

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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REVIVAL

Isaiah 57: 15, 16

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Matthew 25: 1-13

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JL I thought, beloved brethren, we might consider the subject of revival. It is my judgment that it is something which is currently desirable and needed among us, and I trust the Lord will grant opportunity through our time of enquiry to stimulate some revival among us. We have been through a long period of exercise and a good deal of trial, and, if my judgment is right, I think it would be the Lord's mind that there should be some evidence of spiritual revival among us.

We might read first of all from the prophet Isaiah to see what God has to say about the subject. God is speaking, and we have, through Isaiah, the record of God's thoughts about the matter of revival.

When we come to Habakkuk, we have the record of the intercession of a godly soul before God in view of revival coming in among His people, and, in the latter part of the chapter, the evidence of the result of that in the soul of the prophet himself with his exuberant language and his outgoing of praise towards God, thoroughly lifted up in his spirit.

In Matthew we have ten virgins. All are called virgins; five are described as prudent and five foolish, and I thought it well to consider this section, presented by the Lord Himself, lest we might think that the subject of revival only has its application to some whom we may judge to have become a bit discouraged and who may have turned away a little, because the word has its application to us all. It is clearly indicated that *all* slept, and there was need of particular revival amongst all. We might be helped in enquiring how the revival came about and the readiness then, in view of meeting the bridegroom, was achieved. I think we are coming very close to the time when we shall hear the Bridegroom's voice. I carry a particular exercise, and I am sure I am not alone in this, that we might be prepared and ready for the Bridegroom.

Lastly, in reading from Ephesians, I thought we might take home to heart the particular application that Paul gives to this quotation from the Old Testament, showing its application to the saints at the present time and in circumstances where the greatest light and the fulness of the truth had already been made known. He makes an

appeal to those there that they should “Wake up ... and arise”.

In speaking then of revival, I am not suggesting a church revival. I am rather thinking of the need of individual revival for those within the local assemblies. We do not look for any public, universal revival. I do not think Scripture indicates that, but I do think there is clear evidence that revival is looked for amongst individuals and will have its fruitful answer right to the last. Perhaps the references to the overcomer in Revelation bring out particular evidence of that. That is my thought, if we can pursue it together for profit.

AMB I share your exercise as to the matter. Would these moral features of contrition and humility that come into your scripture in Isaiah be, on our side, preparatory ground and conditions for revival?

JL That is why I read from the prophet Isaiah to begin with because we cannot get anything more significant than God's own words about the subject. This is what God Himself indicated; He, in all the majesty of His being, prepared to draw near to help such persons, to be “with him”. What a beautiful expression! “I dwell in the high and holy place, and with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones”. We have great need of walking humbly at the present time.

NJH His dwelling has revival in mind, has it not? We cannot be revived without the divine presence, can we?

JL How could there be life and living energy found among the saints in the absence of divine help and conscious nearness? I could not understand such a thing being achieved. This is a delightful passage to me. I love to reflect on the majesty of God. We do well to ponder over the language of Scripture: “the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, and whose name is Holy”. Think of such a God prepared to take account of persons walking humbly, and to bring revival into their hearts.

JCG The references to the spirit and the heart, “to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” would relate to our relationships Godward, would they?

JL I have used the word revival in contrast to the word recovery. It may seem both of these words are very similar, but they are not synonymous. Revival involves that there is something brought in in the way of life and renewed energy to what already exists, whereas recovery may well imply, as it does in Scripture, persons being brought

back who have been lost altogether in the meantime. Revival involves the bringing in of life and energy where something already exists. To come back to your question, I do think there is something in the spirits and in the hearts of the saints. I would attach the thought of the spirits to the intelligent activities of the saints, and the thought of the heart might well be the inward affections, and I believe these things exist among the saints and need stimulation and revival.

JCG What you have said is very helpful and good and important for us. The main point about it is that our relations in relation to divine Persons should be current and alive, not just formal. That is the point of it, is it not?

JL Would you not like to have such a living link with God like this? How wonderful to think of God as He has now come near in Christ in order to be so near! The language is beautiful: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and with him ...". "With him": how good to enjoy sonship, divine nearness, as walking humbly and in a contrite way before God!

JTB(Eh) Samson was depressed, but, following his victory, when he "called on Jehovah" (Judg 15: 18), the water was supplied and his spirit revived: "And he drank, and his spirit came again, and he revived", v 19. Does that link on with what you are saying? He "called on Jehovah": is that the key?

JL Very good, calling on Jehovah. He clearly felt his personal weakness at that point. It is right that we should tread softly and be conscious of the way that we have been rather humiliated, but we do need to walk humbly. I would be glad of your thoughts in relation to your point about the spirit, the spirit of a man. What do you say about that?

JTB(Eh) The spirit of a man is the man himself; it is what is there essentially. It is very affecting to think of that. God forms the spirit within us. Our spiritual being is that essentially, what our spirits are.

JL It represents that intelligent link with God, does it not? And it seems to me to be most attractive that God would be willing and desirous of reviving that, no doubt in view of His own joy and pleasure, but we cannot bypass this need for humility and walking in a contrite way. These are conditions that God takes account of.

JTB(Eh) So it is 'the caller's spring' (meaning of "En-hakkore", note c). It is always available as that spirit of dependence marks us.

PAG In Leviticus 10 very sad conditions had arisen, and God had had

to deal with them, but what was brought in as part of the reviving, in verse 15, was “The shoulder of the heave-offering and the breast of the wave-offering shall they bring”. I was wondering if these impressions of Christ, “The shoulder of the heave-offering and the breast of the wave-offering” would have a reviving effect on our spirits?

JL They certainly would. There is no doubt about that. Do you not think in some way the Lord has graciously introduced the remembrance of Himself in the Supper so that week by week we should be stirred in our affections in relation to Himself in that way and have our hearts and our spirits, we may say, rejuvenated through occupation with Himself? Does it not have a link there?

PAG The fact that the elements of the Supper involve food and drink would suggest that life was in view, but it is life towards God, do you think?

JL Necessarily so. What else would God wish to revive unless it was something that was going to be for His own delight? That seems to be the whole intention of the subject of revival.

APG Paul writes to Timothy “to rekindle the gift of God which is in thee”. 2 Tim 1: 6. That was in a broken day. That was in view of burning with affection for Christ, do you think?

JL I think so, and it confirms my thought about revival, that there is evidence of something already existing there which needs stimulating and, to use Paul's word, rekindling. It had not been lost. Indeed, the work of God and the gifts of God which He has given are not lost, are they? They may need reviving and rekindling. I have a longing desire that that might be achieved amongst the saints at the present time. Reference was made to the spirit and to the heart, and I do feel there is exercise carried in the souls of the saints to seek after these things.

