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it” (v 4), and then further on in the chapter He says, “Did I not say to thee, that if thou shouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?”, v 40.

RG-y Do you think what we are speaking of is gathered up in John 14 where the Lord says, “I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be”, v 3? There is no question of the matter being broken up; it is the Person, “where I am ye also may be”. Paul says, “For we know in part, and we prophesy in part” (1 Cor 13: 9), but the time comes when the whole matter is complete, and we see it in Him clearly.

PAG That is helpful. “Where I am” was characteristically true of Him; “where I am”, “the Son of man who is in heaven”, John 3: 13. These things do require the power of the Holy Spirit in order to understand them because we would otherwise be confused. He says in John 17, when He speaks to the Father, as to “the glory which I had along with thee”, v 5. He had that glory not simply as looking on, but both as to presence and as to place He had a glory with the Father.

RG-y What you say is helpful, including the thought of place, “that where I am ye also may be”. Do you not think in present exercises in relation to conditions in local assemblies, God really insists on the fact that He sets His Name and gives His truth in a place, and that orders the gathering of the saints, do you think?

PAG So the Lord has a place, and the saints have a place, and it is all in God's ordering. A brother was remarking to me after the last reading, as to the matter of fruit in John 15, that the Lord has set them, and the Lord has set us where we are. One of the things that I do have an exercise about, in relation to this expression and this Name, “I am he”, is that it involves the Lord's invincible authority. We cannot gainsay this authority: “I am he”.

JCG In Revelation He “walks in the midst of the seven golden lamps”, chap 2: 1.

PAG Yes, and He chooses; He walks; they do not tell Him where to

walk; He walks; and He is taking account of what He sees; and He is taking account of those who are responsible; He speaks to the angel - that would be responsible persons - and it is none less than He who is speaking.

JCG Would you say that Daniel had some light in his soul when he speaks about “the Ancient of days” coming? I know it is the great judgment in Daniel 7, but when he says, “the Ancient of days,” referring to days, it must surely refer to Christ coming in, do you think?

PAG I would say it does, and it is striking that you get something of that. The first presentation, as I understand it, of this name, “I am HE”, is in relation to judgment in Deuteronomy 32: 39, 40:

See now that I, I am HE,
And there is no god with me;
I kill, and I make alive;
I wound, and I heal,
And there is none that delivereth out of my hand,
For I lift up my hand to the heavens, and say,
I live for ever!

The fact is that there is authority and judgment vested in the One who says, “I am he”.

NCMcK The One whom we know as the Lord Jesus also in His divine power created the worlds, created everything, created us. That gives Him an authority as Creator as well as what He has accomplished in redemption. He did not accomplish redemption as a mere man; the One who accomplished redemption was God Himself in His Person; but He was the One who had the right to redeem as being Creator as well. In regard to that there was more than mere manhood, would you say?

PAG Revelation 4 and 5 deal with His glory as Creator, and His glory as Redeemer, but it says at the end of chapter 4, “Thou art worthy, O our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honour and power; for *thou* hast created all things, and for thy will they were, and they have been created”, v 11. So that is creation. But then in relation to redemption, it says, “To him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb,” - so that is really the oneness of the Godhead - “blessing, and honour, and glory, and might, to the ages of ages. And the four living creatures said, Amen; and the elders fell down and did homage”, chap 5: 13, 14. So in creation He is acknowledged as “our Lord and our God” and in

redemption, you might say, as “him that sits upon the throne, and ... the Lamb”; they are brought together to receive this “blessing, and honour, and glory, and might, to the ages of ages”. How great He is!

NCMcK It certainly gives Him that authority to meet the whole matter of redemption as being Creator. It must be as a divine Person He did that; no mere man could have done that.

PAG No. I feel that, that some impression of the intrinsic, personal greatness of who He is would help us. We know what He is, we might say, officially, and we also know what He is morally, but some touch of who He is personally would enliven us, and I think it would steady us too.

JTB That scripture in Zechariah is very affecting, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, even against the man that is my fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts: smite the shepherd”, chap 13: 7. The One who came into manhood was none other than God Himself, Jehovah's “fellow” in that sense.

PAG Yes. The hymn says,

His, who Jehovah's Fellow stood,
And claimed equality with God,
Whose glory knows no bound (Hymn 224).

The One 'Whose glory knows no bound' came into circumstances here where He did accept what it was to be bounded, and yet His 'glory knows no bound'.

DHM It is fitting that when the Lord makes Himself known in the breaking of bread that firstly we engage in worship towards Him. We come together to break bread. The terms of the Lord's request are not exactly that we remember what He has done, although the emblems on the table and remaining on the table would always affect us as to what the Lord Jesus has done, but we gather to remember *Him*, and I wonder if there is that time in the service when we are entirely engaged with Him and His greatness and glory, and hence we worship.

PAG There is a thanksgiving. You might say, we are thankful for the loaf and for the cup, but when He presents Himself in His glory, Joseph's “sheaf rose up, and remained standing” (Gen 37: 7), and the other sheaves bowed down. There is the moment really where worship is proper. Some impression of the *greatness* of who is there, the One who has come in, the One of whom it is said, “being the effulgence of his

glory and the expression of his substance” (Heb 1: 3) - and there He is in the midst - would surely promote worship in our hearts, would it not?

