

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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DEPENDENCE AND PRAYER

Luke 22: 39-46

1 Samuel 7: 1-17

JSS My exercise in relation to this occasion, beloved, is the matter of dependence on God and prayer. I feel the need of it at the present time and I thought if we are to learn this feature we must look first at our Lord Jesus. He was the dependent Man; He was a praying Man. Prayer is the expression of dependence on God. Luke's gospel in a particular way shows the Lord Jesus praying. I think there are at least eight different occasions where the Lord is said to be praying in Luke's gospel. We could have read of the time that He was praying when He was baptised (chap 3: 21); the time when He spent the night in prayer to God before He chose the twelve (chap 6: 12); when He prayed on the Mount of transfiguration before God marked Him out in all His glory (chap 9: 28); where we have read here, of course, and there are others too. And then on the cross: "Father forgive them", chap 23: 34. The Lord Jesus, beloved, was a Man of prayer and He was a dependent Man. I just wondered if we might look at some of the features associated with such a Person, and then how it might apply to us in the testimony.

Where we read in Samuel, it was a dark and difficult day for the children of Israel. Sorrowfully, the very ark itself had been taken by the Philistines in the previous chapters, but I think Samuel was another man of prayer. Indeed you might say he was himself the product of prayer. His mother had prayed for a son; Samuel was given to her by God. Samuel knew what it was to pray; he was dependent on God. There are certain things that have to be adjusted; if we are to be dependent on God there are certain things that have to be seen to first: other strange gods have to be put away; there is fasting; there is the pouring out of the water; and there is the acceptance of our complete inability to do anything ourselves.

Then there is this beautiful type here of the Lord Jesus, the sucking lamb. What could be more dependent than that? A lamb that is entirely dependent on its mother. It is a type of the Lord Jesus, and it is a whole burnt-offering. You might ask how in such a dark day as this there is a whole burnt-offering. Well, beloved, we can always have an appreciation of Christ, and the perfection of that One, and what He is to God, an appreciation of God's delight in Him. There is a sweet savour that goes up to God from such an offering. Remember, beloved, that

we are accepted in that One; that is the basis of our acceptance, nothing less, the One in whom God's delight was and is, the true Burnt-offering. Therefore we can have boldness to approach God. He is able to save us completely; I thought of that scripture in relation to this matter, "he is able to save completely", Heb 7: 25.

So in addition to that there is perseverance in prayer. It is interesting how the enemy's efforts are redoubled when he sees persons praying. Even as the burnt-offering is offered, the enemy attacks, but God thunders on them. As well as God acting, there is the need for action on our part. We have in scripture those who combat in prayer; so we need to be with God in what He is doing. At the beginning of the chapter the people are described as the children of Israel but then later they are "the men of Israel". There is something formed in persons who are dependent on God, those who are praying persons. Then there is the suggestion of what is maintained in this circuit of Samuel; we might get some help as to what that would speak of.

But we should look first to see in our Lord Jesus the perfect, dependent Man, in such a time of pressure as this that we could never know. I just wonder at this scripture, "and being in conflict he prayed more intently". Beloved, He is presented to us in Luke's gospel as a Model for us. Are we experiencing, in measure, conflict at the present time? How did Jesus act at such a time? In conflict greater than any of us could bear He prayed more intently. Perhaps we could get some help together on these things.

RT Most interesting verse that - "being in conflict he prayed more intently". We are apt to get very formal in our prayers; we pray to the Lord, and we say we leave it there. But that does not do, does it? The Lord looks to us to do something as well as pray. He looks to us to act on our prayers, does He, in the hope and the intelligence that He will help us?

JSS Yes, I think that is helpful. So prayer is not to be a last resort or a formality but should it be something characteristic with us?

RT We do not want to be overly critical, but see what has happened publicly. They have got prayer books, have they not? There is no earnestness put into reading from a prayer book or even repeating what we have said before. The Lord Jesus waits for an answer at times, does He not? "Being in conflict he prayed more intently", and He is waiting to get the answer.

RG It says the apostle Paul and Silas in prison “in praying, were praising God with singing, and the prisoners listened to them”, Acts 16: 25. Do these two things go together - our appreciation of who God is brings forth praise and worship, but along with that we can be praying more intently? “In praying, were praising God with singing”. What an answer they got: an earthquake that opened the prison doors, and brought the jailer down.

JSS Yes, I think that is helpful. So often we resort to prayer in our need, but do you not often find that the need is more than met; and then something flows back to God in praise as we recognise the One who is able to more than meet our need? There is something for His glory.

NJH It is said that the disciples followed Him to the Mount of Olives; help us in that.

JSS Well, I would like to hear what you say. It was His custom to go there. That would reinforce the thought of what was characteristic. It was what characterised the Lord, but does their following Him mean that there was something for them to learn by following and looking on this One? What would you say yourself?

NJH It would be somewhere that is cleared of everything bar what is the will of God. Would that be right? And I wondered if following would suggest just what has been said as to prayer: prayer is not to be selfish but the will of God is before you. Is that right? It is to be “praying in the Holy Spirit”, as it says in the epistle, Jude v 20.

JSS Yes. I think that is an important point to bring out. The Lord Jesus, of course, shows that perfectly, does He not? “Not my will, but thine be done”. So we are encouraged - exhorted - to pray according to God’s will. It says that in John’s epistle, does it not? “If we ask him anything according to his will he hears us”, 1 John 5: 14. So it would be incongruent to be doing our own will whilst asking God to help us.

AW Why does He says to His disciples, “pray that ye enter not into temptation”? Does that connect with what you spoke about as to conditions?

JSS Yes; I would like help on that. I suppose in one way they were weak in that they slept from grief. They were not able for this. The Lord knew what temptation was, “sin apart” of course. Satan tried to tempt Him, and found that he could not. But do you think prayer is what would preserve us from giving in to that temptation?

AW I was thinking that it is not just a question of words; it is a question of our own living link with divine Persons. We do find ourselves in temptation. Temptation takes us away, but we need to be kept in that dependent condition. There are conditions that we have here in which it says of the Lord that “he prayed more intently”. What the result of that was. It was something that He was going through in His own exercise and that is what we have to come to, is it?

JSS Yes, I think that is right. So the Lord was bearing things in His spirit here. I suppose the conflict that is spoken of here would really be with Satan. Satan would be bringing before Him the horror of what lay ahead and was trying to persuade Him not to go on with it. But He could not be swayed.

JL Is the Lord Jesus set before us in a particular way as a Model at this point as well? We have been saying that there may be need on our part to pray more intently because we may have been a little lax, but we cannot identify that thought with the Lord Jesus, can we? In “praying more intently” is He, therefore, set before us as a particular Model for our help and guidance?

JSS I think what you draw attention to is important. There was nothing in any way lacking in the first prayer, but the continuing in it - you might say the persevering in it - showed His perfection, and as you say, He is a Model for us. We might say even the fact that He is withdrawn about a stone's throw gave them an uninterrupted view of this One, as a Model to see how He acted.

