

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 175

October 2021

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JOHN 16

JTB You spoke in your prayer about the blessings which we can enjoy. This chapter is a great comfort in that sense that, despite the adversity and attacks which the enemy might bring about, we have the Holy Spirit, and we have this assurance that the Lord Jesus says, “and again a little while and ye shall see me”, a very blessed thing. I suppose, as we gather together at the Supper, we have that privilege, although it has a forward look as well, but to see the Lord as glorified by the Spirit is a very great blessing, do you think?

GB So Paul refers to the Lord Jesus saying, “in the night in which he was delivered up, ... as often as ye shall” do this, 1 Cor 11: 23-26. It is a living experience, and we read about the Comforter: “*he* ... will bring to your remembrance all the things”, John 14: 26. We are provided for in the Lord's absence, but He is nevertheless with us in that sense.

DCB This flows forward from the end of the previous chapter; “the Spirit of truth who goes forth from with the Father” and the fact of His coming, “*he* shall bear witness concerning me”, v 26. When He says, “These things I have spoken unto you that ye may not be offended”, He is really giving them reassurance, and gives us a wonderful reassurance, that in the Spirit there is One who is to sustain the testimony despite the absence of Christ.

JTB That is what I thought about these preceding verses as to “the Spirit of truth who goes forth from with the Father”. There is a certain majesty and dignity, but authority as well, as if the mind of heaven is conveyed in that, going “forth from with the Father”.

TWL The Spirit goes forth from where Christ is forever as Man, and sustains us as a Man. This being offended is not being offended exactly in or against the persons who harm them, but it is the idea of the path of suffering, that they would not be offended in the path of suffering because of what they have in the reality of Christ in heaven. Is that how you understand that?

JTB I was affected this morning by the very fact that during these ten days there were three divine Persons in heaven, but for the first time a Man was there, a glorious Man, who had accomplished everything for the divine pleasure and who also, through the Spirit's operations, makes Himself available to us still: but it is a Man. But the Spirit too, “who goes forth from with the Father”: it seems a great realm of affection and care. Comfort is mentioned, the Spirit as Comforter, but it

is very pleasing that the Spirit is so described.

TWL He “goes forth from with the Father”, speaking very carefully, with the power for everything that belongs in heaven. Everything connected with our place in heaven has power because of the Spirit; and He goes forth from where affections are known, and men are known. It is a wonderful thing to think of the Spirit moving and being the power for heaven.

JTB We have referred to the testimony; so there is power to reflect what is heavenly in testimony now because of these great transactions, “the Spirit of truth who goes forth from with the Father”.

DCB You see what power there is in the Spirit. I was thinking that, naturally speaking, it was as great a bereavement to the disciples if the Lord was caught up as if He had died, in that He was no longer present to persons He had been present to. That feeling might have been with them, but they have the Spirit as link with Him, and the same Spirit that is in Him is in them and is in us.

JTB In some sense the disciples, speaking guardedly, experienced a fatherly influence from the Lord Jesus. The Spirit “goes forth from with the Father”, who is another divine Person, preeminent in the economy. But it was really that kind of influence that would be with them as comforting them. Is that what you had in mind?

DCB I suppose that previous reference does set that out: “I will send to you” that is from the Lord's side, while “from the Father, the Spirit of truth who **goes forth** ...”. It brings in the fact that the whole of the Trinity is engaged in that movement, and that it is a movement that is going to be for comfort, sustaining and carrying forward what is for the Lord Jesus in the time of His absence.

TWL And going into the next part, the reality that they would not take offence was seen in people like Stephen, and seen in the ones that Paul afflicted, and so on. That was the reality of the link they had. Of Stephen it says, “a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit”, Acts 6: 5. He did not take offence at the situation; He saw a Man in heaven. That was the reality of the Spirit's work, “who goes forth from with the Father”. That was, to our way of thinking, the beginning of chapter 16.

DHM The way He opens up to them that “It is profitable for you that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I go I will send him to you” is very attractive. He is giving them, as well, a

reassurance that He is seeking to open up to them how things are going to be. They might be very different from when He is here, very different but actually better, which would be very hard for them to take in at that point. The whole heavenly realm, the whole heavenly side of Christianity, was going to be opened up after the Lord had completed His work here.

TWL It is quite a thing, when we think about it, that the Lord does not say the Spirit *cannot* come; He says, “the Comforter will not come to you”. The Spirit would not come until there was a glorified Man because He would not settle on anything less than what was in accord with the glorified Man; so it says He “will not come”.

DHM We have seen that this was the One on whom the Spirit descended as a dove; this was the One that divine delight was found in; but now what we have is consequent and contingent on Him going away. Even the term is very feeling. He does not say, 'I am going to go into death. I am going to suffer on the cross. I am going to go into the grave'; He says He is going away. He is very gentle with them as to what is so precious in the hope, I suppose, that they understand it as quickly as possible.