DCB Say something about the importance of believing in this connection, because the Lord refers to it twice, including, “for unless ye shall believe that I am he”.

PAG I think it is important that we go beyond what I would describe as mere acknowledgment. I think believing means that there is a full acceptance of the Person. You could probably in some quarters get persons to acknowledge that the Lord was a good Man, and some might even acknowledge what He did, that He came as a babe in Bethlehem's manger, lived a life of perfection, died on the cross and rose again. All these things are right in their place, and they are all true, but I think *believing* in this setting involves the acceptance of His Person; so John says as to his own writing, “these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life in his name”, John 20: 31. Believing is the access to the Person who is the life-giving Spirit.

JW In Revelation He appeared to John in judicial garb, and John says, “I fell at his feet as dead; and he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; / am the first and the last”, chap 1: 17.

PAG Yes; a brother was commenting about that at the interval: “he laid his right hand upon me”. What a hand of power that is! “Fear not”! Would the Lord not do that for us, lay His right hand upon us and say, “Fear not”? I believe He would do that.

JW There is no one greater to do it, is there?

PAG No, and we might have to see Him in His judicial garb in certain circumstances because there is what needs to be taken up and dealt with, but even at that He would say, “Fear not”. I believe the Lord greatly desires to have His affections in liberty. At that point He was “girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle”, v 13. It was necessary for the moment, but the Lord wants us to be in the free-flow of His affections; He truly does.

We might look at chapter 13. You asked about believing. The Lord says, “If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them”. There would be some evidence of believing, do you think?

DCB That is helpful. They are looking on to a time “when it happens”. Think of what there was going to be, and they would get some fresh

impression of Christ in glory as they really went through, as far as they possibly could, these experiences.

PAG “When it happens”, and the things that happened include, “My kingdom is not of this world”, chap 18: 36. That happened. The abuse, the crown of thorns and the purple robe, that happened. The cry to crucify Him, that happened too. But it also says, “he went out, bearing his cross, to the place called place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha”, chap 19: 17. And then the inscription was written. Pilate says, “What I have written, I have written”, v 22. Then He went on to the point where He says, “It is finished” (v 30), and then His blood was shed (v 34), and then He was buried, v 41. All these things happened, and all were according to “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2: 23), and they would be seen. John saw it and he recorded it and he says, “his witness is true”, John 19: 35. Do you think that would all relate to this, “I am he”? John says, 'I saw that and my witness is true'.

DCB And through it he has that continuing appreciation of “I am He”, of the Person, the deity of Christ, that is always there and unchangeable.

PAG Yes, even when some of the disciples had gone away a little, it is John who says, “It is the Lord”, chap 21: 7. He recognised Him. That changeless, perfect One trod every footstep in devotion to the will of His God and Father and in perfect manhood, and yet John never lost that sense of wonder, “I am He”.

NJH Scripture refers to His having not lost one “but the son of perdition” (John 17: 12) and Judas was the one, as we see later, that fell away backward. Here He says, “I speak not of you all. I know those whom I have chosen”.

PAG We cannot reach back into the purpose of God exactly. What we do know is that from God's side there are “vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared for glory”, Rom 9: 23. That is God's side. It also refers to “vessels of wrath fitted for destruction” (v 22); God does not fit us for destruction, but Judas's acts fitted him for destruction. That is what he did.

JCG Is it diverting to ask about one who “lifted up his heel against me”? Does that go back to Genesis 3? Is the word the same?

PAG Well, Satan would know of that promise, and that God had also

said that Satan would crush the heel of the woman's seed, but the seed would crush his head. How could it be otherwise? Satan is a great being, "the anointed covering cherub" (Ezek 28: 14); he had a place; but there is One that is greater and that is the One who created him. It says, "he shall crush thy head", Gen 3: 15. The Lord would accept that there would be that side of bruising that would apply to Him, but even that He did not accept from Satan. It says, "Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him", Isa 53: 10.

BWL The setting of this is in a scene of love really, is it not? Judas was there, but I was thinking of what was said earlier as to the Lord coming in, presenting Himself in His glory. There is that which attracts, and do you think in the inside position there are those that appreciate that glory? When you come to your last scripture, I think the glory of the Person repels opposers, but in relation to those that love Him it is very attractive.

PAG It is. Judas went out; it says, "he went out immediately; and it was night", John 13: 30. He could not stay in that presence any longer, but John was "leaning on the breast of Jesus", v 25. "One of his disciples in the bosom of Jesus", it says here, v 23. That is where he desired to be. That is something for us to take account of, that One so great would make His bosom available to us that we might be in it. The note suggests it is, 'one of his disciples *on* the bosom of Jesus'. It draws attention to nearness and restfulness, I believe.

GBG We have been speaking about when the Lord comes in, and we worship Him. Do you think it is good always to have a worshipful spirit in relation to the Lord Jesus? It is also an individual matter. If we were in a worshipful spirit in relation to that Person, we would be glad to do what He says and not fight against it.