JL I was thinking in that connection when our brother asked the question earlier about the disciples following. Peter in writing in his epistle does not claim exactly to have been a participator in the sufferings, but he says that he was a witness of the sufferings of the Christ, 1 Pet 5: 1. And standing just that little distance away they would nevertheless be witnesses of the intensity of what the Lord was passing through; and in some way at least they would later gain from it, do you think?

JSS Yes, I think that is helpful.

RT The Lord says, “not my will, but thine be done”. Do you not think that is a testing word for us? We often want the Lord to do what we want, do we not?

Obedience full, unquestioned: perfection of a Son!
(No 110 Hymns for the Little Flock 1951 Edition)

JSS Yes. I find too often that I am selfish in relation to my prayers. It was not so with the Lord Jesus; He was always thinking of the Father and His will. And that is a great test, but it is available to us to look and see how the Lord prayed, and to seek to pray according to God's will.

GBG Are you suggesting that we would learn from considering the Lord here, but also from their following? The Lord does not ask them to pray for Him. Do you think there is a depth in this that they would not be able to fathom and enter into? The Lord was alone in the deep exercise here. They could take account of Him but it was between Him and His Father when you might say He restfully proceeded.

JSS He was not asking them to pray for Him; He was facing this Himself. But do you think the fact that He says to them to pray shows He was considering for His own, even at that point? And immediately after too, He says to them, "rise up and pray". He is not saying anything about what He has passed through; He is considering for them.

AB We would often say, 'Well, the least we can do is pray': but it is the greatest thing we can do! You cannot do anything greater than pray. The power of prayer is something that every Christian would know something of and as we progress in our history we find that prayer comes into privilege. The Lord Jesus in John 17 prays for His own. That is something very precious, do you think?

JSS Prayer ought not to be, as we have said, the last resort; it ought to be the first thing that I do in every situation.

JTB Regarding the matter of praying more intently, the oblation was baked in the oven in the pan and the cauldron, was it not, Lev 7: 9? Does that suggest varying degrees of intensity that the Lord's spirit was capable of? At the end of this gospel He cried with a loud voice, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit", chap 23: 46. The Lord's spirit was capable of these degrees of intensity, that we would do well to seek to follow, although they are always beyond us, do you think?

JSS Yes, I think that is helpful: more and more intense. No matter how intense the pressure, He shone perfectly in all His beauty as a dependent and obedient Man. He is here as a real Man experiencing this. Always, of course, God in His Person, but a perfect Man.

JTB The oblation was one of the offerings by fire. Would it suggest a degree of testing? Responsiveness completely met by Christ, do you think?

JSS Yes, that is not something I feel I can say too much about, but it is worth our contemplation.

AGM Is that why He says twice, “pray that ye enter not into temptation”? When we are considering such a holy matter there is a danger of temptation. We are in a mixed condition; He was not; He was perfect. We need to be praying that we enter not into temptation and not allow anything of the first order of man to enter into it.

JSS Yes; I think that is very important. The Lord knew what His own were able for, and that they may be tempted, and He therefore exhorts them to pray that they might not be. Well, that word would still be current for us, would it not? “Pray that ye enter not into temptation”. It is striking that He says it before and after this prayer of His own.

DCB Luke's gospel brings in the Mount of Olives rather than Gethsemane as in others. Does that give really a setting to all of this prayer?

JSS Help us as to the distinction between Gethsemane and the Mount of Olives.

DCB Gethsemane particularly emphasises pressure; it would be the wine press, or something of that kind. But here it is the mount of Olives, which might relate to the earlier reference to praying in the Holy Spirit. It suggests a whole elevated area of the Spirit's presence that would give an atmosphere for our prayers.

JSS Yes; so would you say it is a holy atmosphere here? It was a place the Lord Jesus had recourse to, suggestive of what is heavenly and the time He spent there with His Father. It is a holy area; I think that is important.

RT Do you not think the Lord sometimes puts a matter back on us? Somebody said,

I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids,
Until I find out a place for Jehovah. (Psalm 132: 4, 5)

He sometimes says, 'Well, what are you doing about it?', does He?

JSS That is my exercise; I may tend to pray to God but then not necessarily do anything more about the matter myself. But we are to be with God in the exercise, are we not, and to be active? It speaks in scripture about persevering in prayer (Col 4: 2) and combating in prayer v 12. These are active thoughts, are they not?

RT That links with what we are saying: “not my will, but thine be done”. It would help us to be adjusted as to the exercise and reality of our prayer.

TWL Would a scripture in relation to David help? When it came to the time of recovery in a difficult day it says he “strengthened himself in Jehovah his God”, 1 Sam 30: 6. And then he asked for the ephod (v 7), and then he moved forward to recover all for God. Is that the character of what God was saying to the disciples here - “Pray that ye enter not into temptation”?

JSS Yes; that is helpful as to strengthening ourselves. Would prayer have that effect on us?

TWL Yes, exactly. David did not ask for counsel from people. He strengthened himself in the God he knew, and he moved forward in recovery according to the God he knew. Would that be right?

JSS So as we go into God's presence, in prayer, and make our requests known to Him according to His will, not only do we find that He is able to meet our need, but He would strengthen us and reassure us to go on as having had that experience, and perhaps then knowing Him a little better, that we can rely on Him further.

AB What do you think of this matter of “according to his custom”? Is there something for us to learn in this?

JSS Well, for us prayer would be a good custom, do you think?

AB We read of persons “who, on account of habit, have their senses exercised for distinguishing both good and evil”, Heb 5: 14. I wondered if that comes into a custom that we as Christians should adopt. Do you think that would be fair to say that?

JSS Yes, I think that is right.

APG Paul prays for divine peace: “The peace of God ... shall guard your hearts and your thoughts”, Phil 4: 7. Is that how we are restful as we commit things to God?

JSS Yes. We might be troubled in our spirits as we go into God's presence but He would cause us to be restful, knowing that He is in control and He is able for all that we ask and more.

APG The Lord says in John, “Let not your heart be troubled” (chap 14: 1), does He not? He gives His peace; so we can know that as marked by this prayer, do you think?

JSS Yes, I think that is helpful.

JL As one of the Lord's servants said, 'Dependence without confidence is misery, but dependence based on confidence is supreme happiness' CAC Outline of Luke's Gospel vol 10 p130. That is what the Lord would enjoy here despite the intensity of the grief. He was addressing His Father, was He not, at this point?

JSS Yes, that is helpful. So you said 'dependence based on confidence'. We are dependent on God, but we *know* that He is not only able to help but is also willing to do so; His disposition is to bless and to help.

WMP Does what has just been said suggest then that communion underlies this prayer?

JSS Yes, I feel that. I am too apt at times to be casual in prayer, but do you think it should be a deliberate matter with us to be going carefully into the divine presence? Of course we can pray at any moment, but I am thinking in relation to what was said as to a holy atmosphere where we can open our heart to God; it is a place of communion.