JCG That is good, and that Christ should be given His central place. I was thinking of Jacob, that he had lost heart in relation to the departure of Joseph to Egypt. He thought he had gone, but when he saw the waggons - that would refer really to the power of the Spirit - “the spirit of Jacob ... revived”, Gen 45: 27. That is, his contact with divine Persons was revived in that sense, do you think?

JL I love an expression that comes in near that point: “Joseph is still alive”, v 26. Christ is in glory: He is alive! Should our hearts not be rejuvenated as occupied with Him? That seemed to be one of the things that stimulated Jacob and really brought some living energy

back into his soul: "Joseph is still alive". He was prepared on that account to go forward again in his pathway, was he not?

WMP Another example is found in the Egyptian found in the field. David provides him bread and water and some raisin-cakes and other things and it says, "and his spirit came again to him" (1 Sam 30: 12), and he became serviceable. Do you think that would be always in view in revival, that we become serviceable persons?

JL Very good. I was reading about that yesterday and I thought it was a very interesting section. How graciously he was served by David to bring that about, no doubt some allusion to the distinctive service of the Lord Jesus. Is there not some way that we might be able to serve one another in love to stimulate the very same things?

WMP Yes, I am sure of it. We need to be alert then to see where it is needed in our places and to have the resource for it too. We need to have it ourselves to administer it to another.

JL I am sure that is right. It is a right place to begin here in thinking of the immense resource in God Himself, prepared to draw so near to exercised souls. What encouragement to seek after God! David was one who strengthened himself in God at a time of extreme difficulty, drawing near to God when he had not another supporter. They were about to take his life, and he "strengthened himself in Jehovah his God", 1 Sam 30: 6.

AMB Say more about what is in your mind as to the matter of God's dwelling: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit". It seems a very blessed matter. Would you open it up a bit for us?

JL I was pondering a little over the expression used here that He "inhabiteth eternity", we may say, dwelling alone in divine majesty in eternity. Such language has no application to anyone other than God Himself, has it? And yet such a God is prepared to come near, to dwell, in nearness, with His creature man. But it involves moral suitability being found with us. It is a thought that is carried forward in a very beautiful way by the Lord Jesus, that His Father and Himself would draw near to be with those who were desirous of enjoying divine company.

AMB There is a tremendous amount involved in it, involving the purpose and the counsels of God, revealing Himself as He has done, making Himself known. Do you think too the moral characteristic of

those God desires to dwell among would be a result of the full reception of the gospel? I was wondering if the matter of having “a contrite and humble spirit” and “the heart of the contrite ones” would be the result of the gospel having full way with me.

JL Yes; I think that would be right. That would be a necessary preparatory part of the exercise, but in a way the climax of the exercise involves God tabernacling with men, Rev 21: 3. That is one of the few things we are given to understand in the somewhat limited references in Scripture to the eternal state, that it will involve God tabernacling with men. The complacency of love enjoyed in nearness seems to be indicated in the thought of God dwelling with men. That is a very blessed thing as before the heart of God, is it not?

AMB Your point also is that this tremendous privilege of the consciousness of the presence of God can be enjoyed now by believers in the power of the Holy Spirit.

JL We will not need revival in eternity, will we? Clearly the import of the passage is in view of help now, God coming near, and His presence being enjoyed, and a revival brought in.

NJH Are His dealings with saints not from the standpoint of divine purpose?

JL Say more.

NJH Well, in these scriptures here and also in Habakkuk and Matthew you approach what the saints have entered into that are not exactly totally in line with divine purpose, but God approaches from that standpoint. It is the height of things He starts from.

JL Well, I might ask, what is it that God is reviving if it is not some fruit from His own purpose and love that has already had its initial work in the hearts of the saints, if not yet brought to completion, because Paul was exercised that the work begun should go on to completion? It is God's own work according to the purpose of His love. What else would God revive? Maybe you have more to say about it.

NJH It is very encouraging. As we will see later, “they all grew heavy”. Something developed that was outside of the divine mind, but God always works from the standpoint that He has Christ before Him and He is working out new creation from the standpoint of purpose as to that.

JL Everything according to the purpose of God has been made

workable through what Christ has accomplished and because of God coming near in Him. Every obstacle that would have prevented us from enjoying divine nearness has been taken account of too by the work of the Lord Jesus, and the steps taken in divine love that we should be spiritually revived are amazing, including, I would say, God granting us the gift of the Holy Spirit, that the energy of life should be operative in our hearts.

AW Nehemiah says, “I told no man what my God had put in my heart”, Neh 2: 12. Does that apply to revival?

JL That is an interesting passage. He already had some sense of personal nearness to God in carrying the exercise, but say more, please.

AW In the first two chapters he sets out a contrite heart and a humble spirit. He takes upon himself all these things, but then he says, “I told no man what my God had put in my heart”. That would be something that would be substantial in his own affections by way of revival, would it not?

JL That is how the matter started off, but it did not remain that way that he never, ever told anyone what was in his heart, because the rest of the book clearly shows that he did disclose what was in his heart, and brought others in to share and to participate in the great work that was in view; but things do need to be consolidated in our own souls personally to begin with, do they not? I cannot see revival coming about otherwise than in the souls of individuals.

AW He had the full thought in his affections. He did not stop short in his thoughts as to what was to be for God.

JL Perhaps we should go on to the reference in Habakkuk. I believe in some way he answers to the references to moving humbly and in a contrite way because he certainly was not a man exemplifying anything to do with pride or self-sufficiency. He was clearly deeply exercised and was crying to God in his extremity that God would revive His work “in the midst of the years”. I am interested in the reference to “in the midst of the years”. It conveys to me that as the exercises were all proceeding and the concerns being borne, he was looking in the very midst of it for a revival of God's work. Has it not an immediate application to ourselves and the circumstances in which we are?

AMB We really need to be maintained in the spirit of revival, of freshness and spiritual energy and commitment and vigour, do you not

think?

JL It is very clear from what Habakkuk said in the beginning of his prophecy that he in no way saw the end or the result of all that God had in mind. Everything seemed to be going in the wrong direction to Habakkuk. He was speaking as if things had got completely out of gear and there was a great need of help being brought in. It seems that this reference to “the midst of the years” bears evidence that Habakkuk was, in effect, pleading with God that while these things were being worked out, God would be pleased to bring in some really reviving evidence of life. Would you say that?

AMB Reference was made to Nehemiah, and what took place under Nehemiah followed I think just thirteen or so years after recovery under Ezra. The spirit of recovery and revival - you are using the word revival which is right - was sought after by these faithful persons. Nehemiah particularly would speak of somebody who had personal exercise as to revival.

JL God has a great care and interest in regard of His own work. He is set according to His purpose, as we have been reminded, that it should not be overthrown. We might just refer back briefly again to Isaiah where God says, “I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit would fail before me, and the souls which I have made”. That indicates that God did not wish to see His people being overwhelmed and neither did Habakkuk. He was looking for a revival “In the midst of the years”.