PAG I think a spirit of worship, as you are suggesting, is protective. It is protective from the world, but also protective from our own wills because we are occupied with Someone other than ourselves, but not just in relation to what He has done, which is a wonderful thing in itself, but in relation to who He is. To be occupied with Christ because of who He is really brings spiritual refinement into our souls.

AMB Do you think too that the Father would be delighted to see that worshipful spirit among those who belong to the Lord? Would what you are bringing before us speak to us of the importance of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus in our souls? We need to develop in our knowledge of

this Person and, as we do, we will develop in our sense of worship in His presence, and that is pleasing to the Father.

PAG I do think that. “God highly exalted him, and granted him a name, that which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow”, Phil 2: 9, 10. Now, some will bow in a day to come because it will be required of them, but I think there is much more for the heart of the Father in persons bowing to Jesus because they desire to do so. Would that be right?

AMB I am sure that is right. I am impressed with the delight that God would have in saints with a true appreciation in their hearts of who this blessed One is. The Father knows Him uniquely in the sense that “no one knows the Son but the Father” (Matt 11: 27), but there is joy for the Father in saints desiring to know this Person and to be worshipful in His presence.

PAG Do you think we get some impression of that in the teaching as to the burnt-offering, Lev 1? We know, and we have often been reminded, that the burnt-offering was for God. It was not eaten by the priests. Nevertheless the offerer laid his hands on the head of the burnt-offering, and the priest had the skin of the burnt-offering; so one might say the glory and virtue of the burnt-offering was available to the priest, and the elements, or components, of the burnt-offering were to be distinguished by the washing in water, the head and the legs and the inwards. Now, in that sense, the offerer of the burnt-offering is presenting something that is for God, and yet it speaks of appreciation of Christ.

DJH It is very profound that He should be as He is and yet remain a Man. That is what has been impressing me, the fact that though He was who He is in His Person, as we had in the first scripture, yet immediately He says after saying that, “I do nothing of myself”. That is really wonderful.

PAG It is, and because He remains a Man, we will be able to see Him: “we know that if it is manifested we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is”, 1 John 3: 2. We will be able to see Him; we will be able to speak to Him; and He will speak to us; and God will be known. We shall know even as we have been known, 1 Cor 13: 12. We will be in His presence, and there will be nothing to hinder that. The glory of it is seen in 1 Corinthians 15, “when all things shall have been brought into subjection to him, then the Son also shall be placed in subjection to him,

who put all things in subjection to him, that God may be all in all", v 28. Christ remaining Man in that sense brings us into the enjoyment of what it will be that "God may be all in all".

DJH Mr James Taylor added - when he was asked about that scripture - that God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit "may be all in all", vol 35 p263. Wonderful that that glorious revelation remains and will remain throughout eternity!

PAG And because Christ is Man, to the degree that it is suitable for creatures, we will have access to that. We will not have access to Deity, but we will have access to the Person in whom it is known eternally.

NCMcK I wondered if you could say why the matter of the Lord being a divine Person in manhood was necessary, as much as His being in manhood was necessary. Mr Darby has a remark that 'His Godhead rendered His obedience meritorious and transferable', Collected Writings vol 12 p60. It made it effective for us, the fact that there was a divine Person in manhood. Would you say something about that?

PAG Well, I suppose we are limited in what we can say, but it was God's way of coming near - so He has "spoken to us in the person of the Son" (Heb 1: 2), but the Person who is the Son, who is known to us as the Son, is God; so it was not an indirect message. God was speaking "in the person of the Son", and in that way it was the very voice of God.

RG-y Does this emphasise then the importance of the Supper? I was thinking of the Supper itself bringing before us the greatness of the Person and all that flows out of that, when we come to a position where we see everything in order as God would have it to be. Everything to do with the moral question is finished; everything displeasing to Him is dealt with; all that flows out of our gathering to remember the Lord Jesus. That would help us to maintain what you are speaking about.

PAG Yes, we may think that the time of the Supper is for us to speak to divine Persons and so it is, but they speak to us first. When we come in, when we assemble to break bread, we see the loaf and the cup on the table. They are there, physically in front of us. Divine Persons are speaking *to us*. We see the saints; we take account of them; and we see the work of God in them. Before we speak to the Lord, He first speaks to us. We "announce the death of the Lord, until he come", (1 Cor 11: 26) - that is the public side; but you could hardly think of a more powerful speaking than the loaf and the cup on the table there in front of us, and the work of God in the saints, manifest before our very eyes.

RG-y When the disciples were sent by the Lord to look for a suitable place, He said, “and *he* will shew you a large upper room furnished ready”, Mark 14: 15. Who furnished it? We can say that God furnished it, and so it is in relation to the Supper, a divine provision which we do well to get the full benefit and blessing of, do you think?

PAG Yes; the Lord Himself in His instruction to Paul, says, “This is my body, which is for you”, 1 Cor 11: 24. That means it is a divine provision. “In like manner also the cup, after having supped, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood”, v 25. That is God's provision. So we have the Lord's provision and God's provision directly before us when we come together.

RG-y That helps.

WMP Do these words of the Lord Jesus, “I tell you it now before it happens”, have a very present meaning for us?

PAG Well, they have this bearing, I firmly believe, that nothing that happens takes divine Persons by surprise. We might not know why things have happened, but God knows, and the Lord knows.