WMP There have been several remarks about this already: what our brother said as to the Mount of Olives, and what has also been referred to as to the God that He knew; so we must pray in the conscious sense of the knowledge of the One to whom we are praying.

JSS Yes, absolutely.

DSp So faith enters into our prayers. I am linking on with what has been said as to the fact of praying to a God that we know. We do not pray in relation to matters that have no conclusion; as having faith in God we leave them before Him in order that they may work out in a conclusion for His glory. Faith must enter into prayer in that sense, do you think?

JSS Yes, I was thinking about Hebrews: "For he that draws near to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who seek him out", chap 11: 6. We have to be conscious that we are actually speaking to a Person.

RT The answer might test us, might it not? Paul says thrice he sought God for something, but the Lord said, "My grace suffices thee", 2 Cor 12: 9. He did not pray for it again, but the answer may test us.

JSS That is a great test, and I came across something in ministry

recently that said, 'We spend time in praying that God would change our circumstances, whereas we should use our time better by asking that we might be changed', CAC vol 10 p69 That is a test to me, but the Lord would help us in it, and, as you say, His grace **is** sufficient.

JCG In relation to the will of God, do you think that we need to be exercised in relation to finding out where the Lord would go in the testimony? The will of God is what the Lord found the answer to. He really *accepted* that He should go to death and rise again, and be glorified. Should we not, in our prayers, seek help from the Spirit and the Lord to find the way of the will of God in the testimony? We spend quite a lot of time in relation to our needs, and it is right that we should feel things amongst the saints, but the testimony is prime, is it not?

JSS So we would not be aimless in how we pray. We would be seeking how the Lord might direct, and what we should do next. We see that in the Acts, do we not? How prayerful they were as to where they should go next, or how they should proceed. That is, they were not thinking of themselves; they were not selfish: they were thinking of the Lord and His testimony.

NJH I understand that, in one of his last prayers, Mr Darby prayed that the saints may be guided into the unity of the testimony. Do you think that is in line with what our brother said as to finding where the Lord is in the testimony, that the saints may follow?

JSS Yes; I think we could get help as to that, because too often, I may think of myself and myself only; but I should think in my prayers of the Lord, of His testimony, and of those that are His in relation to the testimony.

NJH Duty lies in a committal to the testimony of our Lord, does it not?

JSS Yes. Perhaps that would link with what we have in Samuel. I feel very limited as to what I can say about this Old Testament scripture. The book is very interesting. In the previous three chapters, apart from one verse at the very beginning, Samuel is not even mentioned. The ark is taken; then the ark is recovered without the people doing anything in relation to it: God shows what He is capable of doing Himself. And we see the total superiority of the ark, that is typical of Christ, over against every other god. Dagon the fish god fell and was broken in pieces in the presence of the ark. So there is what God is able to do for Himself in protecting the testimony of our Lord. But then, as our brother helped us earlier, what are we going to do? At the beginning of this chapter 7, the

ark is brought back. It is not exactly brought to where it should be - not yet; David would see to that, the king would see to that, but Samuel's desire is to help the people in their state to be together. He gathers the people together, to have Jehovah before them only. We had ministry recently as to singleness of eye. I thought about that in relation to this scripture: they "served Jehovah only". We have to be exercised to be like the people here. These children of Israel were God's people. Perhaps we can apply this to believers in the Lord Jesus at the present time. How are we considering for the ark? How are we going to make sure it is carried and taken to its proper place? That for us is a matter of how Christ is to be given His proper place; I think it is by praying persons.

RT So there is an interjection here. It says, "that the time was long". That was how God was feeling about things, was it not? There was not much exercise among the people, but somebody got the sense that God was feeling this very deeply. Maybe that should exercise and colour our prayers more. How is God feeling about it?

JSS Yes. I wondered about that comment, "the time was long". The note says, 'the days were many'. Think of God feeling every one of those days when the ark was not where it should have been. Beloved, how does God feel it if I do not give Christ His true place individually and in my household and my local meeting? How God feels it; every day He would feel it.

RT So the time was long because the people were careless. But somebody got exercised later on and it moved very quickly, did it not?

JSS Yes. It shows what is possible as we are dependent on God, do you think? We have first of all to put away what is not according to God's will. I was thinking of that scripture, "The fervent supplication of the righteous man has much power", Jas 5: 16. The people here were not being righteous before God. They had strange gods; they had idols. Mr Coates has said that all Israel had effectively become Philistines, Outline of Samuel vol 27 p16. What a sorrowful state for God's people to be in.

AB I was thinking of that verse you were referring to in James, "The fervent supplication of the righteous man has much power". That is the test when we pray: if I am praying, is it an empty prayer? The test is the power. And then James tells us about Elias, "a man of like passions to us", and then what he did, and what prayer effectuated, v 17, 18. And that is the test, would you think?

JSS So prayer gives us power with God, and then we have power with others here. It has been commented that there is something additional mentioned in James; that the earth gave forth fruit. That is not mentioned in the Old Testament passage (1 Kings 18) but James refers to it in chap 5: 18. It shows what can be brought about as a result of prayer.

RG Is it important to notice that Samuel says, “If ye return to Jehovah with all your heart”? So it refers to our heart: “with all your heart”. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and **incurable**; who can know it?” (Jer 17: 9) - God knows it. He knows what is in these hearts of ours; all these things that you have pointed out that had to be removed. Some of them might be hidden, no doubt, the people going on privately with things that were obnoxious to God because they were held precious in the heart. It is not merely a mind matter. The whole of Christendom is characterised by man’s mind, but it is a heart matter.

JSS I think that is an important word for us. God “looketh upon the heart” (1 Sam 16: 7), and what did He see in these hearts? He saw hearts that had something other than Himself there, some of these idols. Some of them might have been very small, but nevertheless they took the place of God in the affections of the people and therefore they had to go.

RT Is not fasting connected with prayer? “This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting”, Matt 17: 21. That is why it was prolonged here, was it not? But once you begin to fast it facilitates the movements of God, do you think?

JSS Yes, I thought that, and I am glad of what you bring in. So, first of all, in verses 2-4, they have to deal with the putting away of these gods, but then in verse 5 Samuel says, “I will pray Jehovah for you”. He did not say earlier that he would pray for them; he said to them, “put away the strange gods”. So we must be obedient; we must be subject to the Lord and His will; put away what is not suited, and then we will find that we can get help. The fasting would show that we are not trying to get help anywhere else.

JL Am I right in saying that the word Mizpah means ‘watchtower’?

JSS Yes, I believe that is right. So we get the expression, “watch and pray” several times in the New Testament. What would you say?

JL Yes, I was thinking along those lines. We pray, and we have been reminded already that that should be in faith, but it has to be in

watchfulness too, waiting and looking for the divine answer, and being prepared to move in relation to it.

JSS We could think of watching in two ways. We could look watchfully so as to be aware of what Satan might try and bring in unawares. But too we should look positively, watching for the answer to prayer. I was thinking of Elijah's servant - he went seven times looking for the answer and then he saw it, "a cloud, small as a man's hand"; the Lord's hand coming in in answer to prayer, 1 Kings 18: 44.

