

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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RESURRECTION

Philippians 3: 10-21

TWL I wondered, brethren, whether we could get some help in looking at the matter of resurrection. Quite often we think of resurrection in relation to what will happen when the Lord comes, which we are all looking forward to. At least, I trust we are all looking forward to the day when the Lord will come and we shall hear His voice and go to be forever with the Lord; when the dead in Christ are raised. But resurrection is not just anticipative; resurrection is for now. The enjoyment and the power of resurrection is for the saints now; consequently Paul speaks here in relation to this, “if any way I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead”. Then he goes on to say, not that he had arrived, he is not saying that he was complete, not saying that those things were true yet of him, but it is what he pursued after. He pursued after what it was to be in the good of the resurrection, as it says here, “if any way I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead”. He does not want to arrive just at resurrection; he wants to arrive at “**the** resurrection”; he wants to arrive at all that came in and all that was established at the resurrection of Christ. Christ is the defining point of everything for God and He is the defining point of everything for man. Consequently Paul wants to arrive at “the resurrection”.

And then he goes on from that and speaks about what it was to be in our walk, following on the truth of resurrection, how we would conduct ourselves, how we would act, what we would look forward to. We could start with how he begins here, because in the earlier part of the chapter he talks about the things that he had naturally, the place that he had amongst men, what he was naturally, and then that he counted “all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (v 8); so he begins this section here in relation to resurrection with “to know him”. That is the starting point for everything. Maybe we could start there.

GAB “To know him”: that is the Man who is actually raised. He is literally raised; we come to it in a moral sense. We are looking forward to the actuality of resurrection, but we cannot put it off entirely to the future because there is much to be entered into now. Is that your point?

TWL Yes; there is a very interesting part of scripture at the beginning of the Acts where there are forty days in which the Lord was here upon the earth, appearing amongst His own; then there are ten days when

the Lord had ascended up and the Spirit had not come. And the persons that were there carried on in those ten days without a divine Person here upon the earth, speaking carefully, and not limiting divine Persons in their movements; yet they carried on in the light of the Man they had seen for forty days. That was “the power of his resurrection”; that was the Person that was formed in them for the ten days until the Spirit came; so they knew Him. Would that be right?

GAB These forty days really were allowed of God to bring the reality of resurrection to the souls of these dear saints who, in some ways, like the two on the way to Emmaus, were a bit nonplussed and disappointed, but the reality of the thing was there before them in the Man in flesh and bone.

TWL Exactly; so John starts his epistle, “that ... which we have seen with our eyes; that which we contemplated, and our hands handled” (1 John 1: 1); it is the substantiality of a Man out of death, the substantiality and the reality of a Man out of death for God. A most interesting thing about it is that the resurrection sets the platform for everything that will be for God. Sometimes we think of ascension as setting the platform, but it is not. Ascension is what we are according to place and destination, but the platform on which we stand before God, the platform on which we have victory, is the platform of resurrection.

JAB It is good that you should say what you meant by 'knowing resurrection'. As our brother has implied, we do not know it literally, but we must as believers with the Holy Spirit know something of the moral effect of it. One example of that moral effect is that this hall is full today. There were plenty of other things that we could have been doing, especially the young people, but there is something to be enjoyed of this that you want to bring before us, and on that platform of resurrection, which Mr Raven spoke of so frequently, we enjoy a life that the world knows nothing about and which we can only find in the presence of divine Persons and in the company of each other. Is that right?

TWL Yes, exactly. One of the things it might be worthwhile our speaking about is, 'What is resurrection?'. What is the purpose of resurrection? What does it do? Resurrection was not just a case of God meeting the actions of man by the blood of Christ, but He dealt with the man that did those actions in the resurrection of Christ. What we see in the burial of Christ, speaking carefully - because this is holy ground and we need to be careful - is the man that sinned was out of

sight; what God got in Christ in resurrection was the order of Man in persons who are attached to Him which sin could not touch. There is no breakdown for men attached to Christ in resurrection; it cannot be.

JAB Is that why the apostle Paul says that Jesus our Lord was “raised for our justification”, Rom 4: 25? No charge can be brought against those who have been justified in that way; therefore, there is an aspect of the resurrection which was vicarious; He did it for us. I know that He did it for the Father's pleasure, and the Father had a part in it too, but what you say is helpful.

TWL So we know Him. We know the Man, and it is worth contemplating, the Man who has brought this about. In order for there to be resurrection there had to be death. It had to be that Christ went into death for us “to know him, and the power of his resurrection”. “To know him” is that you know the Man who went into death so that the resurrection could be accomplished. There was what was there in Christ, who was moving according to the purpose of God so that God should have a race on resurrection ground.

JTB It is fine to grasp the sense of “the power of his resurrection”. Joseph's “sheaf rose up, and remained standing”, Gen 37: 7. Nothing could gainsay that power. Then our sheaves come round; we come in association with Him to acknowledge His distinctiveness but sustained in “the power of his resurrection”, do you think?

TWL Exactly, and what they saw in “the power of his resurrection” during the forty days was a Man in power. The One who came in and went out amongst them was a Man in power, a real Man, but then they also saw “the power of his resurrection”. In Matthew's gospel it speaks in relation to the angel sitting and all those around the tomb being as “dead men”, and the stone being rolled away, chap 28: 2-4. There was “the power of his resurrection”; there was a testimony to the power that was there, different from the other gospels. Matthew's gospel is a testimony to “the power of his resurrection”.

NJH What is meant when He says, “I am the resurrection”, John 11: 25?

TWL You have something on your mind.

NJH That was before He entered into death. The power was there; “the Spirit of holiness” (Rom 1: 4) was there; but the power was there and that was exercised at that point with Lazarus.

TWL The Lord says that to Martha in John's gospel: "I am the resurrection and the life". He says that before Lazarus is raised, and then when it comes time for Lazarus to be raised, when the tomb is opened and before He speaks to Lazarus, He raises His voice to the Father and says, "I thank thee that thou hast heard me", v 41. There was communication between the Father and the Son that those who looked on should see the power of the resurrection in what it would be for them anticipatively. Consequently they can go through, with faith as to the resurrection of Christ. Does that fit in?

NJH I was thinking Satan brought the power of death to bear on Christ in Gethsemane, but the power of resurrection, in principle, was in that Person as He entered into death, and His resurrection allows us to enter into that matter too.

TWL Yes, exactly. So what comes of the resurrection is that God has His race of men, but it also gives me the right to stand. I get the victory; as we were reminded at the burial on Wednesday, there is a victory. I get the victory by being on the platform of resurrection associated with the Man who has come out of death. So Colossians 2 says in relation to it, "in whom also ye have been circumcised with circumcision not done by hand, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of the Christ; buried with him in baptism, in which ye have been also raised with him through faith of the working of God", v 11, 12. That is the present tense; that is true now. "Through faith of the working of God" is a very interesting thing. You have baptism, which is an actual thing done; you have quickening which is also an actual thing experienced, but you have resurrection and that is "through faith of the working of God". Faith connects you to the Man out of death and your stand with Him.