AMB This is a prayer of Habakkuk; so would you encourage us to pray in this way, first of all in relation to ourselves, our own immediate responsibility, but then for revival in the spirits of the dear saints?

JL I pray for revival among the saints. I carry an exercise about it. I carry an exercise about it locally. I carry an exercise about it amongst the saints in a general way and I know I am not alone in that. May the Lord take account of our desires to be spiritually revived!

DJW He is referred to as a prophet. Does the prophetic word really recover us to first things?

JL Yes, that is a good thought. We would look in that way for something specific to come in by way of an answer from the Lord to bring that about, but perhaps you have more in your mind in making reference to it.

DJW Only that we read the end of Malachi at home and the last two verses seem to indicate that, the revival to the law of Moses. He says, “I send unto you Elijah the prophet” (chap 4: 5), as if that is the way He would bring us back to first principles.

JL Well, I am sure it has a very definite connection with the word of the Lord among us and the current speaking of the Holy Spirit. I also feel assured that, so long as the Spirit of God is here, there will be a continuation of divine speaking. We need to have ears to hear. I cannot imagine the Spirit of God being here with nothing to say. Have we ears to hear?

RB Clearly if we are to be revived, there must be something that can be appealed to; so we need to be alert as to that. Do you think it is a help to us if we get some impression of the desires of God to this end? At the beginning of Jeremiah God says, “I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land not sown”, chap 2: 2. Do you think that was an appeal that was intended to revive His people?

JL Very good, and do you not think too that the more we have to do with God, the more we are helped to act like God? Part of Habakkuk’s appeal here was to God that in wrath He should remember mercy. We need to be strengthened in the very same features ourselves to be granted wisdom in the working of things out “in the midst of the years”. We need to be ready to display something of the mercy with which we have been reached and secured for blessing, and of the grace that has sustained us and in any measure preserved us in life. We need to act like God.

RB It is interesting that you have referred to that. I was thinking earlier as to the way that David was revived by an appeal, typically, by the assembly, Abigail: “the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with Jehovah thy God” (1 Sam 25: 29), as if there is something that can be appealed to of the work of God which results in life.

JL How attractive then to see what was truly characteristic of David being revived and coming into fresh evidence in his later activities!

CMcK In Psalm 51 David acknowledged the contrite heart and what God looked for in a soul that was to be revived, and he also spoke about renewing “a steadfast spirit within me” (v 10) and restoring the joy of His salvation (v 12). I know that he had sinned, and that is maybe not your

thought, but he wanted to be renewed and to be restored.

JL That is a good link; I appreciate your reference to that. The thought of restoration would fit in very nicely. We wish to be thoroughly revived in a suitable way before God. That was achieved clearly with Habakkuk, was it not? The end of the section here is most attractive: the soul of Habakkuk answered to the exercise he expressed at the beginning of his prayer.

JCG Your reference to “the midst of the years” is interesting. It is always the middle period that tests us. There could be the tendency to flag or our spirits go down because of problems or difficulties so “the midst of the years” is the time when we need to appeal to the Spirit, to divine Persons, so that there is a revival, do you think? I think your reference to “the midst of the years” is very important for us. We may be bright at the beginning and bright at the end, but the middle period is often the testing period, is it not?

JL I am sure it is. I find this reference to “the midst of the years” very interesting. It seems to me that it is just as if it was in the course of things being worked out and the whole burden and weight of all that had come in being keenly felt by Habakkuk, that he was really appealing to God so that while all this was proceeding, God would bring about some true revival in life. I am sure that is what is needed. We may begin well, and we have Paul's assurance that the work that God has begun He will certainly bring to completion, but “in the midst of the years” is a testing time, is it not?

JCG Habakkuk came to find that the strength that brought him right through these years was in Jehovah, in God. What he said about the failure of what was natural and the material outlook led him to have strength in God that there was a different world in which he found joy and encouragement, do you think?

JL I think so. The great stimulation of the Lord's love, and I again make reference to the Supper, brings about a revival in the affections of the saints and strengthens us to go on. In a way “the midst of the years” has a link with the filling out of the week, the week of the testimony here. Week by week things have to be filled out. What a fine way to begin by being stirred in our affections in relation to the Lord Jesus! It seems as if the end of the prophecy here bears the evidence of that being brought about in Habakkuk's soul.

DS Do you think also God uses the saints for revival? I was thinking

of Eutychus in Acts 20: “Paul, descending fell upon him ... said ... for his life is in him”, v 10. Do you think God not only speaks to us individually, but he uses the saints in order to bring about revival?

JL One of the things Paul did at that point was “enfolding him in his arms”. What does that mean?

DS You can help us further, I am sure, but it shows the affection of the body working, does it not? It shows that there is affection among the saints, and it shows the desire to bring about life. There is life in the saints; there is life in the spirits of the saints; and really enfolding would bring him back into the currency of that.

JL I think so. That was a remarkable evidence of Paul's affection, encircling and enfolding. I was thinking of Paul at one point in his experience being carried out of a city assumed to be dead, and it says at that point, “the disciples encircled him”, Acts 14: 20. Think of them gathering round him in affection! He revived, rose up and went on in the course of the testimony. I do think we can serve one another in love. If we have the desire to do so, the Lord will give us skill to do it in a wise and suitable way, do you not think?

NJH Was the apostle contrite in going down to the same level as Eutychus?

JL Very good. I had not immediately thought about that, but please say just a little more about it.

NJH Do you think it is important that how we revive or help one another is that we get down to an appropriate level in their spirits in our dealings together?

JL That is a very good point. Paul was extremely busy, engaged in his remarkable service to the saints; he might have said someone else could attend to this young man, but he descended himself and enfolding him in his arms. There is always room for humility and moving in a contrite way. I do not think we can go wrong in doing that, can we?

DAB Do you think something of this matter of revival has to do with the strings being tightened?

JL You had better tell us a bit more about that.

DAB Verse 19 speaks of that: “To the chief Musician. On my stringed instruments”. There is what is being worked out in the hearts of the saints. I know for myself maybe my strings can be a little bit loose at

times, but do you think the Spirit's actions and the Lord's presence known by us would help us to maintain the strings at the right tension so there is what is for the pleasure of God maintained harmoniously amongst us?

JL That is a good point. Yes, I appreciate your thought about that, the revival in that way bringing about a revival to the true pitch of the note, and setting things again in accuracy in view of what is for God being maintained at its true level and dignity and harmonious result. You speak of the word 'harmonious'.

DAB It is interesting with Habakkuk. He seemed to be quite an overcomer. Verse 17 says,

For though the fig-tree shall not blossom,
Neither shall fruit be in the vines;
The labour of the olive-tree shall fail ...”

but he says, “Yet I will rejoice”. Come what may, he was going on.