JL Habakkuk makes mention of his watch and his tower (Hab 2: 1), and expectantly looked for the answer in prayer, and found it, did he not?

JSS Yes, I think that is helpful. So we should not pray without actually believing that there will be a result. Let us pray in faith, knowing that God *is* able and He is willing to bring about the help that we need.

TWL Is what Samuel says important? He does not say, 'I will pray *to* Jehovah for you' but "I will pray Jehovah *for* you".

JSS What do you understand by that? I was interested in how it was put here: "I will pray Jehovah for you".

TWL I wondered whether this is a prayer according to the holy glory of God. He is not praying to Jehovah here. He is praying Jehovah. It is the character of the prayer according to what God is, according to what He is in His holy majesty because prior to this there is the putting away of the things contrary to God. But then he is going to "pray Jehovah". The scene is set according to His holiness, and according to His glory, and subsequently the help comes.

RG Would "pray Jehovah" not indicate how close the two were? The Lord was in his heart: "I will pray Jehovah". 'To' might mean there is a distance. I think if we had some sense, even in the prayer meeting, that Jehovah was in our hearts, our prayers might be more intimate in relation to the interests of the Lord here.

JSS Yes; it suggests that Samuel was someone who frequented God's presence. He knew familiarity in a right way with God.

GBG The Lord Himself says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall come to pass to you", John 15: 7. So along with this closeness - "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you" - there is to be intelligence in our prayers, is there not? "My words abide in you". We might be praying for something that is not actually according to the truth. So it is important that "my words abide in

you”, and then you might think you have an answer. So it is important to be regulated by the truth in our prayers in the scriptures, do you think?

JSS I think that is helpful. So the matter of intelligence would come into our prayers; that we would know what would be the right thing to ask for.

EJM Would it be right to bring the sisters into these matters? The feminine side is very prominent in 1 Samuel, is it not? It begins with Hannah who prayed, chap 1. She rose up. She had prayed; she had vowed. She asked for a man-child and there was a result of that request. It went on for years, the praying, did it not? It did not just happen overnight, but perseverance in prayer brings about manhood.

JSS I am glad you bring that in. Perhaps the sisters may know more about prayer than I do, in what they bear in their spirits. How unselfish Hannah was in her prayer; she was willing to give the man-child to God all the days of his life. She was not thinking of herself; she was thinking of the testimony of God and His service.

RT That is a beautiful reference, because she prayed for him all the time and, once her prayer had been answered, every year she went up she took up a garment that was already bigger, chap 2: 19. She was expecting the Lord to have come in. But she did something about it by taking up another garment.

JSS Very good. It confirms what you were saying earlier, that she prayed with faith knowing that there would be a result as having left it with God, but then she was not inactive herself in relation to it.

RT Was it big enough? What would she do? But she had full confidence that what she was praying about, God was able to bring it about, and He tested her and she rose to the test.

JSS Yes; I think that is very attractive.

GAB Is there something very important about the water here? They drew water and poured it out before Jehovah. Earlier they had dealt with these wrong things, and had attended to them, but the water has more of an inward effect, does it not? The fact it was before Jehovah means that everything is plain in His presence.

JSS Yes, I would like help as to it further. They poured it out before Jehovah. One suggestion in it, I think, is that it represented what they were. They poured it all out, and there would have seemed to be nothing left; it would be soaked up by the earth. There is another

scripture about water that is spilt on the earth and cannot be gathered up again, 2 Sam 14: 14. They are just in honesty before God, accepting that they were nothing and could do nothing for themselves.

GAB When it is before Jehovah there can be nothing hidden at all. The water seems to have that effect, that things are all clarified in the divine presence.

JSS Yes. Was there not someone who went into God's presence and spread matters out before Him?

GAB Hezekiah was the one, 2 Kings 19: 14.

JSS It is a good thing just to go before God and have it all out with Him.

JCG The gathering is important in this; Samuel gets the people together. So they heard Samuel praying, and they got the prophetic word. So having got rid of my idols, I am able to gather together so that the word of God can come in, and so I can know the direction that God has in mind in it. That would be total dependence, would it?

JSS Yes, I am glad of what you say as to gathering them together. We were reminded in the week as to separation from evil being God's principle of unity, JND Collected Writings vol 1 p353. That principle does not change; there will not be unity on any other basis.

JCG And the other article, "Grace the Power of Unity in Gathering" (JND Collected Writings vol 1 p366) is the positive side. They were praying in the upper room before the Spirit came. We need to be constantly dependent, do we not?

JSS Yes. I feel more and more that prayer is to be characteristic with us. It is not only a matter for emergencies. It is not only a matter when there is a particular difficulty; although there was one such occasion where the scripture speaks of unceasing prayer being made, Acts 12: 5.

NCMcK I was thinking about that scripture in Isaiah which says, "ye do not at present fast, to cause your voice to be heard on high", chap 58: 4. Fasting seems to be a state of negation of the first order of man in view of our being accepted before God; it brings in power with God. It says of the Lord He was "heard because of His piety", Heb 5: 7. It is a great matter to have power with God, is it not; power to intercede?

JSS I am glad of what you refer to in that scripture in Hebrews, He was "heard because of his piety". That is an amazing thing; Paul says to Timothy, "I will therefore that the men pray in every place, lifting up

pious hands”, 1 Tim 2:8. It says “holy” hands in the note. Help us more please as to your thought of fasting in Isaiah.

NCMcK Isaiah's word to the people was that should they fast they would get power to cause their voice to be heard. A person has weight with God then; a righteous, holy person has weight with God.

JSS Yes, I think that is right. “By him actions are weighed”, 1 Sam 2: 3.

GBG The Lord says, “pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who sees in secret will render it to thee”, Matt 6: 6. It does not say He *hears* in secret - it says He **sees** in secret”,

JSS Can you explain that please?

GBG Well, He *would* hear, but the Lord did not say that. He says, “thy Father who sees in secret shall render it to thee”. He hears what we say but He sees ourselves, and sees the whole situation, which I might not.

JSS Yes, that is very helpful.

RG Does the Lord speak of seeing in secret because piety is a matter of state?

JSS Say some more please.

RG Well, where am I? Have I changed? What is my outlook? Have I still got natural ambitions, even ecclesiastical ambitions naturally, or is it the Lord that is first in my desire? I think this thought about state is something we need to give more consideration to. I do not mean here; I mean all the time.

JSS I feel the test of it myself but I think what you said about being changed as being in the divine presence is helpful; we cannot go in there truly and come out the same as we were when we went in. And that would surely help us in our state the more that we went there.

BWL How far does the sucking lamb really represent the state of Israel?

JSS Say some more please.

BWL Well, it is a burnt-offering. We might have thought a sin-offering would have been appropriate, but it is a burnt-offering. You said in your outline that it really speaks of the excellency of Christ, and our acceptance in Him, but it should relate to something subjectively seen in the saints, do you think?