WMP As to the Lord Jesus, He "brought to light life and incorruptibility by the glad tidings", 2 Tim 1: 10. It is the One who "annulled death" who did that. Does that connect with your thought as to what the outcome of resurrection is, "life and incorruptibility"?

TWL Yes, very good; thank you. It does, because the life that is out of death can never be intruded upon. The reason death had any sway over life at all was because sin was there. The reason that it came upon the race at all was because there was breakdown; but for Christ out of death, and for those associated with Him out of death, sin has no place. The man that sinned has been laid in the grave; he is gone; he is out of sight; he is out of God's sight. God does not look at him. And if God

does not look at him, and I stand on that ground; God does not look at me like that either. God looks at me like He looks at Christ. What victory there is there! What deliverance there is there! All of this comes true, "life and incorruptibility". Nobody can intrude on the life which is in Christ Jesus and nobody can corrupt anything that is associated with Him.

TM Resurrection puts you on new ground and on new ground you are "taken possession of by Christ Jesus".

TWL Exactly, and that is a fine thing, "seeing that also I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus". "Seeing that also I have been taken possession of" is what Paul goes on to later. He understood that Christ had laid a claim on Him. On resurrection ground Christ had made a claim that nothing could intrude upon. What a wonderful thing that is! So he says here, "to know him, and the power of his resurrection", but then there is a moral process to arrive at this. It says, "and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death". If we are to arrive at resurrection, beloved brethren, if we are to arrive at the victory substantially, if we are to arrive at the liberty substantially, these other things must be gone through.

DCB I was thinking about Ephesians 1 which brings in prayer, and praying to "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory" (v 17); what is included there is that the power of resurrection should be known. Would you say there is something of the effectiveness there? You referred to the Lord praying before raising Lazarus. There is something of that relation to the Father that would help us to get onto this ground that you are speaking about practically.

TWL Yes; there it is the power "towards us who believe", v 19. That is how it is put, is it not? And that is a remarkable thing. Faith is the background to belief and faith is the acknowledgement of light from God; so if we look at this, "his power towards us who believe", what do I *believe* by faith? Do I *believe* that Christ is out of death? If I do, I know that that is the greatest power that has acted in the whole of the time of creation because everything that set itself against God was dealt with on the ground of resurrection. When Christ came out of death, everything that stood between God and His purpose was removed out of the way. That is the "power" that is "towards us who believe". That is what sets me on this ground. Now if I believe that, if I believe that that is the God who has set Himself to me, then I will stand. Does that fit in with what you have in mind?

DCB I was wondering about the difference between Colossians, which views us as raised with Christ, and this passage in Philippians where you have Paul saying, “if any way I arrive at the resurrection”. Would you say something about the difference between these views?

TWL Well, I think Paul wanted to arrive at it. He knew it objectively, but a believer, I think it would be right to say, by experience, is constantly arriving at “the resurrection from among the dead” until it becomes your entirety. It becomes your whole. If we truly arrive at what it is, “the resurrection from among the dead”, if we truly arrive at that, we will arrive at an uninterrupted relationship with divine Persons on which nothing can intrude of an old man or the scene we are in.

GAB Peter says in the preaching in the Acts that “it was not possible that he should be held by” the power of death, chap 2: 24. I suppose that would link with the suggestion that “I am the resurrection”: He was that intrinsically. But as linked with such a glorious Person on the other side of death, that puts us into an invulnerable situation. Just as He is invulnerable on the other side of death, our link with Him puts us on that ground, that is to say, whatever the devil may attempt, he is not able; it is impossible for him to frustrate these great, divine thoughts.

TWL Exactly, and that is the point. In all of this, in all of what we are speaking about now, and I hope what we are saying is intelligible, particularly to the young ones, because this is important, this will set the tone for your Christian experience for the rest of your life upon the earth. The ground of resurrection does that; and none of what God arrived at for men and what God arrived at for Himself on the ground of resurrection can be intruded upon. Everything that stood against God or in the way of the purpose of God was removed in the death of Christ. That is a remarkable thing. Get a hold of that in your soul and it makes you stable.

JCG Do you think the service of the Holy Spirit makes the power of His resurrection effective in our lives? He uses our faith, the strengthening of our faith, in view of it being practically understood.

TWL Yes, I think so, and I also think it would be right to say that the Spirit of God helps us as we go through the experiences of “the fellowship of his sufferings” and “being conformed to his death”. Those are very real experiences, but you must go through them, and you will not go through them under your own power; you will go through them by the Spirit of God who knows a Man in resurrection. He has come from

the ascended Man. Speaking reverently, the Spirit of God knows everything that God had in His heart and He is now at liberty to express it because there is a Man in resurrection.

JAB Peter says that the Lord Jesus was “made alive in the Spirit”, 1 Pet 3: 18. We think of the Father's part, and the Lord's own power expressed in resurrection, but the Spirit had part in it too: He was “made alive in the Spirit”, and we are to know this life in the Spirit. Do you think that would, as it were, make it accessible to us that the blessed divine Person who is in us links us on with this life? In a sense we do not need to say 'resurrection life'; it is the life of Christianity. Life according to the natural man is not at all within the scope of what we are speaking about.

TWL So what the Spirit of God is is “the earnest of our inheritance”, Eph 1: 14. Our inheritance came into effect on this ground too. The Spirit of God makes vital the relationships God established between men and Himself when Christ came out of death.

JAB In one sense resurrection was an event. The Lord Jesus rose from the dead, and that actually happened, and that is the foundation of everything else we believe, that He was living and He is living, and we can speak to Him, and He can speak to us; and so life really is the result of resurrection, and it should be with us as it was for the Lord Jesus, although we keep Him supreme.

TWL Absolutely.

PAG The fruit of resurrection is not only standing but also walking. Paul speaks in this chapter of walking “in the same steps”, but when the Lord was here in resurrection, it says a number of things among which are He spoke “of the things which concern the kingdom of God” and He “assembled” with them (Acts 1: 3, 4), so that a person who is in the good of walking in the light of resurrection will be subject to the principles of the kingdom and will want to walk in the same steps with others. There will be evidence of it.

TWL Yes, exactly, because my link with you is on that ground. I break bread at the Supper in the light of a Man who has died and has risen, with others who are in the light of a Man who has died and has risen, and we have our life one with another as in Him. We walk because we are in Him, and we meet because they are in Him: that is a wonderful thing. One of the marks of resurrection is that you become a subject person, and there is nobody in the kingdom that is not subject. One of the other things in relation to all of this as to resurrection is “if any way I

arrive at the resurrection from among the dead". It is interesting that in Romans - and I know that the setting of it is somewhat different from what we have been speaking of thus far - are the two things that happen in relation to this, one of them being, "who shall deliver me out of this body of death?", chap 7:24. That happened in resurrection. And then the next thing that happens in resurrection is, "There is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death", chap 8: 1, 2. That also happened at resurrection. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus": the Spirit of God works according to the law that was established on resurrection ground of a Man out of death, life in Christ Jesus. Well, that refers to us, beloved brethren. That is the whole import of the twelve stones taken out of the Jordan, and set up on the banks of the land in the Old Testament scripture. I understand Christ's resurrection and my part in it. Consequently, those stones are set up and I can tell it to the generation following - and those of us who are older should be able to tell it to the generation following - what the resurrection of Christ has meant to us; so that when they ask they can understand that it is the platform on which we stand and because of which God has been at liberty to move in relation to what was the purpose of His heart.