WMP I was just following up on what our brother has just said, that if the Lord makes Himself known to us as He does, He brings us into the intimacy and knowledge of His headship. There may be something of a prophetic character entering into that. The prophetic word is helpful at the ministry meeting and that would also enter into the matter.

PAG The Lord, now on high, would speak to His assembly and, in that sense, prepare her, but also the Spirit “will announce to you what is coming”, John 16: 13. Now, the question I ask myself very soberly is: have I been listening, because certain things have come in, but have I been listening? But then the encouragement is that the One who is able to carry it through is the One who says, “I am he”.

DAB When we speak of the greatness of the Lord as “I am he” it brings about a reverence as to the greatness of His Person, but it does not repel us. The glory of Christ attracts us. In man's world glory might bring in fear, but with the Lord as He comes in it attracts us towards Him - whereas the glory of who this Person was made these persons fall away backwards. We are embraced in the blessedness of who that Person is; the glory really enfolds us.

PAG Subjection to the Lord's absolute authority draws us into the sphere of His affections; rejection of His authority brings in judgment. It

says, “they went away backward and fell to the ground”; they could not even stand in the presence of it. They were set at nought. Now, because it was the will of God that the Lord should be taken, matters proceeded after that, but there was a demonstration at that moment that the Deity was there, and man, the first order of man, could not approach it. Yet men were allowed to lay wicked hands upon Him because it was God's will, but for us we can approach because of what was drawn to our attention earlier: there is a Mediator, and the Mediator brings God to man. It says, “The mediator of God and men one” (1 Tim 2: 5), but in order for God to be brought to man, there had to be One who occupied that place in Godhead who became Man, as we have been saying, and the Mediator having brought God to man, the Priest brings man to God.

NJH I was considering what was said about furnishing. I wondered if the setting out of the truth in the first Corinthian epistle shows that furnishings include the removal of the party spirit and judgment of evil before the Supper is introduced.

PAG One thing we could say without in any way diminishing the work of God in each believer is that if we have an impression of the Lord's own title “I am he”, that removes me entirely, does it not? There is only One who is entitled to say, “I am he”, and therefore who I am, and what I might think, and all the things I might think are due to me, must go, and everything is due to that blessed One. The furnishing of the room would involve, I think, that anything that was not suitable had been excluded from it, and then it would be the appropriate atmosphere or place in which the Lord could make His further thoughts known.

TJC It is “Jesus the Nazaræan”; it is that name that brings out the Lord's words, “I am he”. Can you open that up for us?

PAG “Whom seek ye? And they answered, Jesus the Nazaræan.” I suppose that was a name of reproach as far as they were concerned. I suppose it was probably a name that they held in contempt, and when that One whom they held in contempt said, “I am he, they went away backward and fell to the ground”. The world holds the Lord in contempt; we should not forget that. You drew our attention yesterday to what we might even have in the palms of our hands. Do we want to let the world that holds the Lord in contempt come into our own hands? Is that what we want? No, we do not! I am not accusing anyone of it. I truly believe we do not; so let us see to that then, but the fact is the One who says “I am he” carries everything through for God, and the world's contempt is

swept aside.

JCG These persons are affected by the presentation of the Lord in this way because they repeat the same thing. The second question brings out the same remark as to Jesus the Nazaraean. It shows that the Lord “knowing all things that were coming upon him” knew what was proceeding, but we need to be affected by the presence of the One who was there in all His greatness.

PAG We have spoken about light and faith and believing. The light was here, but there was no faith and no belief, and this is what happens to persons: if they do not respond to the light, they fall to the ground. But if you do respond to the light we come into the good of the statement “that the word might be fulfilled which he spoke, As to those whom thou hast given me, I have not lost one of them”. Any who are responsive to the light, any who are believers, will not be lost.

TWL Would it be right to say that here, where John makes reference to “Jesus therefore knowing all things that were coming upon him, went forth and said to them”, this is the “I am” moving according to the purpose of God apart from the acts of men? This is the “I am” moving forward according to the purpose of God. Would that be right?

PAG Yes. If you read this with the natural eye, you might think that men were in control of what was happening here, but they were not; the Lord was in control. A brother ministered in Edinburgh some months ago about that: the Lord is in control. He was then, and He is now, and He always will be. He was moving in the perfect dignity of His manhood and yet, because of who He was, we read at the end of John 3, “The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand”, v 35. Everything was still in His hands here despite what men were doing.

TWL I was thinking of it from the aspect of what we read in John 17, the intercourse between two divine Persons, and it is after that that you see Him moving: He “went forth” of Himself. He is going according to all the dignity and the glory of Himself to accomplish God’s purpose.

PAG Yes, and John was taking account of that. It brings about self-judgment in John, because we would not know, if John had not told us, that he was the one who saw to it that Peter was admitted to the palace of the high priest. John tells us that; he did not have to, but he did because he had judged the fact that he had let the Lord down. The Lord knows all these things and He says, “I have not lost one of them”. The “I am” is unassailable.

JTB The resting-place which the ark gained for the people in Numbers 10: 33 was out ahead. The ark was there taking the initiative to secure a resting-place. The fact is that we are secure in Christ, we have found our resting-place, do you think?