JSS Yes, I think Samuel has an attractive way of presenting what the people ought to be; marked by dependence as seen perfectly in Christ. It is contrasted with the water that was poured out, which was really nothing. What we are ourselves is nothing but here it is a whole burnt-offering. The lamb is what is excellent to God. His delight is in it and there is no reason why such a full offering cannot be offered to God. Even when there have been difficult and testing circumstances and a low state, dependence on God can bring about this kind of offering, quickly. There need not be a long time for improvement.

JL From another point of view it was a very tiny offering for a whole nation. What do you make of that?

JSS The main impression that I had as to it was the fact that it was a sucking lamb. Not just a lamb - a sucking lamb. A lamb that was entirely dependent. And I just wondered if Samuel was particularly drawing attention to that feature as seen perfectly in Christ, and God's delight was in such a One. What would you say?

JL I think that. It brings out the sufficiency in perfection of all that was found in the Lord Jesus, but it reminds us of the need for humility on our part in the current times, does it not?

JSS Yes; I think that is right. There is nothing for us to be proud about; humility is an important feature and I think that is very helpful.

DCB Is it particularly needed in the face of the Philistine as the enemy at this time who had presumptions, and would assert the mind of man in God's things?

JSS Yes. The Philistine were a people who as I understand it had also come from Egypt and dwelt in Canaan. But they did not come the divinely appointed way and they did not belong in God's inheritance; they had no place there. I suppose we see that in what Christendom has become, where man's mind has been allowed to promote itself where it has no rightful place. We see things of outward grandeur in Christendom and things that are impressive and imposing.

RG They suggest to me those who come into the profession by way of the department of theology. And we can have a department of theology amongst us, not just in the university along the road.

JSS It is a test to me to be sure of the ground that we are on, and that we are on it on a right basis. The Philistines had no place in this land; this was God's land: this was the land for God's people. Did you have more to say as to the Philistine?

DCB Only that you see how their features are going to develop in Goliath, in what is grand and demands place among the people of God, to have its sway there. Here there is an answer to that, and it takes the two forms of the water poured out, from our side, which might relate to self-judgment, and the sucking lamb, showing the perfection of Christ in His dependence.

JSS Yes. How different a sucking lamb is to the Philistine!

NJH After getting the divine answer in Acts 13, it says that they still fasted and prayed and committed themselves to what the Holy Spirit had said, v 3. Is that important?

JSS Yes; help us a bit more please.

NJH The local assembly was brought into it. It speaks of what was “in Antioch, in the assembly”, and it says who were there - who were present; and then it says, “And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then, having fasted and prayed, and having laid their hands on them, they let them go”, v 1-3. So the company entered into the whole matter in this way even after getting the divine word.

JSS So they were not going to rely or trust on anything other than God Himself.

NJH Barnabas and Paul could come back to that condition; they were continuing fasting and praying.

JSS Yes, that is helpful.

AB The Philistine is in contrast to the pious man; would it be right to say that a pious man is a praying man?

JSS Yes. It has been said that piety is giving God His proper place in everything here. Prayer would do the same too; it would bring God in.

AB It is interesting that Paul speaks about the mysteries. One of the mysteries that he speaks about is piety; he says, “And confessedly the mystery of piety is great”, 1 Tim 3: 16. And then he opens up in his heart to God, saying, “God has been manifested in flesh, ... has appeared to angels, has been preached among the nations, has been believed on in the world, has been received up in glory”. His heart goes out to God.

JSS Yes. I think that is affecting.

JTB “The hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible ornament of a meek and quiet spirit”, 1 Peter 3: 4. Do you think that corresponds with the sucking lamb? Was that in principle what Samuel was seeking to engender here?

JSS Yes. So it is hidden, but it is not hidden before God, is it? God takes account of it; God values it.

JTB It would be in contrast to the Philistine, the outward excellence of the flesh, do you think?

JSS Yes. Man looks on the outward appearance; God looks on the heart, 1 Sam 16: 7.

JTB That passage in Peter ends with the unity between the husband and the wife, which results in the prayers not being hindered. Does that bring together the two sides you are speaking of?

JSS Yes, I think that is very helpful.

JCG As Samuel brings forward this sucking lamb, Jehovah acts for them because they said, “We have sinned”. Do you think we need to give thanks for that? Eben-ezer suggests “Hitherto Jehovah has helped us”. The prayer meeting involves thankfulness for positive results, do you think?

JSS Yes. So another thing that goes along with prayer is thanksgiving. I remember being at a meeting once on Lord's day morning and when the announcements were made the brother said 'On Monday night there would be a meeting for prayer, praise and thanksgiving'. I found that attractive. In fact we had it in our own prayer meeting on Monday. We sang that hymn,

We'll praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that's to come. (Hymn 23)

It is important not only to just keep asking for help for our need at the present moment and then moving on, but to look back and see what God has done in a substantial way. This is a milestone is it not?

AGM Before they came to Eben-ezer the men of Israel went out and pursued the Philistines and smote them. God comes in and acts but we have to make that good for ourselves in our own soul history, and then we can arrive at Eben-ezer. Do you think that is one of the great exercises of today, that we do not treat things superficially? What the saints are going through is to be in soul history with God.

JSS Yes, I think that is important. So in that way God does not do everything here. He shows them what He is against and He shows what His power is against, but He really would say to them, 'Are you going to finish it?'. Paul speaks to Timothy about what is to be fully followed up: "The good teaching which thou hast fully followed up", 1 Tim 4: 6. Are we going to fully follow things up? Let us not leave things unfinished. God would have us to be with Him in what He is doing, and not to stop short.

AW Does Samuel's circuit keep us in a right state?

JSS Yes I am glad you referred to that. So this stone is set up at Ebenezer, which you might say is like prayer and thanksgiving, but we then have to be maintained. The thought of the circuit year by year is interesting and perhaps links to what our brother mentioned earlier as to Samuel's mother coming up year by year. Samuel realises that there is to be progress year on year. And there are different exercises every year; the exercises of this year are different to those of last year.

RG Would it be weekly now instead of yearly?

JSS Well, it could be continually, could it not? But I agree. How much we value the prayer meeting. I value getting to the prayer meeting; I miss it when I cannot; there is power there. There is power available with God for the testimony and we need to be exercised not to miss it. We can get some help as to these places, Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah and Ramah. Bethel, of course, speaks of the house of God. Paul speaks to Timothy, "that thou mayest know how one ought to conduct oneself in God's house", 1 Tim 3: 15.

WMP Does that become a point of reference then for us in the testimony? We have to take our bearings as we go through life, and there is something established here for God, is there not? It is the house of God. That should have its effect then do you think as we arrange our circumstances?

JSS Yes; I think that is right. Surely it would be right to relate ourselves to such a place as God's house, and consider for such a place in our prayers, and arrange our circumstances as we can to be in accord with that.

NJH The idea of judgment is applied to each place: "And judged Israel in all those places."