JL In that respect, I do not think we should expect a general church revival, but I do think there is need of things to be taken up by us personally in a right spirit, and Habakkuk exemplifies that. It is very much an individual exercise that is expressed here: “I will rejoice ... I will joy” and so on, though I have no doubt it finds its fruit in the collective expression of response amongst the saints where we are able to merge with others carrying the very same exercises. I think it is set out in the overcomers in Revelation, is it not?

PAG I was just wondering if revival here is to unconditional committal to the Lord.

JL 'Unconditional' is a good word to use. That is something we would conclude from the language of Habakkuk.

PAG He does not say, 'If there is some blossom, and some fruit, and so forth, then I will do this or that'. He says, 'Even if all these things are not so', “Yet I will rejoice in Jehovah”. And why can he say that? “Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength”.

JL That is very good. That is the language of a man who had come to know God, and know something of the nearness we were speaking of earlier, in contrast, we may say, to Jacob at the beginning of his life who intended proposing a bargain with God, that if God would do certain things, then he would respond on his part. He assumed he was able for it, but he had to learn his weakness, had he not?

ADM In Matthew 25 it says, “in the middle of the night there was a cry, Behold, the bridegroom”, but before the virgins “all grew heavy and slept”. Does that correspond with “in the midst of the years” when we may become slack, and there is always the need of revival?

JL Yes, it does, very much. I am glad you bring us onto Matthew 25 because there is a clear connection there. It is the period when we are perhaps most tested, and I think those are really the days we are in just now. There is a great need to be revived in our affections with the prospect of the bridegroom being before us, not only the event of His coming, but the Bridegroom Himself: “Behold, the bridegroom”! That seemed to be worked out in a very definite way by the oil becoming available in view of the torches fulfilling their function.

JTB(Eh) It seems from the reading of these verses that only the prudent have vessels. Is that right? Would there be something in that? “The prudent took oil in their vessels”. There is no reference to vessels in connection with the foolish virgins. It seems to suggest some dependence on God and the Spirit that the sufficiency of resource should be there that can be utilised and tapped into, do you think?

JL Very good. We would see it in a practical way that they really then represent persons to whom the gift of the Spirit had been graciously given, which was absent from the others, but then there was need of revival so that full use should be made of the gift and the blessing granted. Is that what was in your thought?

JTB(Eh) I suppose there is an extent to which we can proceed in a kind of nominal way, but recourse to the vessel suggests that there is sufficient to take us forward in all the power that is available from the divine source.

JL Yes; this passage quite exercised me because, in an exterior way, things seemed to be quite normal and right. They are classified as virgins, and they were professing to proceed with a right occupation, but there was not the real evidence of living affection for the bridegroom, and I do think that is a prime function of the Spirit's service in our affections at the present time, is it not?

JTB(Eh) Revival would help really replenish the vessel.

JL Yes, very good. I had that thought, as you would discern, in using the word revival that there is something there to begin with. That is implied in the suggestion about the vessels, but their use and function needed stirring up and that was through the oil.

JSS I was thinking in that connection of the woman in 2 Kings 4 that Elisha visited. He serves her by drawing attention to what she had: the pot of oil was there, and it was revived, and the result was life. She listened to the prophetic word. She went through personal exercise, and shut the door upon herself, but it had its results.

JL And there was no suggestion that in the midst of the period it would eventually fail: quite the contrast! It seemed as if it was quite sufficient to sustain things the whole way through. That is very encouraging, and bears on the thought about “the middle of the night” as well.

JSS I was thinking that. You might say times had been better for her. She had had a husband, but he had died. You might say it was “in the midst of the years”. What was she going to do? Well, she typically still has the Spirit.

JL Very good. This passage, then, raises its own particular challenge. Are we those who may well have the consciousness of having received the Holy Spirit and be therefore classified as vessels, as we have been reminded, but is there really the energy of life seen through the Spirit's service?

AMB Is this like what Paul says to the Galatians as to sowing to the Spirit, Gal 6: 8? That would mean consciously making room for Him and bringing Him in, do you think, and being subject to Him?

JL Yes, we do need to do that. That is always quite an exercise with us. I have to take that home to my own heart, and feel very much the need of doing that. I have to acknowledge I often feel a considerable deficiency, and yet we can see how important it is in preparation for what is so immediately before us in the coming of the Bridegroom.

WMP The virgins “arose and trimmed their torches”. Perhaps what you have said as to making use of the Spirit is something that ought to go on with us all the time.

JL What were you thinking about these two words, “arose” and “trimmed”?

WMP It looks as if they had not done it before in the time when they were sleeping. I wondered if trimming was a constant exercise, to use the Spirit, just to keep ourselves in line with what you have been suggesting, the need for vitality on our side always.

JL Yes, I think it is right to say it is essential to permit the light to shine brightly. There has to be that exercise to arise and to trim. It bears a little on what has been said concerning the measure in which we are sowing to the Spirit, or are there things allowed by us that tend to dim this fruit, the fruit that the Spirit would bring about in our hearts?

JTB(Gr) I was thinking of Paul's exhortation to the saints in Ephesus, "be filled with the Spirit", chap 5: 18. That is our responsibility, to make more and more room for the Spirit till we are filled.

JL Well, it is a great challenge. I am sure the more we make room for the Spirit, the more He will be prepared and ready to serve us.

JTB(Gr) It goes on to say, "speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (v 19), really enriching the service of praise.

JL Yes, I am sure of that. What a fruitful result from the room given to the Holy Spirit to operate in our hearts! Think of the intensity of the exercises, one might say reverently, connected with the Spirit's service at the present time! The more we make way for the Holy Spirit and for His active service in our affections, the more there will be in result a great answer for the heart of the Lord Jesus. In Ephesians that is clearly brought out as well. The light - and we have had a great deal of light - makes things manifest. It may be we have discernment to know wherein the deficiency lies; it may be we are able to see where the difficulty has arisen; but what about the subsequent exercise? "Wherefore he says, Wake up, thou that sleepest, and arise up from among the dead, and the Christ shall shine upon thee."

AMB We might wonder why the apostle writes as he does, especially what you are bringing before us here in chapters 5 and 6, given the glorious matters that he writes about in the first three chapters to the brethren in Ephesus. Is this necessary if the enjoyment of spiritual things is to be maintained?

JL I might say it would be a fine thing if there was revival amongst them. Paul would in effect say, 'Well, wake up and arise! Let it work!'. That is what he is really saying to the Ephesians. He is really saying to them in a straightforward way, 'Let it operate'. That revival was needed. The subsequent account by John about the church at Ephesus (Rev 2: 1-7) shows that there had not been a general acceptance of the importance of Paul's word, but there is still an appeal to the overcomer to rise "in the midst of the years", as it were, and in the decline, to show this spirit of affection through wakening up and arising.

AMB Reviving would have in mind that we would hold fast to our first love. That comes into the address to Ephesus, that they had not done that, but we should be maintained in living affection for Christ.