JCG So "being conformed to his death" is the basis in relation to the teaching of Joshua 3 in which we understand resurrection. It really takes us back to the Roman teaching, does it not? "For if we are become identified with him in the likeness of his death, so also we shall be of his resurrection", Rom 6: 5.

TWL Exactly. "If we are": that is the point. It is a case of whether or not I move that way; so Paul speaks here in relation to "the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death". I was thinking about this in relation to how Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians 4. We are put to death daily: "always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested", v 10. There is what is there on resurrection ground that becomes evident in a person who is walking according to it. Those persons were able to look on Paul, and they were able to see it. Well, Paul speaks about it there, "that the life also of Jesus may be manifested". It became manifest in the person who walked according to the principles that were established by Christ as coming out of death. Paul was attached to Him; he loved Christ; He was his all, and consequently he would walk and he would suffer. He

would bear in his body “the brands of the Lord Jesus” (Gal 6: 17) because Christ had died for him and had been raised.

NCMcK The resurrection of Christ began the first resurrection. Everything changed at that point. It means that for a man to live towards God there was the full acceptance that death lay upon him, and that life must be given to him by a divine Person in order that he should live to God, dead to one order of things, and alive to another order of things even though still here on earth.

TWL Yes, exactly, and going on to 2 Corinthians 5, “For the love of the Christ constrains us, having judged this: that one died for all, then all have died” (v 14), that then it goes on to say, “that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who died for them and has been raised”, v 15. You live your life in relation to a Man who lives, not in relation exactly to the things that He met, but rather on the platform on which He lives “who died for them and has been raised”.

NJH There is now another order of man in evidence.

TWL Yes, exactly; in the eyes of God there is another Man, and with us there should be too.

DS Can you say something more as to this thought of having “been taken possession of by Christ Jesus”? This is not me having taken possession of Him; this is Him taking possession of me. It is very touching: “also I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus”. It is this One who is taking up such a character as I am, who is sinful, and is seeking to bring men to the fulness of this possession. It says earlier, “but I pursue, if also I may get possession of it, seeing that also I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus”. There are certain things that I have to take possession of but it is only by the One who has taken possession of me that I can come into the gain of this. I would like some help as to this.

TWL Well, I think it would be right to say that the background to all of this from God’s side is love. Christ moved in relation to the purpose of God, that He had in His heart to have men. The ground for having them was not Adam; the ground for having them was Christ out of death. So men are in an unassailable position where God has the liberty to move according to His heart; love drove that. To be “taken possession of by Christ” is that Christ has moved to bring us to God. He died “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God”, 1 Pet 3: 18. To bring us to God necessitated His dying, but it also necessitated His rising; so then

what makes us want to move according to, “seeing that I also have been taken possession of” is that I look at the love of a Man who gave His life to save me, who gave His life to secure me for His God; I take account of the sufferings. That is the other thing that happened in Joshua 3. Joshua typically understood the necessity for the death of Christ because, without instruction, he took the twelve stones for the tribes of Israel and put them *into* the Jordan. We can say he understood the necessity for the death of Christ in order for God to have the twelve stones out of it. He took account of the love that worked in such a manner. How can it not affect your heart, so that you walk according to the Man who has established you, not in what you have been as a sinner, but in what you are as saved for God? Christ did that.

JCG He says in an earlier chapter, “For for me to live is Christ”, chap 1: 21. That was that he had a great appreciation of the Person Himself, and not only what He had done, although that was great too, but the greatness of the Person was before him: “For for me to live is Christ”. I was thinking that the Roman teaching that you were speaking of earlier helps young believers to move and to make an advance. We do not want to be static in the understanding and appreciation of divine Persons, but the Roman teaching is that “even as Christ has been raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life”, Rom 6: 4. That should encourage young believers that they should move forward, do you think, especially in the prayer meeting and taking part in the service of God? That is the starting point.

TWL Yes, it is. Do you not think too there are two of the most remarkable things that have come out of the resurrection of Christ? One is deliverance from the man that fails, and the other is the liberty to approach the God that delivers us. A most remarkable thing! It never ceases to amaze me that I can go into the presence of the God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ and be restful there, because Christ is there and He has made me fit for that place, I who am no more than at best a failing sinner: yet that is all gone in the sight of God because of what Christ has done. I have the victory by Him; I have deliverance by Him; and I have liberty by Him, all on the ground of resurrection.

TM Do we see the results of resurrection with the man in Acts 3? He was walking in “newness of life”, “walking, and leaping, and praising God”, v 8. The full result is the result of the power of resurrection.

TWL And what a thing that was! They were all amazed. There was a

man who had been like that for the whole of his life. What is going to stand in the way of the power of God working? Nothing! Absolutely nothing! God has done this for Himself. He has done it for us but He has done it for Himself.

JSS Does our present salvation depend on this? I was thinking of being “saved in the power of his life” (Rom 5: 10), and also Romans 10, “believe in thine heart that God has raised him from among the dead, thou shalt be saved”, v 9. Is that present experience?

TWL Exactly. Romans 10: 9, we have often been taught, is not saved from your sins; it involves being saved from your sins but it is not limited to that. “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from among the dead, thou shalt be saved”. To “believe in thine heart” goes back to the point of resurrection, taken account of by faith again. It is important to get a hold of that. Everything that stands in relation to you and God stands on the ground that you believe, by faith, that Christ is out of death. Do you believe there is a Man in heaven? Do you believe that there is a Man who went into death and has come out of it? Do you believe that in your heart? If so and you confess Him as Lord with your mouth, you have salvation. You have salvation in the whole scene of adversity from everything which the enemy of our souls would contrive to hold you back.

AM Did Abraham move on the principle of resurrection? His faith in the promise taught him that Isaac would be raised and life would come in again. It says in Romans 4 that “it was not written on his account alone that it was reckoned to him, but on ours also, to whom, believing on him who has raised from among the dead Jesus our Lord, who has been delivered for our offences and has been raised for our justification, it will be reckoned”, v 23-25. The principle that Abraham apprehended was resurrection, and also justification by faith. Do you think that is another thing we have in resurrection?

TWL Yes, and justification is a very interesting thing. We often think of justification meaning justification for us, but God will be justified in how He has moved. God will be justified in how He has taken up men because He has taken them up on the ground of a Man out of death. God has taken up you and me on the ground of a Man out of death; God is justified in what He does. I am justified, but God is justified. Abraham moved on the ground of justification and, by faith, in relation to resurrection, because he was convinced of the power of God in relation

to life.