JSS I am glad of what you say; there would be the thought of

consistency. I was thinking of Revelation, where it says of the Lord that He “walks in the midst of the seven golden lamps”, chap 2: 1. There is a word to each of the assemblies. You might say there is something particular for each place, but nevertheless, it would apply consistently to every place. You might say judgment is a severe thing. Mr James Taylor said, 'Well, you say, judgment does not cause joy. Well, if it does not cause joy, directly, it will indirectly, because it will bring about the removal of what hinders joy, JT vol 51 p485. If there is to be peace and joy in our places this element of judgment may have to be accepted. Samuel is a prophet; he brings God's current word in.

RT What about the altar he built?

JSS That seems to be at his own place. So there is the house of God; there is Gilgal - the cutting off of the flesh - but not only that; there are twelve stones there. All the tribes of Israel are represented. There is a universal aspect, and we do not forget that, the whole thought. They were to gather *all* Israel; the twelve stones would remind them of that. And Mizpah, where they had just been, Watchfulness. But then Ramah, his own house. Is there to be a consistency in our own household, what is sacrificial for God's pleasure?

RT So it suggests an easier approach to God, an altar in his own house.

JSS Yes. I find that a test. How he would love to frequent God's presence there and make sacrifices to God.

JTB He starts by going to Bethel. Judgment begins from the house of God, does it not, 1 Pet 4: 17? So the whole of this course of judgment would be consistent with the principles of the house of God, do you think?

JSS Yes, I think that is helpful; that it begins there. And everything else takes its bearing from that. And then he would go back to it again. So there would be this circuit that would have a consistency about it.

TWL Is it important, though, that he begins from his own place which is Ramah; that is a high place. He built his altar at Ramah; everything we do must be according to what is true of a Man in heaven.

JSS It is an elevated place, and it would cause us to be exercised too, do you think, as to our own place? That is where our responsibility is first, is it not? Our own dwelling.

TWL Yes. I was thinking about it in relation to what our brother has made reference to about the house of God. That is judgment according

to the testimony that is here. You have the watch tower. You have Gilgal, but for us all of it is in light of a Man in heaven. Everything starts there; we do not just end up there; would that be right?

JSS Yes, I think that is very attractive and encouraging to remind us of as we close, that it is One who is in heaven who makes intercession for us there. I read something in ministry that struck me. Mr Coates said that “every true prayer is minted in heaven”, that is, it comes from heaven, CAC Outline of Mark's Gospel vol 9 p127. A true prayer comes from heaven. You might think of our prayers going up to heaven, but then he went on to say that when you present it at heaven “it must be honoured because it came from there”. It is a wonderful thing to begin there and end there; Christ in heaven.

RG I love these two lines in that hymn,

Oh the sight in heaven is glorious!
Man in righteousness is there;” (Hymn 212)

Come to the prayer meeting; can you sit down and say that man in righteousness is here?

JSS Well, that is open to us and available to us, is it not?

Kirkcaldy

4th November 2017

Key to initials:

D C Brown, Edinburgh; G A Brown, Grangemouth; J T Brown, Edinburgh; A Buchan, Kirkcaldy; R Gardiner, Kirkcaldy; A P Grant, Dundee; G B Grant, Dundee; J C Gray, Grangemouth; N J Henry, Glasgow; J Laurie, Brechin; T W Lock, Edinburgh; B W Lovie, Aberdeen; A G Mair, Cullen; E J Mair, Buckie; N C McKay, Glasgow; W M Patterson, Glasgow; J S Speirs, Grangemouth; D Spinks, Grangemouth; R Taylor, Kirkcaldy; A Wilson, Kirkcaldy

FAITHFUL AMIDST UNFAITHFULNESS

G. Bruce Grant

2 Timothy 2: 1-4

2 Samuel 11: 10-11

2 Samuel 19: 24

Numbers 3: 25-26

In our hymn we sang of One, the Lord Jesus, who was 'faithful amidst unfaithfulness', Hymn 230. That was always true of the Lord Jesus; He as a Man here had so much against Him, and yet He was faithful in bringing out the truth as to His God the Father. It says in Psalm 40, "I have not hidden thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation", v 10. It says, "I have published righteousness in the great congregation: behold, I have not withheld my lips, Jehovah, *thou knowest*", v 9. He is faithful at the present time; He is a merciful and faithful High Priest in things relating to God. How thankful we are for His service in that way. How much Paul suffered and yet "the Lord stood by him", Acts 23: 11. He was not faultless, but the Lord stood by him. He said, "Be of good courage; for as thou hast testified the things concerning me at Jerusalem, so thou must bear witness at Rome also". The Lord was faithful; He supported him with priestly support. How much suffering Paul went through, but he knew the service of the merciful and faithful High Priest. The Holy Spirit is also faithful; we see that in His never leaving us; He indwells the believer but He never leaves, always available when you turn to Him. The Holy Spirit is serving faithfully throughout the whole dispensation. God is faithful: the apostle tells us that a number of times. We know that in the simple matter of having what we need as God's creatures: He provides for us. He is faithful to His purposes, His promises; we can trust what God says. In regard to His purposes, He will soon bring them in in finality. We enjoy something of these things already but the fulness of them will soon be brought in. So divine Persons are faithful. It is a feature of the manhood of Christ.

Then the matter comes down to ourselves. We are at the end of the dispensation, and Timothy was the assurance, you might say, that the testimony would continue. He was Paul's true child and Paul was nearing the end of his course; and he was concerned that what he had taught, what the Lord had given to him, would be continued. So he says to Timothy, "be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus". That grace

is there, and I think we prove that grace by staying close to the Lord Jesus, abiding in Him. How gracious He is! We have to go to Him, be near Him to prove it, His support and strength. He “has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of wise discretion”, 2 Tim 1: 7. Paul says, “the things thou hast heard of me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, such as shall be competent to instruct others also”. And then it goes on, “Take thy share in suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” Faithfulness - as we see in the Lord Jesus - involved suffering for Him, and so it involves suffering for us. It says, “take thy share in suffering”; it does not say take thy share in fighting but, “take thy share in suffering”. How the Lord Jesus suffered to uphold all that God was. He suffered unto death, and He suffered like no other one in an uncomplaining, unresisting, meek spirit. He was faithful to His God and Father, and whatever suffering was needed He was prepared for it. It is the Lord who determines how much we suffer; He knows what we are able to bear.

I thought of Urijah as a good soldier. It was Urijah's simple, uncomplicated faithfulness that confounded David: nothing heroic. He just would not be turned aside from what he knew was right, and David could not understand it. The enemy was defeated by simple faithfulness on Urijah's part. It is a terrible story - I do not want to go into it. Think of the callousness of David, writing a letter to Joab: it says in verse 14, “it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by Urijah”; and Urijah carried that letter, and it involved his own death. But Urijah had God's things before him: the ark, Israel and Judah. David relinquished his responsibilities, but Urijah did not: he was morally greater than David at this point. The safe and right way is always “pursue righteousness”, 2 Tim 2: 22. It is the way of being blessed and prospered. Later in Samuel we get the lists of thirty seven mighty men, and Urijah is the last one, 2 Sam 23: 39. The Spirit of God could not leave out Urijah; Urijah would not have known he was on that list but he was there. And why is he the last one? So our minds focus on him, and see what he stood for in simple faithfulness. He was subject. Joab told him to go and he stood in the place where all the valiant men were, and he was killed, but he was subject and he was serving loyally; and he gave his life for it but God honoured him. He will be honoured in a coming day, although he was just an ordinary soldier.