JL Very much so. Would we not like the Christ to shine upon us? Oh, to be in the radiancy of the shining of the Lord Jesus! The Spirit of God in a very distinctive way helps us in regard of the shining of the glory that is in the face of that blessed One at God's right hand. The Spirit has come from that very place to bear testimony to His glory there. May the Christ shine upon us!

APG The reference in Isaiah is, "Arise, shine! for thy light is come", chap 60: 1. We need to appreciate fully our light, the heavenly light that has come to us, and wake up to that.

JL Yes, in effect that means the opportunity for light to shine for you. In that respect it is *our* light. It is what belongs to *our* dispensation and *our* time. It may be "in the midst of the years", but it is our privileged portion to be able to enjoy such a shining of light.

PAG We have been taught that the greatest light is given in the darkest days. Think of Saul on the road to Damascus! He was in complete darkness spiritually and morally, and yet there was a light which came in which he described as being "a light above the brightness of the sun", Acts 26: 13. There was a light that nothing could withstand.

JL If anyone was qualified to say this to the Ephesians, Paul was. It was a personal experience in his own soul. He likewise at one point rose up, did he not? He was awakened to the shining of a light that he had never experienced before. The Christ shone upon him, shone into his heart, not only upon him, but shone *into* his heart and shone out from him in service for the Lord.

JCG This scripture bears on our walk. It goes on to that. I was thinking about what the Lord said that our light should not be hidden "under the bushel, but upon the lamp-stand" (Matt 5: 15) so that it can be seen. So, revival amongst the saints is a thing that is *seen*. We would know when a person was imbued by the Spirit. Reference was made to Galatians: "If we live by the Spirit, let us walk also by the Spirit", chap 5: 25. The walk is consistent with the way that we live in relation to God.

JL Well, the brethren are quite entitled to look at me and ask whether I in any way express that: am I half-asleep in the meetings, or

do I come in as a person upon whom the light of the Christ is really shining? Paul says first of all in verse 14, "Wherefore he says", but then when we come to verse 15, that is the consequence being worked out in regard of our practical walk that you were referring to. He says, "See therefore how ye walk carefully", and so on. That is the practical result of the Christ shining upon us, is it?

NJH I was thinking of the candlestick and this light shining on the table and the loaves being there, Exod 40: 4. It is really persons being recovered to what they are in the eyes of God, the Christ shining upon them. Is that right?

JL That light had never to go out, had it? It shows that there was to be exercise in relation to the maintenance of the shining of the light. The priests had to carry that exercise. Priestly discernment and affection would help us then in the practical working out of these things, would it?

NJH I was thinking of the reference to walk and of our meetings, our weeknight meetings. Would the shining should come in there?

JL "Redeeming the time": if we are "in the midst of the years" - and I believe now we are close to the end of the period - it may be that there is not much time left. It would be quite an exercise for us to carry, and we would trust that there might be such a fruitful result even from today that we would be diligent in regard of the rest of the time, however brief it may be, to fill it out wisely and well.

TWL In relation to this scripture, "Wherefore he says, Wake up, thou that sleepest", before that is, "But all things having their true character exposed by the light". John's gospel is "he that practises the truth comes to the light, that his works may be manifested that they have been wrought in God", chap 3: 21. Would it help us in relation to what you are saying, young and old, in relation to redeeming the time the things we are in touch with, bringing them to the light "that they have been wrought in God"?

JL The Ephesians were not lacking in light. Paul had opened "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20: 27), in a remarkable and distinctive way, to the saints at Ephesus. They had all the light that was necessary and could be required, and it may be that we can discern where the deficiency lies. What can I do about bringing in the answer? That is the great thing. "Redeeming the time" seems to be that there is something brought in to help in the way of redeeming service in the closing days. I

think it is by the Christ shining upon us as we wake up and arise.

NCMcK That scripture came to mind where the prophet says, “he shall bring forth the headstone with shoutings: Grace, grace unto it!”, Zech 4: 7. The house is going to be finished; these things are going to go on. Persons are going to be in the joy of this Ephesian truth: are we going to be part of it? It is almost as if Paul is saying to individuals in Ephesus, 'This is going on now, this great truth. Are you going to be in the revival? Are you going to be part of it?'

JL There is no doubt about that. One of the Lord's servants said about the beginning of Revelation, it looks as if everything is in public disarray. You go to the end of the book: “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come” (chap 22: 17), see similar reference JBS vol 6 page 406. The bridegroom will have His answer. I would not like to be asleep and miss out in the closing days but rather be in expectation of the Bridegroom Himself. It is a great thing to hear the Bridegroom's voice. We are about to hear it in actuality, are we not? Would the Spirit of God not stir up reviving energy in my heart to be amongst those that would have an ear, ready to hear the Bridegroom's voice?

Grangemouth

20th January 2018

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THE BLOOD OF JESUS

David C Brown

John 19: 33-35

When we preach the gospel we do so on the basis of the blood of Jesus. We had a brother in the city who used to always adjure those younger when they were asked to preach: "Preach the blood". Why? Because it is an answer; there is in the blood the answer to the divine requirements, and the answer to the need of men. The scope and the effects and the power of the blood are very extensive. You will find it throughout the Scriptures, directly throughout the New Testament, in many different ways, the preciousness and the wonder and the effectiveness of the blood of Jesus. It was looked forward to in the Old Testament; think of how many sacrifices there were, none having any direct efficacy themselves, but each one looking forward to One whose precious blood would be sufficient that by it you and I should be saved. The scope of that is wonderful. I picked up a book by Mr G V Wigram and he suggested twenty eight different ways in which Scripture looks at the blood of Jesus; how extensive, how blessed it is that that precious blood should be so precious and wonderful in the sight of God.

I suppose the first thing that comes to mind, and it was mentioned in our hymn (No 145), is that a lamb was slain. When we speak about the lamb that was slain, the passover lamb, do you know the effectiveness of what the blood meant? God said, "when I see the blood, I will pass over", Exod 12: 13. There were persons, Egyptians, whose doorways did not have the mark of the blood upon them. The destroyer came in; the judgment of God came in. The judgment of God is due, pending upon the world; there are some harbingers of it we would say in the present time, but the judgment is due. Are you one who is sheltered by the precious blood? Do you know the power in the blood to protect you? Why is it effective? Because it satisfies God! That was the first word, "when I see the blood, I will pass over"; the judgment will not come in because of the preciousness and the virtue and value of the blood of the lamb in the sight of God. But as we have said there were houses in Egypt that were not marked by the blood; and there were houses in Egypt that were. What was the difference? The difference was that there were those that had taken to themselves the lamb, who appreciated the lamb; and not only had they slain the lamb but they had taken its blood and put it with the hyssop on the doorpost and the lintel. That is what you need to do, to lay hold by faith on the

blood of Jesus.