PAG A resting-place for the ark, a resting-place for the people, and a resting-place for God: He has done everything. We cannot entirely compass these words, "It is finished". We can look right on to the day in Revelation 21 where it says, "It is done", v 6. These words are part of that blessed, divine accomplishment, "It is done", when everything will be for God. But as to this resting-place, do you think that is, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God", John 20: 17? It says in the hymn,

Love's resting-place together shared (Hymn 180).

JTB We have been brought home to where Christ is. It is our dwelling-place, the Father's house.

PAG What a consideration that God would bring us home to Himself, and not as strangers, not as servants, but bring us home with Christ as sons, sons for the Father. Here is the One who is accomplishing that, and while the opposition was awful, there was no suggestion at any point that there would be any deviation from the will of God, nor that any feature of what God had sought would have to be missed out or left behind: "I have not lost one of them".

JL Does that make those words, "the cup which the Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" very precious, v 11? "They went away backward and fell to the ground", but He was going forward in full completion of the Father's will.

PAG Do you think that is a word for us that the Lord kept going forwards, and without overemphasising it, really for us there is either forwards or backwards? There is not somewhere in between. The ark is moving to its resting-place. The Lord is moving on even now, having in view God's eternal glory. We should be exercised to move on with Him.

GAB In chapter 19 it says, "(Jesus therefore went forth without, wearing the crown of thorn, and the purple robe)", v 5. He is moving forward in invincible power. They may have put a crown of thorn on Him, but, according to John's account, they cannot take off the purple robe.

PAG “Wearing the crown of thorn”: He accepted the suffering that was involved. They had no doubt arranged it in a way that would cause pain and suffering, but He “went forth without, wearing the crown of thorn”. Why did He wear it? Well, it was His Father’s will: “the cup which the Father has given me, shall I not drink it?” “And the purple robe”: they could not take His kingly dignity away from Him. It could not be removed from Him. They had no right to it, and He had every right to it, and then “he went out, bearing his cross”, chap 19: 17. Who could measure the weight of that cross, “bearing his cross”? No other man could have borne that cross in all it meant. Paul speaks of “the blood of his cross”, Col 1: 20. That is a special cross, a distinctive cross, and He bore it, and He finished everything and He shed His blood and He died and He rose. There is nothing left to be done.

**At three-day meetings in Edinburgh,
21st October 2017**

Key to Initials:

R Bain, Buckie; A M Brown, Grangemouth; D A Brown, Grangemouth;
D C Brown, Edinburgh; G A Brown, Grangemouth; J T Brown,
Edinburgh; T J Campbell, Glasgow; J Drummond, Aberdeen;
G B Grant, Dundee; J C Gray, Grangemouth; P A Gray, Grangemouth;
R Gray, Grangemouth; N J Henry, Glasgow; D J Hutson, Edinburgh;
J Laurie, Brechin; T W Lock, Edinburgh; B W Lovie, Aberdeen; E J Mair,
Buckie; D H Marshall, Edinburgh; N McKay, Glasgow; W M Patterson,
Glasgow; J Webster, Fraserburgh

SWEETNESS

G Allan Brown

Judges 14: 5, 6 (to “hand”), 8, 9 (to “as he went”), 14 (to “sweetness”), 18 (from “What is” to “lion”)

I am just carrying forward, dear brethren, an impression from Lord's day. This is quite a remarkable passage of scripture. Samson at this point, I think, is a type to us of the Lord Jesus, and this young lion is a type of death, the power of death. Our opening hymn on Lord's day contained the words:

The power of death has witnessed
The strength of love divine. (Hymn 263)

This has been with me since then. What a matter it was: the Lord Jesus here, a Man in perfection! The penalty of death lies upon every other man, but not on Jesus, because there was no sin. “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6: 23), and every one of us has been touched by the awful effects of sin, and therefore the consequence of that is death. But in the Lord Jesus here there was no sin and therefore there was no penalty of death upon Him. This young lion, which seems to me to represent the power of death, which had gone unchallenged in the course of humanity from Adam onward, as has been said before, no doubt would have devoured Samson. Bringing it forward into the great anti-type, death, as another one of our hymn says:

Death had on Thee no claim (Hymn 152).

Death met its superior, its conqueror, when the Lord Jesus faced death. He went into it, not like other men who had to succumb to death; the Lord Jesus *invaded* death. He went in there as superior to it and overcame it and rose from the dead. That, I think, is what is implied when it says of this young lion, “he rent it as one rends a kid”. That is to say, the victory was unquestioned. The victory was total and it was glorious when the Lord Jesus came out of death, having broken its power for ever. It says, “nothing was in his hand”. The Lord Jesus used no sword, no weapon. He had no organisation, as men think of it, no armies behind Him, nothing. Alone He met that awful power and conquered it, alone! He needed no instrument to help. He did it in the power of His own Person. Nothing could challenge the Lord Jesus as He went into death.