There is only one Commander, one Captain: we are all on the same level, ordinary soldiers, all under Christ. He is in control; He is in command; He knows what He is doing. It falls to all of us to confess the

Lord Jesus: that is a good soldier of Jesus Christ. It is a simple thing; no one else needs to know about it, but you are being faithful to the Lord. You are owning He has got a right over you. What power comes into the soul when you do that. It means much to the Lord Jesus. There were these other mighty men that were listed - all before Urijah. But none of them is in the list of Christ's genealogy in Matthew 1, only Urijah: it says, "David begat Solomon, of her that had been the wife of Urias", v 6. Bathsheba's name is not even mentioned, but Urijah is mentioned by name. Her distinction was that she had such a husband, one who was faithful. It shows how God, the Lord, honours and appreciates this feature of faithfulness.

I read in chapter 19 regarding Mephibosheth. He was one that was loyal and faithful to David, in the time of his reproach. What made Mephibosheth so faithful and true and loyal to David? I think in the first place it was grace. Now we have all been reached through grace, the grace of Christ, the grace of God that has come towards us in Christ. That is what made Mephibosheth faithful. He was brought from Lodebar; he was of the house of Saul and he was brought in amongst the king's sons to sit at the king's table. What grace that is! He enjoyed the best at the king's table; that made him faithful to David. He enjoyed that so much he had no other life: that was his life. It all depended on David's goodness to him: that made him faithful. Think of the whole system that was around David at that time: Mephibosheth appreciated it. We should appreciate initial grace and the continual grace that comes towards us. The Lord Jesus has done for us what none other can do. He cares for us, His eye is upon us, His interest is in us: constant grace, support. Mephibosheth said he was "a dead dog" (2 Sam 9: 8); he had no claim whatever but was brought into the greatest of circumstances; that was unmerited favour. What favour we have been brought into, "taken ... into favour in the Beloved", Eph 1: 6! God's greatest thoughts, His sovereign goodness and grace, made Mephibosheth faithful so he enjoyed that life. He was waiting for David to come back, and he was faithful in David's absence.

I thought a number of times recently in the service of God, that it is fresh, living and enjoyable. David set on the service of God in song which is so uplifting: it is for the pleasure of divine Persons, and we are there as sons enjoying it, Christ's brethren. I have said to myself a number of times, 'I would never want this spoiled'. The enjoyment of these things is life. Now faithfulness is needed in view of maintaining that. Mephibosheth was faithful because of how he had been treated.

David showed him the kindness of God in such a remarkable way, and we have all experienced that. Not one of us, as a believer in the Lord Jesus, could say otherwise; therefore we need to be true to Him, here for Him. We gather to remember the Lord in His absence; that is being true to Him, that is being loyal to Him: that is affirming our loyalty to the One who has been rejected here. We “announce the death of the Lord, until he come”, 1 Cor 11: 26.

Then I read in Numbers. These families, the Gershonites, the Kohathites and the Merarites each had a different charge. What we are corresponds to all the things these families had and one flows into another, but they are distinguished here in the scriptures for us. They were given these charges in relation to this whole tabernacle system that was going through the wilderness. It is called a charge and it is also called a service: it says, “cometh to labour in the work, to perform the service” (Num 4: 23); so there was an actual charge; they actually had to perform it and carry it out. The Gershonites had this charge, the coverings, the curtains, the hangings of the court. That was heavy work so they were given oxen and waggons to help them. Then there are the Merarites, who carried the boards and what holds the boards together; and then there are the Kohathites, who carried the most precious things, the inner side of things. I would like to point out that the Merarites were never put first: the Gershonites were put first, and sometimes the Kohathites, but the Merarites are never put first. In times of conflict, I think the Gershonites come first. It is true to say that if you put the Merarites first - what they carried refers to persons -, or if you do not put the Gershonites first - their service relates to what speaks of divine principles - you will lose the truth and the persons. It is instructive that you get the Gershonites put first time and time again. Divine principles (the expression is not in scripture; but principles are, that word “principle” is in scripture) relate to divine requirements. An example of a divine requirement is that if you are going to get the blessing of the gospel, come to God's great thoughts for you, you have to come in by way of - or on the principle of - faith and repentance. There is no other way; that is a divine requirement. God commands repentance; and so there are things that cannot change.

In the chapter where we read in 2 Timothy, it is like the Gershonite service: “Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity”, chap 2: 19. You go on with what is right, pursue what is right: that is the way of blessing, that is the way of preserving all that is precious to the Lord. These are very simple words to say, but

sometimes it is very testing to perform, actually to carry out these things with the needed grace, patience and wisdom.

Then you get the judges. Sometimes you learn by negatives and Jephthah was a judge: he is actually named in Hebrews 11. The negative there is, I think, that he was not formed and he was unspiritual; he spoke rashly with his mouth, but God used him. In taking up responsibility, in seeking to be faithful to the Lord's matters and interests, these moral features of spirituality and priestliness are needed. One thing about him was that he knew the truth as to the matter; he knew the facts as to the matter. He sets it all out clearly in chapter 11, he knew he was on right ground and that gave him his power, but he lacked in other ways.

Samson too: the end of Samson's life was his greatest victory. All the lords of the Philistines were killed when he brought down the pillars, but in very humiliating circumstances. His eyes were put out, he was bound by chains and he had already given up the secret of his power, his hair had been cut; but the hair of his head began to grow so there was life there. We might wonder why matters go on so long; it is humbling. Samson was there in humbling circumstances. One thing in it might be the Lord wants us to feel humbled and dependent on Him to come in. We need to be kept humble, we have much to keep us humble; and these extended exercises keep us humble, they draw us nearer to the Lord Jesus. Yet God gave Samson the power to bring down those Philistines at that time. So you might say he was a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Paul speaks of those who have been enlisted; it is not optional, we have been called to it and there is available in Christ what is needed to give us the strength and the grace to be faithful, "entrust to faithful men"; that is what is needed. The soldier does not entangle himself with the affairs of life: Urijah did not. What is righteous we have to proceed with and that is very important. We please Him who has enlisted us as soldiers; this is what is needed for the present time. You want to please the One who has enlisted you. Communion makes you faithful. Moses was in communion with God: he spoke mouth to mouth, and he was faithful in all God's house. Nearness to a person - it is like a husband and wife, you know that person - so you are faithful, you appreciate that person; you would not want to do anything against them, that which is not pleasing to them.