KRC I was pondering what you have made reference to, and I was wondering if that is maybe why it is so serious when the Spirit is grieved. I was thinking of what there is to be for the Spirit to settle on. You could say the model is the Man that is now in heaven. I had not really considered that so much, but I think what you said is challenging.

TWL It is fine to see that the Spirit is eager to help, but we need to appreciate who He is. It is God, and the things that are contrary to Him are contrary to God. It is very interesting that there are certain things that God cannot do, and one of them is that He cannot have liberty where evil is. It is not a case that He will not; He cannot. But the positive side of this is that there are persons testimonially, like the ones even in Paul's day. Paul thought to render service to God: he was provoked because of the work of the Spirit that he saw shining in Stephen, and it began to change him. So when the Lord appeared to him, there was already a groundwork there because of what he had seen in another man.

JTB It is interesting that we have the reference in John's epistle to “we have a patron with the Father”, 1 John 2: 1. “Patron”, as we know, is the same word as “Comforter”. I suppose the Spirit of God could have

said, or the writer John through the Spirit could have just said, “we have a patron”, but it is “a patron with the Father”, as if the great intent is to re-establish our links with the Father so that we can enjoy these heavenly blessings.

DCB I was thinking about this question at the end of verse 5, “and none of you demands of me, Where goest thou?” He is going to the Father. Is it really the desire of the Lord Jesus that they should be alert to that fact of where He was going? He would awaken a desire to know where He was going, and where He was going was to the Father.

JTB You can see this as a kind of prelude to John 17, where these glorious relationships with the Father are asserted. Is that what you thought?

DCB You can certainly see how the chapters from chapter 13 are running up to the glory of chapter 17, of the Lord's communion with the Father.

THB You referred earlier to the Spirit of truth at the end of the previous chapter; Could you say something as to that? It comes in again in verse 8, “And having come, he will bring demonstration to the world, of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment”. Do you think that is one of His services, “the Spirit of truth”? Can you say something about that title? He could not be Spirit of anything else other than truth, could He?

DCB When we think of “truth”, it is not simply what is true, but it is a setting forth of what is in the divine mind. “The Spirit of truth” is a characteristic of His, that He is bringing to us what is the mind of heaven at the moment. “But when *he* is come, the Spirit of truth, he shall guide you into all the truth”. He is guiding you into what He knows.

THB I was thinking of the hymn that we sing sometimes:

Here the Spirit too bears witness
To the truth that all is done. (Hymn 133)

DCB I was thinking about these demonstrations: “he will bring demonstration to the world”. It is mainly the assertion of the truth, is it not? You wonder how He is going to do that to “bring demonstration to the world, of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment”. It is really His presence which demonstrates what these things are, what is according to the truth, the true view of these questions.

TWL Is He not bringing these things to bear as Christ is known? It is not a creed; the truth is not a creed; The Truth is a Person. So the Spirit is operating in relation to what has come into expression in Jesus on the earth; so righteousness was in expression there, and sin, or what was contrary to it, the judgment of it, was in expression there. The judgment of the world was in expression there in that Person, and the Spirit of truth is what He is as linking on with what was manifest in Jesus.

DCB So we often have pointed out to us that in this gospel the Lord Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth", (chap 14: 6): the Lord *is* the truth. But when you come to the epistle, it says, "the Spirit is the truth" (1 John 5: 6); so you can see how at present here in the testimonial sphere "the Spirit is the truth", and the very fact of His being the truth means He sets out the truth of everything of God.

TWL The Spirit operates according to the moral excellency of Jesus in heaven. He operates now in the assembly according to the moral excellence of that Man. Everything centres in that Man for God and for us, and that includes the Spirit.

JTB Paul says "the truth is in Jesus" (Eph 4: 21); so it is a reflection of everything that was found in Christ here, but also what is extant in heaven. It is very fine simply to think of "He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you". That must have a current bearing: "he shall receive of mine". It is what is current in heaven, it seems to me. I had the thought this morning that if every holding of the Lord's supper and the service of God were to be written down in print since it was inaugurated, every one of them would be different because the Spirit is in operation and giving us a fresh impression of that glorious Person. I think that would be the case actually. No two observances of the Lord's supper are the same, are they, otherwise there would be a creed? It would be something that you just repeat ritually, but that is one of the great attractions of the Supper, the service of God, that it is different.

DHM Although we have all been tested in the small breakings of bread we have in our homes, it is amazing how there is support, and it is amazing how something fresh comes in against the backdrop of numerical weakness; and yet not only are we sustained, but there is power that is clearly not our own power in evidence there, which is very reassuring in the circumstances we find ourselves in. Even though the restrictions have been relaxed in many ways, there are still these arrangements in relation to the Supper.