But then what comes out of it, what I want to come to, was that when Samson looked at the carcase of the lion later, it says, “there was

a swarm of bees in the carcase of the lion, and honey". That speaks to us surely of sweetness. That is what has come out of the death of Jesus, sweetness. There is sweetness for us in the sense we have of joy that we have been relieved of all our burdens; certainly there is that for us. But there is something for Him too as He takes account of the fruit, the results of His death. Hymn 152 goes on to say,

Out of Thy death has sprung
A wondrous living throng.

Think of how the Lord Jesus must look around that glorious company of which we are part. However small a part we may be, we belong to this great, glorious universal company. The Lord Jesus looks upon it. What must it mean to Him because it says of the honey, "he took it out in his hands, and went on, and ate as he went". How the Lord, I would say with reverence, enjoys what is His now as the fruit of His death:

Out of the eater came forth food,
And out of the strong came forth sweetness.

I was impressed with this suggestion in verse 18. The question is asked,

What is sweeter than honey,
And what stronger than a lion?

If we think of the lion in man's estimation, it is said to be the king of beasts, one of the most powerful of animals. The Lord Jesus is stronger than that. The most powerful thing that exists in creation, the Lord Jesus is superior to all that, stronger than the lion. He has been able to overcome it, "rent it as one rends a kid". That is what the Lord Jesus has done. But then, "What is sweeter than honey?". I think in this setting the honey might represent what is natural. There is much to be enjoyed in the way of natural affections and other legitimate relationships. Dear brethren, the fact of the matter is there is something that is sweeter than all that, the love of Jesus!

The love of Jesus, what it is,
None but His loved ones know. (Hymn 279)

"Sweeter than honey": that is the Lord we know and love. May He become more and more attractive to us!

**Word in meeting for ministry, Grangemouth,
10th October 2017**

THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Archie D Melville

Proverbs 30: 21-33

I am just impressed by these verses to say a few words as to the characteristics of the people of God. Solomon was one of the wisest men that ever lived and probably one of the richest as well. He had the power, the capacity and the ability to investigate, and to do and examine whatever he felt he needed to do. There is no doubt he had wisdom; he asked for wisdom as a young man coming to the throne. He asked for wisdom, not power, or position, or place, or anything; he asked for wisdom. In verse 21, he summarises what is going on upon the earth: "Under three things the earth is disquieted, and under four it cannot bear up". These are negative things, not to dwell upon them, but to say that this world is largely governed by these principles, and it cannot bear up; it will not bear up.

We begin with "a servant when he reigneth". The servant is rightly in a position of subjection; so the principle of subjection is set aside, because the servant should obey. Then we have "a churl when he is filled with meat"; he is a person who is described as a fool, or a vile person. I think that we might say that indulgence marks him; he is full of indulgence. Then there is "an odious woman when she is married"; we look in the Scriptures and find persons such as Jezebel in a place of insubjection, and in a place of dominance, which is wrong. And finally, "a handmaid when she is heir to her mistress"; she is to be the person who would inherit, so she would be ambitious.

Now none of these principles has a place in the assembly of God; they have no place among the children of God. The wise writer of this book brings them before us to give us a warning. Then he goes on to matters that do mark the children of God: "four things little upon the earth". The Lord described those who came to Him as a "little flock" (Luke 12: 32), intentionally, I think, because they were not supposed to be in places of greatness, honour or influence in the world. It speaks here about these ants, "a people not strong", yet what we do understand about the ants is that they are a community; they work together, and "they provide their food in the summertime". Well, there is no better time than the present to be called the summertime, because God's disposition towards us is one of abundant provision. The ants provide their food in the summertime, and they are full of energy; if you

watch them, they are never sluggish. They are always in movement, and they are always working in a community. How like the assembly of God that is. They work to provide their food. Food is what sustains us, and we are always in need of food. "The rock badgers are but a feeble folk". Those who are feeble are dependent for what they need, and they are not ambitious, nor are they persons who have great outward strength. "Yet, they make their house in the cliff"; the cliff is a high place; it is an elevated place. In this setting, it would mean a place of safety; they were where the enemies could not get them; they could not reach up to them in a place in the cliff. We have been taken into favour in the Beloved; we are in that position of safety in the cliff. "The locusts have no king, yet they go forth all of them by bands"; there is no king for the locusts, but they also work together. How true that is of the saints here; there is no public king. There is a King in heaven - we have reference to the King that is in heaven - but there is no king here. When men look at the feeble folk who meet together, they say, 'Who is in charge of this company? Who is in charge of this meeting?'. Well, we have no king, but we do recognise authority. And we do recognise the authority of Christ. "Yet they go forth all of them by bands"; there is the idea of going forth in the thought of the bundle that we have had recently. A band is not the thought of opposition; it is a band of community, of working together in local assemblies. Then, "thou takest hold of the lizard with the hands". How often the saints of God have been persecuted; they have been taken by the hands and discarded; "yet is she in king's palaces". That is where this lizard belongs, in the highest place of privilege in the land, in the king's palace.