PAG Can you say something more about “being conformed to his death”? We can understand “be not conformed to this world” (Rom 12: 2): do not be like the world; and we can understand what it says in the end, “transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory” (v 21), so that our body will be like His body; but say more about what it means to be “conformed to his death”.

TWL It strikes me that to be “conformed to his death” relates to the fact that the moment of His death was the mark, publicly, in the world in relation to the judgment of God on a fallen race, the power of Satan against God, and Christ going through in relation to everything that was opposed to God. That was what was there at His death. That is what happened there. Conformity to His death is that I am conformed in relation to the things that were established at the cross; so my separation from the world, my separation to God, my giving up of my life in relation to the world, that is conformity to His death; not exactly to His life, but to His death. It is the point of demarcation between you and the world. Is that how you understand it?

PAG That is helpful. I am just thinking about our younger brethren here today understanding what it means; certain things were finished at the death of Christ. It was not that the stones were taken into the Jordan and washed and brought out looking a bit better; they were left behind, and what came out was new and different and from a different source altogether. Do we have to understand that resurrection does not involve us being reinstated; it involves a complete change, a change of mind, a change of Man and a change of place.

TWL Exactly. I remember reading several years ago something in Mr Raven's ministry which laid hold of me very strongly. He said that no mere reformation will fit you for association with Christ, vol 5 p380. At the resurrection of Christ it is not a reformation; it is a whole new thing. There is no reformation; God does not reform what is fallen. He does not reform what sin has attached itself to; He does not reform the best of man: Agag suggests the best of man, and Samuel hewed him in pieces. There is no reformation for what has moved against God willingly, knowingly, or unknowingly; it is all new. And I would say to our young brethren, and it is important to get this into your souls, there will come a point in time in your Christian life when you will need to either set yourself or not in relation to the Man that died for you. If you set yourself in relation to the Man that died for you, it is going to come along that you

are going to have “the fellowship of his sufferings”, and you are going to have to be “conformed to his death”. If you are going to enjoy what Christ has in relationship on the other side of death, you are going to experience those two things. As one of our older brothers in Edinburgh has said to us often, “And all indeed who desire to live piously in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim 3: 12); that is, that you will have “the fellowship of his sufferings” and conformity to His death, but, beloved brethren, you owe Him your life.

GAB Do you think we see this in practice in Stephen? He was really conformed to the death of the Lord. This world had no more appeal for him because he was able to look up into heaven and see a risen glorified Man up there. He was going to die the death of a martyr but that is not the way Scripture puts it. It says, “And having said this, he fell asleep”, Acts 7: 60. That is beautiful. He did die as a martyr: we know that; that is perfectly true, but in the context of it he is able to seek forgiveness for those who were persecuting him and were about to kill him. He was occupied with what he saw; looking into heaven, he saw Jesus standing there in the presence of God, a risen, glorious Man, the Centre of another world; so he had no place in this world any more, and to fall asleep seems to be a very precious way of entering physically into what he was already in the enjoyment of.

TWL It occurred to me recently in relation to this that for those who have been put to sleep through Jesus it is, as to this mortal life, the final touch of a glorious Man in relation to one whom He will raise, not those who are dead, but those who are put to sleep. They are put to sleep by the hand of a Man out of death, to be raised themselves out of death. What a glorious thing that is! That is the Man who died for us.

NJH God has new material to work with now as out of death. I was thinking even of the expression of the new man. It is viewed as “created” in Ephesians, and it comes into Colossians. It is God's new material in the new man. Is that right?

TWL Yes, “created in truthful righteousness and holiness”, Eph 4: 24. That is a wonderful thing. And then what we are as in Christ, “So if any one be in Christ, there is a new creation”, 2 Cor 5: 17. It is all according to a new order. Well, here he goes on, “whereto we have attained, let us walk in the same steps”. That is those who had gone before and those who are “perfect”. Then it says, “Be imitators all together of me, brethren, and fix your eyes ...”. Now this part of Scripture is very interesting. There are other places in Scripture where it speaks about

“Be my imitators, even as I also am of Christ”, 1 Cor 11: 1. He does not say that here. “Be imitators all together of me, brethren, and fix your eyes on those walking thus as you have us for a model”. These are persons who are in the good of what it is to separate themselves to Christ. They have separated themselves from the world, and that is one side of things, beloved brethren. To separate ourselves from the world is one side of things; to separate yourself to Christ is another side of things. It is an extension, a much greater extension, because to separate yourself to Christ means you are going to give up what is yours. You are going to give up maybe even what you have a rightful claim to, and you are going to give it up for a Man you love. That is quite a test, but Paul lays it on here. He is not doing this to put them into bondage, but rather to put them into liberty. He wants them to arrive at the liberty which he had with divine Persons himself, and that is a glorious thing. There is no point in speaking about liberty with divine Persons if you do not enjoy it yourself. Paul did, and where anyone else does that, take a look, see what they are doing, see how they walk.

AMB This is all by the Spirit. Say something about that, please.

TWL Well, as it says in Ephesians, the Spirit is “the earnest of our inheritance” (chap 1: 14), but our inheritance is God. He is the portion of our inheritance, Ps 16: 5. Would that be right?

AMB I think that all that we have been speaking about this afternoon, the Christian coming into the good of the teaching of resurrection, that is, of life out of death, must be by the Spirit. It cannot be attained to by natural means or by trying hard but by faith in Christ and love for Him and obedience. These are the conditions of heart in which the Spirit can enter in and join His help to us, and then He gives us the power to enjoy the liberty that you have been speaking of and the appreciation and experience of heavenly things in this scene here.

TWL Yes; it is interesting in relation to the Spirit of God because the Spirit of God moves in relation to what is precious to the heart of God. The saints bringing something of Christ to God, speaking carefully, is of all moment for the Spirit. He operates in relation to that. He does not operate merely in relation to the joy of the saints; He operates in relation to the joy of God, which involves the joy of the saints, and He operates that we have something to bring. He operates that the relationships flow in liberty between God and men. We have our joy as bringing something of Christ to God. The Spirit works that we have something to bring. That is what satisfies the heart of God, but all of that has come

about because a Man has died and has risen again.

AMB Do you think if we are going to experience what it is to be led by the Spirit, then the exercise that the apostle speaks about here, the exercise of dying, as we have been considering it, is necessary? It is not the end in itself, but what is in mind is that the Spirit should then have free way in my heart, so that I might become a vessel for Him to use to enlarge the knowledge of Christ in me, and to enlarge the response that God has from me.

TWL It is interesting the way that Paul puts it in Colossians. He says, “And you, being dead in offences and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he has quickened together with him”, chap 2: 13. That is by the Spirit of God. “He has quickened together with him” involves place and involves power; both of them are there where Christ is. That is the Spirit's work.

DAB It is very blessed that the power that “wrought in the Christ in raising him from among the dead” (Eph 1: 20) is the same power that worketh towards us, “the surpassing greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of the might of his strength” (v 19), so that is wonderfully comforting and encouraging to us all that the power that “wrought in the Christ in raising him from among the dead” is the same power that is towards us, and, as we lay hold of that we can then say, we can be “dead in” our “offences” (Eph 2: 1), or, as it says in Romans, “dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus”, chap 6: 11. That really is living in the power of resurrection life.