You see how John in writing of this presents the blood and then he says, "he knows that he says true that ye also may believe", John 19: 35. How necessary and vital that the blood should be applied, the blood should be upon you, so that God in looking towards you would see the blood; and that you are covered and you are sheltered by the precious blood of Jesus.

Of course, there is another side to that related to what we have been speaking about. Outwardly, there were these houses on which there was the blood, and God was satisfied; and God is so satisfied by the work of Jesus in the type that He could pass over people, and not bring in the judgment. But inside the house, what were they doing? Feeding on the lamb! Beloved, have you fed on the Lamb? Perhaps you do know that the blood is there, you have faith in that blood, you know it; but you are not just to be sheltering under the blood, you are to feed on the Lamb. You are to have Christ before you as the Food of life, as the energy to go forward, and as the One who will bring you in power and energy through the wilderness, as there are needs there.

What a wonderful scene in these houses; everyone valued that lamb, they appreciated it, they had had it in the house from the tenth day to the fourteenth; how wonderful that they had had it in their houses: they had valued it and they saw what it was, they were affected by it. We think of the way in which this apostle John is an example of one who from the beginning had seen Jesus and heard that word, "Behold the Lamb of God", John 1: 37. And he had watched and watched through these periods the perfect walk and pathway of the Lord Jesus in this scene. He had valued Him, valued that Man, valued Him in His walk. Of course John was a failing man, he was a sinner such as you and me, but he valued the Lord Jesus, he followed Him, he kept close by Him. And it came to the point where the blessed sacrificial Lamb was there upon the cross and the soldier came and pierced the side of a dead Saviour: Someone who had died already, whose work was completed in that sense. And now there is a witness, the witness in its fulness that God is satisfied with the work of Jesus, because the precious blood has flowed forth. John saw it! He can witness to it, he can tell you of it, and he can tell you, 'Here is something precious: believe, have faith in that precious blood!'

Romans brings in the blood on two occasions, and we see the blessedness of them. In Romans 3 it is spoken of, "Christ Jesus; whom

God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood”, v 24-25. How necessary it is that there should be the faith in that blood, the blood that satisfies the heart of God, the blood by which we have this righteousness; “being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood”. That looks back to another scene in the old dispensation, the great day of atonement (Lev 16); how wonderful a day it was!. The blood of these wonderful offerings that looked forward to Christ's work was taken and it was put on the mercy-seat; that is it was brought right into the divine presence. There was only one day in a year as things worked out that the priest could go into the holy of holies, and he did not come without the blood, the blood that was to be put on the mercy-seat; and God sets Christ forth as a mercy-seat, so that His heart is known, His speaking is known. He is going to speak from off the mercy-seat, but it is a mercy-seat that has the blood upon it; God is satisfied. The cherubim were the symbol of the divine rights, and they looked down on the blood that was on the mercy-seat; how wonderful to see that. It was sprinkled before the mercy-seat too, seven times before the mercy-seat; how wonderful that God would give you full reassurance. What is your need? The value of the blood is expansive, it is great, and it can reach everyone, as the fulness that the seven would suggest.

But again it is presented here in Romans as a matter of faith “whom God has set forth a mercy-seat through faith in his blood”. It is remarkable that this should come in. I think it is the only time in scripture that faith is connected with something other than a divine Person personally. You read of faith in God, or faith in Jesus, but here you have faith in His blood. There is something that has power in it, that has effectiveness that is going to affect your soul and your heart, and it is the eternal witness to the righteousness of God, to the completion of the work, to the grace of God, to the heart of God towards you, to the blessing that is available to you through the glad tidings. How wonderful it is, the precious blood! You have to lay hold of it by faith: “by faith in his blood”.

And then later on it speaks in this epistle of the power that is in it; “Much rather therefore, having been now justified in the power of his blood”, chap 5: 9. Think of the power of that blood; “we shall be saved by him from wrath”. There is power in that blood. Why is there power in it? There is beauty and the glory and perfection in the Man who walked

in this pathway according to the divine will and pleasure, who did everything that was according to the divine mind; and the blood of that One is witness that He has died: there is satisfaction for God's heart in Him and His completed work. There is power in it so that you should come into blessing, power that you should be justified. That depends of course on the fact that it is a witness of a completed work, because on the cross the Lord Jesus suffered for sins; He bore sins there, so that the efficacy of the blood of Jesus should rest upon everyone who comes and trusts and believes. What effect there is! It is available to everyone. He bore the sins of everyone who trusts in Him, how full and great that is. I have trusted Him; I know that every one of my sins has been dealt with on the cross; how wonderful that is!

What liberty is brought in, because the covenant brings in liberty; since the covenant is the new covenant in His blood, and that blood has the effect of liberty in the presence of God. How wonderful that you can know that because of the effectiveness and the power of the blood of Jesus; you are "justified in the power of his blood". Do you know what it is to come before God as justified? Sometimes there is a question as to what it means to be justified, and it is said, 'Just as if you never sinned at all'. In one way that goes too far, because your history is there; but God has worked things out in your history, and He has dealt with your history, dealt with it in the work of Christ. And in a way it does not go far enough because you are not just in the sight of God as someone whose sins are removed, but you are there as someone who is set up for God in the power of the life of the Lord Jesus, the Man who has laid down His life and has risen again and is triumphantly seated now on the Father's throne awaiting the day when He takes up His own rights. It is wonderful to have such a Person!

And the blood is the purchase price. Think of that! That God has desired to redeem, there is a redemption that comes in through the work of Christ; I think that is set out in Ephesians. It speaks there about the redemption; the redemption through whose blood? "The Beloved"! It says, "taken us into favour in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of offences", chap 1: 6, 7. Your offences, your sins: they are the matter, the issue between you and God, and here God says "redemption through his blood"; no other way, no other virtue, no other power, but how blessed it is that we have "redemption through his blood", the blood of the One who is so charming to the heart of God, the One who is "the Beloved", we are "taken us into favour in the Beloved". If you look at that second

paragraph in Ephesians 1, and you think of the great and wonderful and marvellous things that God has in mind, they are “every spiritual blessing”, and then you find what is the fundamental matter of it all; “in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of offences, according to the riches of his grace”. His grace has reached to you; His grace is available to you in the gospel and all depending on the fact that the Lord Jesus there upon the cross shed His precious blood. How blessed that is; how full that is; how great it is that you can be there in the sight of God, in the favour of the Beloved because of the completeness and the worthiness of the “redemption through his blood”.

And the blood is cleansing. The sins are something that are upon you, and John says in Revelation, “To him who loves us ...”; that is the present position: there is a Man who loves us, and everything that would make things a problem is dealt with because He “has washed us from our sins in his blood”, chap 1: 5. Think of what it was to be in the sight of God as filthy, in filthy rags, the filthiness of the flesh, the filth of what belongs to the position you have as a sinner if you have not trusted the Saviour. And here there is a power to cleanse you; you can come before God in purity, come before God as conscious of the cleansing power, and you can say as that hymn writer did -

We, too, the cleansing power have known
Of Christ's atoning blood.