In the next section it speaks about things that have a stately step; we can be feeble, but we can move in dignity. "Four are comely in going: The lion, mighty among beasts". We know that the Lord Himself is called "the lion which is of the tribe of Juda", Rev 5: 5. It adds, "mighty among beasts", and "turneth not away for any". You might ask, how that is compatible with being feeble folk. The point is, that he "turneth not away for any" - that is, any evil adversary that would rise up against him. The lion would not turn away; that is, there would be no fear; Timothy was encouraged to be courageous; he was, perhaps, lacking in the lion feature, like many of us are. But, the lion is "mighty among beasts", and "turneth not away for any". When a question of principle is at stake, then this lion goes forward and deals with what is evil. Indeed, the Lord Himself in the day to come, will go forward against Satan and cast him out in a final and full way. The "horse is girt in the loins": it is full

of energy; it is to be occupied in divine things. We know the horse can have a different application, but it is put along with the lion here, in order that the battle might be accomplished. “A horse girt in the loins; or the he-goat”: the he-goat seems to be a lonely animal; our path, in one sense, is a lonely path. It is a path that does not get involved with the goings-on of this world; it is a path of separation. And then, “a king, against whom none can rise up”. The whole section concludes with that, with the dignity and regal character of the king, against whom no one can rise up. Well, that is true; we do not need to be in fear of Satan; we know that He who is for us is greater than he who is against us. So, we are able to rise up, as a king, against whom no one can rise up.

But then, I think, we would all have to consider these last two verses. “If thou hast done foolishly”: who has not done foolishly, lifting himself up in pride or ambition, or some other way? “Or if thou hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth”. This is what Job had to do (Job 40: 4), finally, when God came down and spoke to him, and showed him the glory of His creatorial power, and the greatness of His person; he repented in dust and ashes. He laid his hand upon his mouth; he had no more to say. That is a great point to arrive at - when we have no more to say, and no evil thoughts! But, then, we might want to insist on our own ideas and views. “The pressing of milk bringeth forth butter”; you might say that is a good thing but “the pressing of the nose bringeth forth blood; and the pressing of anger bringeth forth strife”. Let us be careful in what we are pressing, that the result might be for good, and not for blood. May the Lord help us.

Word in a meeting for ministry, Grangemouth

17th October 2017

THE SPIRIT'S MEN

Terry W Lock

Genesis 24: 57-59

Acts 13: 1-3

Ephesians 3: 1-5

2 Timothy 2: 21

I have been thinking about this matter of the Spirit's men. It is very interesting that in this scripture in Genesis 24 you have the whole scope of what was in the mind of the Father in relation to Christ as seen in the type, which shows what Abraham had in mind for Isaac, and you have the oath that was made by the servant, typifying the Spirit of God, putting his hand under Abraham's thigh in relation to the oath and what he would do and how he would work, showing all of these things given to him, suggesting all the feelings that were there, all that the Father desired in relation to Christ. So the servant goes away, and scripture speaks about the camels, and what happened at the time when Rebecca was there and the water that was drawn, and it goes all the way through to the time of the giving of the gold articles, and through to the time of the meeting with Laban and to the housing of the servant and of the camels. It goes through all those things, and then it says, "And they ate and drank, he and the men that were with him". It does not say anything about those men at the time of the giving of the articles, nor does it say anything about those men at the time of the drawing of the water, but they were there. Typically they were the Spirit's men; they were the Spirit's men who were going along in line with the Father's thoughts for His Son. They were the ones that were there, subject indeed to what God was doing by the Spirit. So it says that then they went away, "And Rebecca arose, and her maids, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man" (v 61), but it says a little earlier where we read, "And they sent away Rebecca their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, **and his men**". What happens after that is "Isaac was comforted after the death of his mother", v 67. The servant's men, the Spirit's men as I am applying it, were part of that. One of the things in the day in which we live, beloved brethren, is that it is possible to be one of the Spirit's men in relation to the satisfaction of the heart of Christ. It is a wonderful thing to have part in that, and to know as being intelligent in relation to the Father's thoughts of Christ that you can have part in what the Spirit is doing to satisfy the heart of the Man precious to the Father. Wonderful thing to be one of the Spirit's

men! The men there were not named, not one of them, but they were there just the same. God knew who they were, Abraham knew who they were, and the servant knew who they were. He knew the ones that he could take, suggesting One who knew those who would carry on in the light of the feelings that were between the Father and the Son. They were faithful men characteristically, which was one of the features seen in Barnabas and Saul.

At the beginning of Acts 13, you can look at the history that had been there with Barnabas, and you can understand Barnabas being chosen. Barnabas was a faithful man, full of the Holy Spirit, and he had given up his possessions in relation to the assembly of God, chap 4: 36, 37. He had done those things. He had been a faithful man. But you may ask 'What about Saul? Why Saul? Why "Separate me now Barnabas and Saul"? - and notice it is not Paul. Why such a man as that? Because such a man as that had light of a Man in heaven and had a distinct revelation from a Man in heaven in relation to what was precious to Himself, "why dost thou persecute me?", chap 9: 4. That had never been given to anybody else before; that had never been said like that before. That revelation was distinct to Saul who became Paul; he had been given this, but the other thing that he says later on in the book of the Acts when he is speaking to Agrippa is, "Whereupon, king Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision", Acts 26: 19. That was the vision he received when he was on the way to Damascus. He was here, serviceable, one of the Spirit's men, serviceable to be sent out for the work which had been prepared for him because he was an obedient man; he was obedient to the heavenly vision; he was obedient to what had been given to him by revelation of God. The revelation is a wonderful thing, but if we are going to be serviceable to the Master, as those men that travelled with Abraham's servant, we must be obedient men. It does not say of any of them that they ever stepped outside or expressed a thought in any way contrary to what the servant was doing already. Barnabas and Saul were just there to help in line with what had been expressed by the Father for the Son. They were persons obedient to what the Spirit was doing, or as it puts it in Genesis, what the servant was doing *according as the servant chose* in relation to what he knew of Abraham's feelings. Saul had come from being an insolent and overbearing man to being someone who, even though his name was still Saul at this point, was obedient to the heavenly vision. What a wonderful thing that was! What a change there was in Saul! What a change there was in his heart! So you can