TWL Exactly, and that is the whole point in all of this. In all these things, the reason why Paul strove so hard to arrive at “the resurrection from among the dead” was that God would have His portion from Paul, rather than simply that Paul would have his portion with God. That he would arrive at “the resurrection from among the dead” would mean that everything that stood in the way of the purposes of the heart of God were out of the way. What a glorious thing that is!

DAB The reckoning comes in in Romans, does it not? That is a very real matter that we “reckon” ourselves “dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus”, chap 6: 11. That is like arriving at something in the soul. It is a very definite movement, a very definite point that you reach in your Christian experience, is it not? What it brings in really is deliverance for the soul.

TWL Yes, but if we do not reckon, and this is why I said what I said

earlier that if we do not have a point in our life when we set ourselves for Christ, we will never arrive at this. That is just the reality. You need to set a point, a point of committal to the Man that died for you, set yourself for that. At the point in time you set yourself for that, this whole vista of relationship from God's side becomes yours, but not until then; you cannot carry the world on to resurrection ground.

JCG Your reference to a vista is helpful because Paul speaks about “stretching out”. We not only need to be conformed to His death to do that, which the Spirit would help us in, but the Spirit would help us to stretch out, do you think? That means that we do not remain static in our understanding of divine Persons.

TWL Exactly. The thing that comes first there is, “Brethren, *I* do not count to have got possession myself; but one thing - forgetting the things behind”, - God gives you the right to forget “the things behind” - “and stretching out to the things before”. “Forgetting the things behind” includes the things I have done but includes the things I am. It includes the things I am in the world, whether I have a name amongst men, whether I have an education amongst men, whether I have all those things, “forgetting the things behind”. Those are “the things behind”; that is the point in time. There is nothing wrong with those things in their place; it is at the point in time when they stand between you and your committal to Christ that they become a problem because that will intrude upon the relationship between you and your God. “Forgetting the things behind, and stretching out to the things before, *I* pursue”: that is energy. Would that be right?

JCG Yes, spiritual energy. I was thinking that “being conformed to his death” is like “no longer live, *I*, but Christ lives in me”, Gal 2: 20. When believers reach that point, then in one sense there is no going back.

JTB As we enter the realm of privilege, it is a great anchor and assurance for the soul that we are there as associated with One who has been raised. I was thinking the sheaf of the first-fruits was waved before Jehovah, it says, “to be accepted for you”, Lev 23: 11. That is the One that was cut down in death but was raised and “to be accepted for you”. As we enter into the great realm of privilege, it is fructified, really, by that realisation that we are there as in association with One who has been into death and has been raised. It really enhances our appreciation of the scene into which we are introduced.

TWL Exactly. It helps us to appreciate the scene into which we are introduced, and to the relationships that exist there, and it is an unassailable position, because God has made it thus because there is a Man there out of death.

JTB This reference to “stretching out to the things before”: it is as garrisoned and as fortified by the assurance that we are linked with One who has been into death and who is raised. That is indestructible.

TWL It is indestructible because God has established it, but then it goes on, “looking towards the goal, for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus”. Beloved brethren, I think it was Mr Darby that said when it comes down to the resurrection in actuality when the Lord comes, he would like it merely to be a change of condition, to be so close to Christ that it would be no more than a change of condition; to be near enough to the Man who is risen from the grave and links with Him so close that all that will be necessary will be a change of this body as it is to a body conformed to Him, and the relationships going through according as they are.

KJW Do you think it also helps us to appreciate one another? It goes on to say, “for *our* commonwealth has its existence in the heavens”. I was just thinking of that scripture in 1 Corinthians 15 too, another great resurrection chapter, “the first-fruits, Christ; then those that are the Christ's at his coming”, v 23. What has been established is an order after Christ, after that Man. It goes on to speak there about “heavenly ones” (v 48) and says, “star differs from star in glory”, v 41. We can take account of the saints as on resurrection ground and look at them in their excellence and their glory as related to heaven. Is that right?

TWL Exactly. It goes back to what was said earlier in relation to what we see on resurrection ground. “For *our* commonwealth has its existence in the heavens”: the note to “commonwealth” is very interesting because it brings you onto the ground that it is not exactly that I am just a citizen there; it is more that I have the liberty of the land. I have the liberty of the land with others who have the liberty of the land because our stand is Christ out of death. It is a wonderful thing.

DCB Would you say something about ascension as well? I am wondering about it since what this is bringing us into is “the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus”. The Lord Jesus is not simply in resurrection; He is ascended now. Is all this in resurrection in view of ascension?

TWL Yes, exactly. God had to get His Man before there could be ascension for His own. God got His man morally on resurrection ground; in ascension God gets him in the place. Not all families will enjoy this, but we do. The place that belongs to those of the assembly is ascension. The moral stand in order for that to take place is resurrection. God established the moral stand before ascension took place.

GAB So as out of death, the Lord says immediately to Mary, “go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God”, John 20: 17. So, as entering into the relationships on the other side of death, we are really brought into the very highest level of the knowledge of God.

TWL Yes, and the highest relationship because “my Father and your Father” and “my God and your God” could not be said until resurrection happened. That statement could not be made by Christ, though He carried it in His heart, until resurrection happened.

PAG Is it honouring to God that He should have a victory on earth in resurrection of the saints of the assembly before He carries the spoil of that victory into heaven? He must first be honoured here in the place where Christ was denied and rejected. He is honoured in resurrection before He carries them to heaven.

TWL Exactly. I have often enjoyed the thought, that in the very scene where God has been rejected and Christ has been crucified, there will be a great host of persons standing in the glory of a Man out of death on the very earth where God has been rejected. What a victory for God! What a thing it will be! Will men away from God take account of it? No! But God does. God establishes on this earth a vast host standing in the light of resurrection. What a glorious thing!

NJH It is “Paul the aged” (Philem v 9) who is writing from the prison and he is marked by astonishing energy, increasing energy in the things of God. Is that not one way of encouraging the young that there is a similar energy marking those that are older?

TWL Exactly. That is why he says “those walking thus”. To be “walking thus” is the conduct of your life; the conduct of Paul's life even in prison was energy Godward. The things that he was establishing there were for a broken day and, beloved brethren, sometimes we get involved - and in no way do I want to put aside the sorrows the brethren are going through - in what we speak of as a broken day. Beloved

brethren, there is no broken day on resurrection ground. Get a hold of Christ where He is, fasten on that, and the rest will find its place.

JAB “*Our* commonwealth”, as Mr Darby's note 'h' says, is our 'associations of life'. These associations are not just with each other, are they? I think that is a very wonderful phrase to use about our links with divine Persons and with each other, 'associations of life'. I have found what you have brought before us very testing. Could I live without the Lord Jesus? Then I have to think some days I do. However, “*our* commonwealth has its existence” and we can come back to that. Then we come into the presence of dear fellow believers and enjoy something as we are doing today. We can be attracted into this, can we not? Indeed we must be.