Lydia was one who was faithful. The Lord gave Paul so much in

the way of truth. The Lord says, "I will build my assembly" (Matt 16:18), but the Lord did not open up the truth of the assembly in His ministry on earth. His own could not have understood it or borne it, He says of many things that "ye cannot bear them now", John 16: 12. He left it to Paul to bring out the truth as to the assembly. He gave him so much, and Lydia's heart was opened - and that word "opened" means fully opened, fully opened "to attend to the things spoken by Paul", Acts 16: 14. She was faithful. Are our hearts fully opened to attend to the things spoken by Paul? Ever since Paul's ministry has come out it has been the test for believers but it needs protecting.

May we be encouraged on this line. It is open to every single believer and you can start when you are young, to be true to the Lord Jesus because of what He means to you. May the Lord bless the word.

Buckie

9th September 2017

THINGS THE LORD WOULD DELIGHT TO SEE

Harold J Klassen

Psalm 133: 1

Revelation 3: 8

The first verse has maybe much to do with our individual conduct and life, but as we are together collectively; and Revelation 3 has to do with the conscience of the assembly. Those are things which the Lord would delight to see - for His glory.

THE LORD'S CALL

Phil B Klassen

Exodus 3: 1-6

Matthew 4: 18-22

I have a very simple impression. What we read in Exodus about Moses must have been quite something, but my thought is about where the Lord is calling us, and where He is calling us to. This burning bush was not being consumed by fire, and yet it was still burning. I think that God would bring in things that may seem unbelievable to us, if I can put it that way. He wants us to draw nigh, and Moses did draw nigh. God said, "loose thy sandals from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground". He wants us to come to a place where there is "holy ground", a place where He can tell us of Himself. He said, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob". God wants us to know who He is; He wants to bring us into a place where we *can* know who He is. We read here that Moses was tending to the flock, something that is a legitimate thing to be doing; and yet he was brought into nearness to God: so near that he needed to hide his face for he was afraid to look at God.

Where I read in Matthew, it is interesting that these four that Jesus called here were all fishermen; they all worked in a righteous manner. They did not have any problem with what their occupation was. And yet when the Lord called them, it says they "immediately followed him". What a place! It is a very simple thought, but I just desire to impress on each one of us - following the Lord and being brought nigh to Him. It is so important in our lives; because if we are brought

nigh, I can say it this way: our family comes with us - to be influenced by the things of the Lord Jesus. Then those around us can be influenced. So, I would encourage each one of us not to be afraid to draw nigh to the Lord.

There is another scripture I had in mind: "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you", James 4: 8. I would encourage each one of us to put ourselves in a place where we can be blessed, and that is in nearness to the Lord. If we go out into the world, we are putting ourselves in trouble; it is not a place where we can be blessed by the Lord. I think if we can really draw nigh to the Lord, He will bring us into a place where we will be able to understand what He is as God. God said, "the God of thy father". He was the God of all that had led up to Moses.

I leave these few words with us, that we might be encouraged, for His Name's sake.

THE SOFT GENTLE VOICE

Doug J Klassen

1 Kings 19

I was impressed, thinking of this scripture, especially in relation to the words we have already had. We have had the thought of brethren dwelling together in unity, the thought of a little power, and the thought that was brought before us of the Lord calling the four. It says that He called each one of them, but there were two brothers in Simon Peter and Andrew and two other brothers in James and John.

I read this whole chapter because I want to take the whole of it into account for what was in my mind. What I was especially thinking of was the "soft gentle voice". In the account here we see how Elijah was dealing with outward circumstances, which anyone might have said were completely against him; and, dear brethren, we sometimes feel that things are totally against us. And yet we have the sense of hearing the "soft gentle voice". I would like to liken that soft gentle voice to the voice of the Spirit. There are these other things that it says Jehovah was not in, these great things. Man by nature likes some great sign to be able to see so that he might believe. Indeed, they asked for signs as it says in the scripture (1 Cor 1: 22); and yet you think of "the meekness

and gentleness of the Christ” (2 Cor 10: 1), walking among men; it was not to make anything of Himself. In fact, if I can say this reverently, He was moving under the influence of that “soft gentle voice”: He was moving in the power of the Spirit. I say that because the Spirit not only came and abode upon Him, but it abode in Him, and, dear hearer, what a resource we have as we allow ourselves to be governed by the movements and power of the Spirit! It takes away from relying on our own natural power, that which cannot effect anything spiritually. Elijah was brought to that here: there was nothing he was going to do which was going to effect anything. There was even this woman Jezebel who was seeking his life; you think of the influences of the world which Jezebel would be a type of in a peculiar way. The world would even seek the life of the believer, and seek to take it away. Satan is very active in that; he is going to find something to bring in in any way he can to spoil that.

What affected me, dear hearer, in reading this is the type of the Spirit seen in the angel who came and ministered to Elijah and gave him to eat; and the word came to him, “Arise eat!”. And then the second time he said, “Arise, eat; for the journey is too great for thee”. Sometimes we may feel that the journey is too great. Perhaps we know the end that God desires to reach in us, and yet we feel it is too much and we are not able for it. Think of the sustaining power of the Spirit, able to come in and give us everything that is needed. Have we proved that power? Have we proved what He brings to us, and what He ministers to us of Christ through the week? We often speak about how those experiences bring us to something greater. So we realise we are not alone on this journey. The Lord Jesus has gone before, He has marked out the path that we tread, and we have the power of the Spirit. What a wonderful resource! So we are fed by Him. We do not have to be concerned about the things that are around us, the extreme circumstances that are around us; we recognise that our food comes from above.

I just desire that we would prove this, that we would prove this “soft gentle voice”. The Spirit does not force Himself upon us; He does not force us to do things or to take things. He is there available for us, and as we are kept by the Lord Jesus and maintained and preserved, the Spirit would make His presence known to us. He would desire to speak to us as this “soft gentle voice”. How many times would we think of someone addressing persons having to speak up in a loud voice. I think it is the sensitivity of the heart that God is looking for. If our hearts

are sensitive, the Spirit is able to link on with that. He is able to direct us.

Then, what affected me too in this chapter - going back to the thought of brethren dwelling together in unity - is that others are brought in. I know that the Lord said there were seven thousand more that had not bowed the knee, but what I was thinking of was these others, Hazael, Jehu and Elisha; others are brought in, and Elijah is able to recognise that and link on with them. He is able to see that the testimony is going to continue and this was his desire. And he was also able to recognise that they would be in type following the Lord together as the two brothers who were instructed of the Lord to follow Him.

Well, it is just a simple word that came to me as our brothers were speaking. I trust we can be encouraged in these things. We think of the resource that was brought at the end of the chapter, the sacrifices; I think that is what God is seeking as a result of our times together, and as a result of working out the truth together; and as a result of proving the Spirit as the “soft gentle voice”, that there would be worship and praise, “the fruit of the lips” (Heb 13: 15) returning to God.

May God bless the word.

Words in a ministry meeting in Aberdeen, ID

2 May 2018

Our brother Harold Klassen was taken to be with Christ on 12 July 2018: this was the last ministry meeting which he attended.