understand why his name was changed, because there was a change in his character before ever there was a change in his name, and the Spirit of God was able to use him, along with another brother who had already shown himself to be faithful by what he had done in relation to the giving up of his possessions, for the furtherance of the assembly of God. He was another one who proved himself to be one of the Spirit's men by his actions. Wonderful thing!

But then we go on to look and see what Paul says in Ephesians. One of the things he says in relation to this was that he was intelligent; he understood. It was not just a case of what he was by association; it is what he was in intelligence, able to lay the thing out, able to speak with intelligence in relation to the heavenly vision, able to speak about what was proper to Christ, able to speak about what was proper to the anointed Man, God's anointed Man, the Christ. "For this reason / Paul, prisoner of the Christ Jesus"; "**the** Christ Jesus", not just of Christ Jesus. That is very important there because it is the distinctiveness of the Person from whom he had received that vision, understanding all that that Man was for God. He is "prisoner of the Christ Jesus", and in the light of that he is able to say of what he has written briefly before, and he could say to them there, "ye can understand my intelligence in the mystery of the Christ". That was all part of the revelation but it was also all that he was going to work at to attach the assembly to Christ according to all its glory.

Dear friends and brethren, if you are going to be one of the Spirit's men, you must be intelligent as to the glory and suitability of all that is for Christ. It is not enough to say you are Christian: it is to understand what is suitable to the anointed Man of God's choice. Paul was intelligent; He understood that: could the Spirit use him because of it? Yes, absolutely; he was an intelligent man. He does not say he was an intellectual man, though he was that if you look at Paul's history, at how he grew up, at his education, at the instructor that he sat under, and at all the things he had learned. Was he intelligent as to the ways of the world? Yes, he knew how to run a business, how to make enough money to live on, how to work in the normal way of the world, and how to hold down a job. And he was also intelligent in relation to Jewish history, in relation to the Pharisees, in relation to his place and his tribe and the things that were to be upheld. He was intelligent in relation to the coming in of God, and what was to be looked for as to the Messiah and all those things. All of that comes out at the time of his defence to Agrippa. He was able to speak about his intelligence in relation to the

things of the people of God in an Old Testament sense. But what he had *here* was intelligence according to the revelation that had been given to him from heaven, and he is able to expound in relation to “the Christ Jesus”. That is a wonderful thing!

So then you go on to Timothy. He is another person marked by faithfulness, able to be used by the Spirit of God. Paul put it that he was his “true child in faith” (1 Tim 1: 2); Timothy is a younger man coming on, another generation, coming on to something that had been passed down to him, and one of the things that marked him is that he was faithful. Paul was able to say of him, “I have no one like-minded who will care with genuine feeling how ye get on”, Phil 2: 20. That was Timothy; he was intelligent. But not only was he intelligent, he loved the saints, he loved the assembly according to the purpose of God. He loved it in the same way that Paul speaks in relation to Corinthians, “I have espoused you unto one man, to present you a chaste virgin to Christ”, 2 Cor 11: 2. Timothy was there to work according to that same thought. He went there with genuine feeling to present them as a chaste virgin to Christ because he was Paul's true child in faith.

So we go on to 2 Timothy 2, and quite often we speak of it as being our charter, and, beloved brethren, it is every Christian's charter; it is not just, as we might think it, the brethren's charter; it is every Christian's charter. If you are to work in the day of the Spirit of God, to be able to be serviceable to the Spirit of God, to arrive at anything for God, and to have the saints arrive at anything for God, it must be because there is sanctification, and there is faithfulness; it must be because you have set yourself in relation to divine Persons and the assembly of God. It must be that! So it says here, “If therefore one shall have purified himself from these, in separating himself from them” - that is, all the things that were said previously - “he shall be a vessel to honour, sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work”. What a wonderful thing that is! “Prepared for every good work” involves what the Spirit of God would use somebody for while they are here for the testimony of Jesus, and in relation to helping forward the assembly of God in the time of testimony, and helping forward the saints in attachment to “the Christ Jesus”. That was Timothy; that was this younger man, and yet he was able to carry forward the testimony that had been given to him by Paul. It is a wonderful thing, the faithfulness of a young man like this.

Well, all of these persons were persons with the attitude, with

the features, with the characteristics that made them the Spirit's men. May we have that exercise, while the Lord leaves us here, to go forward exercised to be the Spirit's men.

May it be so, for His Name's sake!

Word in meeting for ministry, Edinburgh

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