TWL Yes. You do not get this by intellectual endeavour; you get it by attachment to a Man. But just in relation to what you said about the relationships, it strikes me that the commonwealth was in function at the beginning of John's first epistle when he says, “our fellowship is indeed with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (chap 1: 3) and then he moves on from that to fellowship with one another. That is the commonwealth in its function.

Grangemouth

12th May 2018

Key to Initials:

A M Brown, Grangemouth; D A Brown, Grangemouth; D C Brown, Edinburgh; G A Brown, Grangemouth; J A Brown, Grangemouth; J T Brown, Edinburgh; J C Gray, Grangemouth; P A Gray, Grangemouth; N J Henry, Glasgow; T W Lock, Edinburgh; T Mair, Cullen; N C McKay, Glasgow; A D Melville, Grangemouth; W M Patterson, Glasgow; J S Speirs, Grangemouth; D Spinks, Grangemouth; K J Walker, Dundee

PATIENCE

Terry W Lock

Hebrews 11: 8-10

Job: 1:1, 8; 42: 1-6, 10-11

James 5: 11 from “Ye have heard ...”

Joshua 6: 1-5

2 Samuel 5: 17-25

Revelation 3: 7-11

I am sure the brethren will understand the context of these scriptures after we get into our subject, and the subject I would like to speak about this afternoon, which I feel has been laid upon me, is the subject of patience. It is one of the things that is most foreign to men, that they should be patient in everything. Men may indeed be patient in some things such as work, or relationships, or learning, but they will not be patient in everything. We all know that by experience: things that exasperate us, things that get under our skin and cause us to say and speak and act in a manner that is beneath the dignity of what we are; that is what impatience does. Now it is quite a thing going through in the day in which we are that one of the greatest marks of power, one of the great marks of power with a Christian, is that he has the patience to wait on God. Well, dear brethren, that is a very testing thing, to have the patience to wait and trust in God in relation to what is going on, be it in your life or in the testimony. To have the patience to wait and move when God says, and to act as you ought is a very, very testing thing. I do not think anyone would put up their hand and say that it was easy or that they did it well.

The persons I read about were individuals that had power with God. The first one *had* power with God; the second *got* power with God, both of them noted for their patience. The first one was Abraham. You think how long Abraham had waited. It says of him in Hebrews 6 in relation to the blessings that God had sworn to give him, and “having had long patience, he got the promise”, v 15. How long was the patience? How long did he wait for Isaac? How long did he wait for that? How long did he wait to get into the land? How long did that take him? In all those things he was learning God, and yet God could speak earlier to Abraham, saying, “walk before my face, and be perfect”, Gen 17: 1. He had trust in Abraham. He had trust in His own work in Abraham, but He brought about in Abraham by patience what was

according to Himself. So you see here in Hebrews 11, "By faith Abraham, being called, obeyed to go out into the place which he was to receive for an inheritance, and went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he sojourned as a stranger in the land of promise as a foreign country, having dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob". Well, he waited at least three generations; that is evident here. He waited at least that long, but the most remarkable thing is what Abraham began with, he was waiting for an heir. What patience had brought about, so that he began to wait for what was precious to God. He had acquired instinct Godward, and power because of it, for it goes on to say, "the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, of which God is the artificer and constructor". Was that going to happen in his generation? No. Did he know that? Yes. Did he wait for it? Yes. Did he conduct his life according to what had been given to him in his patience? Yes. What a remarkable thing that is; he could look on to the day; he could look on to the end of our dispensation. He had the patience to wait for it. Because of that, God enlightened him in his heart. He had power with God and God gave him enlightenment, He gave him a revelation as to what would come, what God was going to do, what God was going to make, what God was going to have for Himself; that is what Abraham waited for. He was no longer only waiting for an heir; his view had been expanded. It had been expanded because he had waited on God. Oh, dear brethren, that is a wonderful thing! Wait on God.

The God you know is moving all things according to His own will. Everything that is happening, everything in the testimony, everything in the world, everything in individuals is happening according to God. To be agitated does not do anything for you. We may be agitated or be impatient, wishing things would go quicker than they do; when Abraham thought that as to Hagar fulfilling God's promise, he took things into his own hand. Was that how he got this revelation in relation to this city which God was building, of which God was the artificer? No, it was not. He could have missed this view of glory. It went forward several thousand years from the time when Abraham was alive. What a thing that was. So that was a man who had power with God. He had the power to wait. That was the proof of the power because he waited; he had the patience to do that.

We come to Job. We had reference to Job in the burial meeting in this place on Wednesday. Job is very interesting. At the beginning of

Job in relation to his history it says he was an upright man. That is how God saw him, as an upright man. He “was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and abstained from evil”. You would say, 'Well, that is good; everything is complete there'. No, it was not; it was not complete there. If it had been complete there God would not have said to Satan, “Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth ... ?”. That is what God said of Job. But God had things to work out in Job. When you go through that whole history in relation to Job you get to the point that was made reference to, “I know that my Redeemer liveth”, chap 19: 25. That was a rock; that was a place in Job's history. As he was going through all the trials that God had put upon him, and the trials included his health, it included his business, it included his family, it included all his relations even down to the point where his wife said, “curse God and die”, chap 2: 9. Job had every attachment, every strut, every anchor that he had, other than God, taken away, everything. You may ask, 'Why did God do that?'. Because God knew what was in Job and He also knew what Job needed.

You go through Job's three friends and all the things that were said; you go through all the things where he would try to justify himself. It is a very interesting book, to go through that whole history. You go through at the end to where Elihu begins to speak (chap 32), and then God begins to speak (chap 38); then you come to the end of it all, “And Job answered Jehovah and said, I know that thou canst do everything, and that thou canst be hindered in no thought of thine. Who is he that obscureth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered what I did not understand”. What had God arrived at in Job? He had arrived at a moral basis in Job in relation to the revelation of Himself that Job would not have received without going through all the trials that he went through. Job says, “therefore have I uttered what I did not understand; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak; I will demand of thee, and inform me. I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee: Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Was Job standing on his own righteousness any more? Or was he standing as he was as a business man? Or was he standing on what he was as a family man? Was he standing on anything at all that would have been the pillars of what was there in chapter 1? No!

That is why we read in James. James says in relation to Job,

“Ye have heard of the endurance of Job, and seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is full of tender compassion and pitiful”. It is an interesting thing here, Job was seen as what he was as an upright man at the beginning. It is a very interesting thing that his brethren came round and gave him rings, a seal of approval of fellowship between brethren. That happened because God had worked, and Job had the patience to wait. The Lord was merciful and compassionate and pitiful in relation to all of that, so that Job should arrive at this, that he should get rings from his brethren and that he should be able to speak to God intelligently, understanding the great God with whom he had to do. That came about because Job had patience. That was the work of God, beloved brethren, that comes to us line upon line, precept upon precept. It does not come *en masse*. It will take you a lifetime to arrive at what God has in mind that you arrive at. It will take a lifetime, be your lifetime long or short; it will be as long as God needs it to be to arrive at His own ends, if you have the patience to wait for it. That is the point.