It is wonderful to have the blood to cleanse, so that you can thus approach God. For that is what it brings in in Hebrews, that there is approach to God. And what is the approach to God? Well, the approach to God is because of the power of the blood; it is because of the cleansing of the blood. Hebrews 10 speaks about the way you can approach God: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness for entering into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus”, v 19. We mentioned that in the old dispensation the holy of holies could be entered once a year by one man with the blood of other creatures; and you can go into the holy of holies as you wish, as you desire, “by the blood of Jesus, the new and living way which he has dedicated for us though the veil, that is, his flesh”. Once, only the priest; now you as a priest may enter into the presence of God, and you will find the One who presides there, a great Priest over the house of God, Jesus. But your entrance depends on the liberty you have by the blood of Jesus. What excellence and what sufficiency there is in the blood of Jesus.

Hebrews speaks of it again as the blood of the eternal covenant: "But the God of peace, who brought again from among the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, in the power of the blood of the eternal covenant", chap 13: 20. Think of that! God brought Him "from among the dead in the power of the blood of the eternal covenant". The blood of Jesus was a witness before God of the righteousness of everything accomplished, and God could therefore righteously raise that glorious One from the dead; "raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father", (Rom 6: 4), raised by God Himself. The God of peace has done it, so that you can have peace, the God of peace has raised this wonderful One from the dead "in the power of the blood of the eternal covenant".

The covenant is a matter of liberty; in one way you could say it is liberty on God's side: God's heart is free, He can come out towards you, come out to you to bring you into the enjoyment of His presence, enjoyment of liberty before Him, and you can take it up. You are free, as you have trusted in the Saviour, to be there in the enjoyment of what there is that is established because of the work of the covenant. That is brought before you as you gather to remember the Lord Jesus at the Supper: "the new covenant in my blood", Luke 22: 20. What privilege there is! What blessing and benefit there is that we know as we gather at the Supper and what flows from it. Why? It is because of the blood of the covenant. The blood, of course, has dealt with the matter of your forgiveness as you have trusted in Him, as your faith is in the blood, but the blood also is that ground of liberty before God. When the first covenant came out there were creatures that were slaughtered and the blood was put into basins (Exod 24); that is a suggestion of just how copious, how full, the blood of Jesus is. And it was sprinkled on the book, and it was sprinkled on the people (Heb 9: 19): everyone had the mark that the covenant blood was upon them, so that God was in a new relationship, a covenant relationship, with His people. That is all superseded - that was fine, so far as it went, but it is superseded by the blood of this precious Lamb of God, by the blood of Jesus, and you can have the liberty in that relationship before God, to be in His presence. Again we have to emphasise it is "through faith in his blood". How wonderful that there is this opportunity to enter into these things by faith in His blood.

I want to speak briefly too of the fact that there was not only blood but there was water, and I feel tested to say very much about that. But

God has provided not only the blood but the water; there is only one hymn in our hymn book that makes reference to that:

Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleansing from its guilt and power. (Hymn 396)

The blood would deal with your guilt and it does so completely; it would cleanse you in the sight of God. And then you have to live in the sight of God, and you have to live in the sight of God in the light and the power of the water; the water came from the side of Jesus so that you may be clear from day to day. It is available for your cleansing when you fall into what is inappropriate.

In the Old Testament too there is the great type of the red heifer separate from the other offerings, a distinctive creature, a distinct offering; it is the only one whose colour is set out, and it is one of the few that is a female offering, Num 19. There is something of divine feelings about that, the distinctiveness that was seen in Christ in His perfection and subjection, and that creature was burned and the water of purification came from the ashes of that creature. It is because of Christ going into death that you can have cleansing for today, that you can have cleansing for the pathway, cleansing for the wilderness. If someone touched a dead bone in the wilderness they were unclean, and there was a supply in this water of purification. If you touch what is unclean in the world, and in some degree perhaps you cannot avoid that, while in some degree it is what may be because of your own failures, there is sufficiency in the work of Jesus for that. You do not exactly go back to the blood again; it has dealt with the matter, and the water allows you to be before God in communion with Him. The water allows you to be before God without what might mar your liberty with Him.

So that where we referred to in Hebrews 10 it speaks not only of the fact that you are there because of the blood, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness for entering into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus", but at the end of that section it says, "and washed as to our body with pure water", v 22. That is not simply a physical matter as to how we would come as washed, but that we are washed since there is a power to wash you so that you should come in suitability. It goes back to the glory of the fact that Christ has been in death, He has taken all these charges and liabilities, but it is available to wash you so that you can

have the liberty of the place that belongs to you. It is an integral part of being one who has “boldness for entering into the holy of holies”. A sober matter was that if someone touched a dead bone and ignored the water, it became a sin, Num 19: 20. It was not a sin to touch a dead bone, which may have been an accident in the wilderness, or have been necessary, but the Israelite had to avail himself of that water; the water is there for you, and how important it is that you should avail yourself of that cleansing power that there is in the water that came from the side of the Lord Jesus.

I commend these things to you. How full and great the power that is in that blood. Let it be something that is constantly before our hearts, the wonderful fact that we have redemption through His blood. And at what might be regarded as the highest level, in Ephesians 1, we have, “in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption in his blood”. What liberty we can have with God because of the fulness and the blessedness of what He has provided in the work of the Lord Jesus.

May the Lord bless the word.

Loanhead

27 December 2020

THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST - WHAT ARE ITS USES AND APPLICATIONS BY THE SPIRIT IN SCRIPTURE?

George V Wigram

If we read the contexts of the following references, we shall see, as to the blood of Jesus Christ, that:

1. It connects the disciple with a covenant (Matt 26: 28 etc)
2. The knowledge of it is eternal life (John 6: 32-69)
3. It is the proof of the death of Jesus (John 19: 33)
4. The purchase money of the flock (Acts 20: 28)
5. The propitiation provided by God (Rom 3: 25)
6. The finished justification (Rom 5: 9)
7. The centre of union among the saints on earth (1 Cor 10: 16)
8. Freedom from guilt (Eph 1: 7)
9. Our nighness - to God as sons - to Christ as bride - to the Holy Ghost as temple (Eph 2: 13)
10. Redemption, even the forgiveness of sins (Col 1: 14)
11. The power of deliverance from Satan's kingdom into Christ's (Col 1: 20)
12. The secured approach of the sinner to the holiest where God dwells, and Christ, who gives good things to come (Heb 9: 7-12)
13. It is to be known as such (Heb 9: 12-14)
14. Both the place to which it thus leads, and the blessings of the place (as well as the people for whom they are) are connected with it (Heb 9: 18-28)
15. It is the taking away of sin, the setting apart of the saints to God, and that by which they are already perfected (Heb 10: 11-14)
16. The power of heavenly filial service (Heb 10: 19)
17. The sanctification of those that know it (Heb 10: 27-31; 13: 12)
18. The measure of our obedience to God (Heb 12: 1-4)
19. The testimony of good things to us, but judgment on the world (Heb 12: 24)
20. The sanctification as of an eternal covenant (Heb 13: 12, 20)
21. The knowledge of it is the proof of election (1 Pet 1: 2)
22. It is the saint's ransom (1 Pet 1: 18)