But then I would like to go on to patience in relation to the testimony. The first thing in the passage about Jericho is that the people had gone over, as we had in the reading. The people had gone over the Jordan at this point. They had been circumcised at Gilgal.; they were moving forward in relation to the land; they were going to take it over. The first thing that was in the road was Jericho, the city of the curse, and at this point in time it was standing. It was still to come down and become the city of the curse, but at this point in time it was right in the way of the entrance to the land. You would think in relation to the armies of Israel, why did they not just go up and take over Jericho? Why did they not just go and have warfare? Why did they not just go and knock down the walls of the city? Why did they not do that? Because that is not what God said. One thing they had learned about coming across the Jordan was that they had to do things God's way. The first thing they had learned going through the wilderness, seeing all the carcasses of their families, the carcasses of their fathers and their mothers, their brothers and their sisters strewn in the wilderness, is that they had to do things God's way. Sometimes, beloved brethren, God has to wait until we learn to wait on Him. It is a very interesting thing in Isaiah where it speaks of God waiting, “For thus saith the Lord Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be your strength; but ye would not. And ye said, No, but we will flee upon horses, - therefore shall ye flee; and, We will ride upon the swift, - therefore shall they that pursue you be

swift. One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one; at the rebuke of five shall ye flee; till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as a banner on a hill. And therefore will Jehovah wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he lift himself up, that he may have mercy upon you; for Jehovah is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him.” Isa 30: 15-18. God had to wait; God had to wait until the people had exhausted their own means of salvation, their own means of moving. What the people of Israel learned in going through the wilderness was that God was for them, and if they waited on Him, He would bring them through. So then they come to Jericho, and it comes to the time what God said in relation to it, for seven days they were to go round the city. For six days they were just to go round, they were not to say anything, they were not to do anything, they were not to speak to the inhabitants, they were not to do anything except what God had instructed. You think of the king of Jericho at that time and the people that were there; he would have said to himself, 'What is this? We are safe here'. He had not reckoned on the power of God in relation to the purposes of His heart, and when God sets Himself to do a thing, it is as Job said, “thou canst be hindered in no thought of thine”. So the people went around six days. On the seventh day they went around. They were carrying the ark before them the whole time; so they had the power of God with them, the testimony to what was in the ark. The proof that they were in accord with the power that was seen in the ark was that they had the patience to do exactly as they had been instructed, and they waited. So they went around for seven days and on the seventh day they went around seven times. What happened? The wall fell flat. If they had gone head on into the city, there would have been men killed. I do not think it says anywhere that there was one Israelite killed in the overthrow of Jericho, because it was God's way. They had the patience to do it God's way to the preservation of life. That was the testimony. God overthrew Jericho: God did it.

So then you come to 2 Samuel. This passage gives us David and how he is against the Philistine and the Philistines were big men. The Philistines set themselves as the best of men, the best and the biggest of men; that is what the Philistine represents. He represents those who in their bigness set themselves against the things of God and the people of God. How are you going to overcome them? Testimonially, how are you going to overcome the world and the people in the world? How are you going to overcome the power that is there? How are you going to overcome the persons who have set themselves

against you? How is this going to happen? “And the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel”. It is very interesting that until that anointing happened they did not do anything, but as soon as David was anointed king, as soon as there was that attraction, as soon as there was that gathering point for the people of Israel from which they were going to be able to gain direction and strength in relation to God alone, who had the promises of God, the Philistines rose up and set themselves against the people of God. The first time David rose and he attacked them, but it is interesting that he asks first. So what happens is that he goes and the Philistines were given into his hands. And then the Philistine arises again and you say, 'Well, just do the same thing again'. No. If David and his men had done the same thing again, they would have lost the battle. Instead, they waited upon God; they waited on the instruction; they waited opposite the mulberry-trees. They were to wait opposite the mulberry-trees until they heard the sound. Now it does not say how long; I do not think it says exactly how long they are there. That is not the point; how long is not the point. The point is that you wait until you hear what God says, and you do not go before that. If you move before that there will be loss of life. If you move ahead of God there will be loss of life; if you go ahead of the Lord, if you do not have the patience to wait for His instruction and you do not have the patience to follow Him, people will die. It is what happens in the testimony. Beloved brethren, let us wait. Let us be patient and do it God's way in God's time; then nobody gets lost, nobody loses their life, nobody loses their way, and God gets the victory. It is a very interesting thing because in all of it what God is after is the preservation of His inheritance. We should be too. Have patience to wait on God, because you value His inheritance. Have patience to wait; do not be impulsive.

It is a very interesting thing to read as we have in Revelation 3, because the proof of both the things that I have been speaking about, one being patience the other being power is seen in Philadelphia. And it speaks in relation to Philadelphia of the things that they had suffered. Beloved brethren, it has always been thus. There has never been a time amongst the people of God ever - Old Testament or New - when the enemy has not sought to attack them. The testimony is not worked out in congenial circumstances; it never has been. The testimony is not worked out thus, but is worked out by persons who overcome according to the power given of them by God with the patience to wait on God. That is how the testimony goes forward, and it has always been thus.

This is not God's praise-service; the service of God in that sense goes forward in settled conditions. The testimony of God goes forward in adverse conditions. So there will always be enemies; there will always be persons that set themselves against the people of God; or the rights of God. There will always be until the Lord comes. But in spite of all of that, in spite of things such as it mentions here - "I make them of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie; behold, I will cause that they shall come and shall do homage before thy feet, and shall know that I have loved thee" - that is what was going on at the time when the Lord could say of Philadelphia, "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an opened door, which no one can shut, because thou hast a little power", not because 'I have given you a little power', but "because thou hast a little power". What gave them the power? What gave them the power is what it says later on, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience". What a glorious thing that is, to keep the word of Christ's patience. He does not refer to keeping His commandments, though they would have been keeping them too. It says, "thou hast kept the word of my patience". They were intelligent as to the movements of Christ, they were intelligent in relation to how God was working in Christ, they were intelligent as to the ways in which God was going to arrive at His own ends with men, and they were patiently waiting for that to happen.

Beloved brethren, God is working; God is arriving at things; God is building things; God is forming things for Himself. Do you have the patience to wait for God to be finished? Do you have the patience to be faithful in a scene that is contrary to all that God is? Do you have the patience to be faithful and hold the word of the Lord and keep His name until God is finished? Well, Philadelphia did, and if you look at what it says at the end, the Lord says, "He that overcomes, him will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more at all out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven, from my God, and my new name." That was the blessing that they got; and the way that it is written here in relation to the overcomers I think you would say would cover most of that assembly because they had the patience to wait.

Beloved brethren, let us have patience. James says earlier on in that chapter where we read, "Have patience, therefore, brethren, till the coming of the Lord. Behold, the labourer awaits the precious fruit of

the earth, having patience for it until it receive the early and the latter rain. Ye also have patience: stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is drawn nigh”, v 7, 8. The most important part of all that is “stablish your hearts”. Philadelphia did what it did because of the love of the Christ. “Stablish your hearts”; hang on to the Man who loves you and died for you, and wait for Him, wait for Him to arrive at His own ends, wait for Him to work out the difficulties, wait for Him to open up to you what He is doing and how He is doing it. Beloved brethren, wait, have patience for the Christ. It is interesting it says in Thessalonians, “the love of God, and ... the patience of the Christ”, 2 Thess 3: 5.

Beloved brethren, that is all I have to say. It is a wonderful day and we look forward to the Lord coming, but in the testimony, and in the working of God, we need to have patience. God is acting; have patience to wait for Him. Have patience that you renew your strength. That is what it says in Isaiah 40, “but they that wait upon Jehovah shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles”, v 31. It is a wonderful thing that: “they that wait upon Jehovah”.

May it be so for His Name's sake.

Grangemouth

12th May 2018

COMFORT

Jim T Brown

John 14: 16-17

The economy, as revealed, brings with it a great system of comfort, in which the Persons of the Godhead individually and, one might say collectively too, administer comfort and grace to meet any given situation. The Lord Jesus knew what it was to be without comfort. Psalm 69 says, "I looked for sympathy, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none" (v 20); He found none, and so how well able the Lord Jesus is to comfort His own, in whatever situation they may find themselves. He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and like one from whom men hide their faces; - despised, and we esteemed him not", Isa 53: 3. But this very Person, the One who died and shed His precious blood, is available now to administer comfort to each one of us in our need. How very affecting that is! The Lord Jesus says in John, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe on God, believe also on me", chap 14: 1. I suppose our faith is involved in that. Peter refers to "the proving of your faith, much more precious than of gold which perishes", 1 Pet 1: 7. The proving of our faith can involve a good deal of testing exercise but at the same time, we feel the comfort of the Lord Jesus.

Later in this chapter, the Lord Jesus adds, "In that day" - that is, our day - "ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you", v 20. We are thus introduced into a great realm of comfort, solace and divine affections where we can know the reality that we are in Him. It suggests that what is in the Father and in Christ is made available to us as conscious that the Lord Jesus is in His Father's affections and we are in His. What a system of comfort therefore opens up to us.

But there is something, too, for the heart of the Lord Jesus. He was once without comfort, as Mr Darby says in his poem,

Thou soughtest for compassion -
Some heart Thy grief to know,
To watch Thine hour of passion -
For comforters in woe:

No eye was found to pity,
No heart to bear Thy woe;
But shame, and scorn, and spitting -
None cared Thy name to know. (from The Man of Sorrows)

The Lord Jesus knew what it was in that extreme sense, which we can never ever in our feeble human minds comprehend, to be without comfort. There was the unbroken communion He enjoyed with His Father, during these years of service, but then for those three terrible, incomprehensible hours on the cross, He knew not one particle of divine comfort or sympathy. What a thing to comprehend! Israel too had rejected Him and His own had deserted Him. But then, we have that remarkable scripture in Genesis 24 that "Isaac was comforted after the death of his mother", v 67. Thus, while the Lord Jesus knew what it was to be without comfort, He now has the satisfaction of being comforted, and He finds that comfort in the assembly, in those whom His precious work has secured for Himself. And I suppose each Lord's day morning in particular, there is something for His own heart. Psalm 110 concludes,

He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall he lift up the head (v 7)

- that is to say, the Lord Jesus is refreshed by what He receives in affection from His own. There is something for our own hearts as we taste freshly the love of Christ and the fulness of it, but what sometimes perhaps we underestimate is the comfort and satisfaction which the Lord Jesus Himself now finds in those who love Him, until that glorious moment when He comes to take His bride to be with Him forever.

So in John 14 we come to this wonderful word, "And I will beg the Father". How affecting that one divine Person should "beg" another that a third divine Person might be made available to those who were dear to the heart of Christ. "He will give you another Comforter" - a Comforter who will be with us for ever. What assurance that gives us. Even in eternity the Holy Spirit will be with us.

By the Spirit all pervading,
Hosts unnumbered round the Lamb,
Crowned with light and joy unfading,
Hail Him as the great "I AM". (Hymn 14)

But He serves us now. He is "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see him nor know him; but ye know him". How blessed that we should know Him. We know His service, we know His comfort, and we know His guiding into all the truth. We know the Lord Jesus and prove His many different services towards us. We know Him as High Priest and we have recourse to Him at the throne of

grace (Heb 4: 15, 16) to find reasonable help and to gain comfort thereby. But we know the Holy Spirit too; "He abides with you, and shall be in you". How wonderful that a divine Person can actually abide in those in whom God has wrought. It is only as you ponder these scriptures that their immensity comes into your heart. The Holy Spirit will doubtless have His own recompense and joy when the assembly, which has been the subject of His solicitude down through the dispensation, and has in unison uttered with Him that longing cry, "Come", is eternally united to the Lord Jesus as His glorious bride.

And then we have access to the Father of compassions. The Lord Jesus knew what it was to find comfort from His Father in His pathway here. Towards the end of His life, when all had left Him and fled, the Lord Jesus could say, "I am not alone, for my Father is with me", John 16: 32. What a comfort that must have been for the Lord Jesus, to know that His Father was with Him. There was the opposition and hostility of men but the Lord Jesus had that blessed assurance as He made His way to the cross that His Father was with Him. As His children, we too experience the compassion and paternal care of our heavenly Father. How fine it is therefore that the Father has an answer to His own desires: "the Father seeks such as his worshippers", John 4: 23. The Lord Jesus found that woman in Samaria and she became a worshipper; what a joy that would be to the Father.

There is a scripture in Acts 9 that comes to mind: "The assemblies then throughout the whole of Judaea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified and walking in the fear of the Lord, and were increased through the comfort of the Holy Spirit", v 31. One of the great services of the Spirit, therefore, is to comfort local assemblies. So that collectively as we gather, in whatever way, we can have some sense of the comfort of the Holy Spirit and being edified thereby. How much there is to cause anxiety and concern, but how fine when we are together, and we do prove it, to have a sense of divine comfort and assurance.

Our brother mentioned a recent bereavement in prayer. What comfort those who sorrow can find from the service of divine Persons. Scripture says as to the fatherless that "their redeemer is mighty", Prov 23: 11. Ruth found in God One "under whose wings thou art come to take refuge", Ruth 2: 12. In the sense of loss which bereavement brings, there is recourse to One who is mighty.

May we be encouraged by the service of each Person of the Godhead

as administering comfort in this way. One of the great titles of the Lord Jesus is “Father of Eternity”, Isa 9: 6. How fine to think of the Lord Jesus as exercising fatherly care and love in the millennial day. No doubt the disciples in some way experienced it in His pathway here; but we have the assurance of His sympathies now, the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and all that is made available to us by the Father of compassions. Indeed we can prove the help of “the God of all encouragement”, 2 Cor 1: 3.

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