23. The saint's daily resource for cleansing (1 John 1: 7)
24. God's witness upon earth (1 John 5: 8)
25. The cleansing of our persons - so sung of on earth (Rev 1: 5)
26. Our redemption so sung of in heaven (Rev 5: 9)
27. The cleansing of our robes (Rev 7: 14)
28. The victory over Satan (Rev 12: 11)

The blood, the death, and the cross of Jesus (though all found together in *the* one great act of man's rebellion against God), are often presented by the Spirit as having different things more immediately connected with each of them. At present I shall only speak of the blood. The blood, when spoken of as known so as to be valued, always seems to involve, more or less remotely, the idea of atonement. In itself it is atonement; even that by which *alone* God can be just, and yet the justifier of the sinner; and, so it is that which not only enables God to bless, but the sinner to draw near for blessing. And yet it has more uses and applications in connection with atonement, than most are aware. For it may be looked at as presented with the view of giving eternal life to them that believe; as in itself propitiation; as the removal of sin; as justification, forgiveness, nearness, peace; as that which alone cleanses the conscience of a sinner, or can keep a saint's conscience clean; which has cleansed the person in one place, and the robes in another; which is redemption - an approach to the holiest - the securer and retainer of that place - our purchase money - our sanctification - the proof of our election - our power over Satan, the power and measure of our obedience to God, that in which we have communion one with another the seal of the everlasting covenant. In such various lights does the Spirit make mention of the blood! May the saints, however weak, know God's estimate of the blood in all varied applications of it, and, through the Spirit, learn to adopt God's estimate, and to set aside their own.

Ignorance of the blood, or carelessness to it, is the world's condemnation. Passages bearing upon this I shall not now notice, except as connected with the saint's victory over the world - writing merely with the view of endeavouring to help Christians to see the blood as connected with themselves. May the Holy Spirit, who bears witness with the blood, reveal to us that which flesh and blood cannot, while we muse on these things!

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MADE PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERING

Terry W Lock

Hebrews 5: 7-9; 2: 10

After our reading and preaching on Lord's day I have been thinking a little, beloved brethren, as to the sufferings of our Lord Jesus. Quite often we think of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus in relation to the cross, and quite rightly so, and we think of them in relation to Gethsemane. It is right to contemplate the Lord in Gethsemane, and when He was oppressed in spirit, when He could say those words in relation to His sufferings, "Now is my soul troubled", John 12: 27. How real were the sufferings of Christ when, as we were reminded in the preaching, He could say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", Ps 22: 1. How great the intensity of the sufferings of Christ was as He hung there completely alone at that point; completely alone! He was bearing the wrath and judgment of God, separated from men, for none was able to stand with Him there; those were very real sufferings.

But, beloved brethren, His sufferings were not just at the end of His life. Scripture speaks in relation to Christ that He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief", Isa 53: 3. We were reminded as well on Lord's day in relation to the Lord that it could say of Him that "He came to his own, and his own received him not", John 1: 11. What suffering was in that! What suffering there was in relation to His feelings when His mother and father reprimanded Him for not being with them, and He could say, "did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business", Luke 2: 49. He was a young boy at that time and yet the suffering was there, for there was no one to understand. All of those suffering circumstances involved belong to the learning of obedience; that is the reality of the manhood of Jesus: and what He suffered qualified Him to fill the offices He holds. The reality of the manhood of Jesus is that He learned obedience by the things that He suffered.

Going back to what we spoke of in relation to the reprimand that He received from His parents, He was in subjection to them; Scripture says that. It was a most remarkable thing that Christ was learning obedience, even in relation to His subjection in normal family relationships. When He came into this scene and His own rejected Him, it did not change Him, but rather He moved forward in subject obedience. When the temptations were upon Him, what was He

learning there? Obedience. How did He answer it? By the scripture, "It is written" (Matt 4: 4); that is how the Lord answers the enemy. All of those things were Christ learning obedience. What a Man He is, beloved brethren!

So where we have read in Hebrews 5 it says, "Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up both supplications and entreaties to him who was able to save him out of death", not 'from death' but "out of death". He knew that that was His pathway, knew the sufferings would peak or culminate at the point where He would enter into death; that in His path of suffering, as Philippians puts it, He would become "obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross", chap 2: 8. It does not just say that He became obedient to die, but it says, "becoming obedient even unto death". That is the force or the power of Christ moving into a position so abhorrent to Himself, and it was obedience that took Him there. What a thing that was! So in all of this it says in Hebrews "he learned obedience from the things which he suffered; and having been perfected, became to all them that obey him, author of eternal salvation". Christ learned this obedience so that He could take up priesthood on our behalf. What a glorious Man He is, that He would learn the experience of obedience so that as we go through this scene, tried and tested as we have heard, failing sometimes, we have One who has suffered in this scene and learned obedience through the suffering; so that He could be "to all them that obey him, author of eternal salvation". What a Man He is on our behalf!

But then you go to chapter 2 and it is what is from God's side: "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory". When I look at the sufferings of Christ, there is one scripture that has often affected me, and I cannot say I understand it, but as contemplating it you get the feelings behind it when it says, "Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him", Isa 53: 10. Think of what that was! That is the reality of the manhood of Jesus. But it says here: "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make perfect the leader of their salvation through sufferings". God had in mind that Christ would go this way, that He would suffer so that He could be a perfect Leader of God's inheritance. That takes our thoughts outside of the things that men did to Him, but it is the things that God set before Him; it is a whole other matter. This goes into the counsels of God, that in the counsels of God He would counsel that our Leader would be made perfect through sufferings, sufferings more intense than we will ever fathom, sufferings

deeper than we can even express. We have a perfect Leader because of those sufferings; that is absolutely true. The Man I know, the Man that we spoke of on Lord's day who has suffered to such an extent, is the Man who is Author of eternal salvation and the perfect Leader, as it says, "to make perfect the leader of their salvation through sufferings".

Beloved brethren, it should make us love Christ more! In what He has done, but also in the offices He fills! It should make us love Him more for those offices which He fills having learned obedience by what was placed upon Him to make Him perfectly suitable, both morally and practically, to fill those offices; and every aspect leading up to it has been marked by suffering. May we be encouraged by this as we think of that Man!

For His Name's sake.

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