JTB It is an affecting thing, “he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you”. It brings out really the harmony that exists between the Lord Jesus and the Spirit; so you can see how the Spirit delights to express the glories of Christ in a fresh way to us as we gather.

DHM There is a hymn that says,

Thou takest heav'nly glories of the Son,
And bringest every precious feature near. (Hymn 401)

That links with what you are saying about the diversity and variety of impressions that we receive.

KRC We sing hymn 434. I was just thinking of the last two lines:

That in these vessels here
Thy glory may shine through.

That is His present glory, is it not, where He is now? It is not historical or what He was, but it is who He is. In the sense of what we have been bringing forward, I think it is quite attractive to see that the Spirit's work in operation is in relation to the Man that is in heaven now. I feel freshly affected by that.

DCB So the background to, “He shall glorify me” is the previous verse, “for he shall not speak from himself; but whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak”. Really it is the conversation of heaven that is being conveyed to us by the Spirit.

KG It seems a gentle service, “he shall guide you”. We would have to be willing to be guided. Would that be right?

DCB That is helpful, because in a certain sense the Spirit does not act forcefully. There are times when He would retire, thinking of the fact that He can be grieved and so on, but He is looking for persons really who are on the same line as He is, who are willing, ready to be accepting that guidance into all the truth.

JTB That is an interesting point. I often think of Numbers 21 in that regard,

Vaheb in Suphah, and the brooks of Arnon;
And the stream of the brooks which turneth to the dwelling of Ar,
And inclineth toward the border of Moab.
And from thence to Beer, v 14-16.

We would think it is circuitous, but He is guiding us.

DCB Yes, and the whole thought of the brooks is gently making things more fertile, and gently guiding in the way that would bring more fruit for God.

DHM A brook flows; there is an indication of supply there as well, is there not?

DCB We have reference to “the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ”, Phil 1: 19. There is what is available, and in part it depends on vessels too, does it not? In the hymn referred to there are vessels; what flows from one to another and what comes out is, “out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water”, John 7: 38. Clearly the Spirit can act sovereignly, but in a certain sense He depends on vessels in which all this is to be opened up and that, of course, is how it works out so much especially in what is normal when we are gathered together, the impressions at the Supper, for instance, flowing from one to another.

DHM The vessel is an interesting thought because it is something that contains, but it is not containing it with a view to it remaining hidden. There is something flowing because it goes on to say, 'shine through'; so there is to be something seen. There would be something in evidence which links with what you are suggesting about what would flow out.

JTB You can see how right it is that the Spirit as a divine Person should be worshipped against this background. Again Numbers 21:

Rise up, well! sing unto it:

Well which princes digged, which the nobles of the people hollowed out at the word of the lawgiver, v 17, 18.

That would be Christ, I suppose, but how the Lord Jesus desires that the Spirit should get His portion!

DCB And you can see also how suitable is the time when the Spirit is addressed, that really it is part of the flow; Christ has been brought before our hearts, and then our hearts open up to the Spirit, the One who has done so much to bring Christ before us, and has allowed that there should be the genuine response in hearts to Christ.

TWL When we were young, we used to be told to speak to the Spirit of God before the Supper so that we had the sensitivity at the Supper to move with Christ. You will not see anything without Him, and you will

not have any inkling without Him, and you will not recognise anything without Him; so it is important before the Supper to pray to the Spirit about the Supper. Do you think that is right?

JTB “Well which princes digged”: it is the removal of every hindrance so that the Spirit's place is recognised, so that He can bring to us the glories of Christ, do you think?

TWL As Comforter He is the One who gives us the capacity and sensitivity to see and hold something of Jesus, and that is what comes out at the Supper. It is not just something we do because it is right to do it but rather the reality that a Man is going to be there. Well, that is the Spirit.

DCB So the remarkable thing is that the Lord speaks of His service as in the Spirit's power. He did not go out in service until such time as the Spirit came upon Him. It is not that you could not say that the Spirit was with Him before that - but there is something publicly shown of the Spirit with Him on that ground. He took up service, and that example to us is that everything that is to be moved forward for God is done under the power of the anointing of the Spirit.

TWL The Spirit's service will not stop when the rapture happens: “that he may be with you forever”, John 14: 16. It will be eternally so that our praises will go on because the Spirit is active; not just because Christ is there but the Spirit is active in relation to Christ. That will be forever; it is not just for time; it will always be true of what goes Godward.

DCB At the moment the services of the Spirit include that He is “against the flesh”, Gal 5: 17. We are going to come into the realm where the Spirit can - shall we say? - restfully lay aside being “against the flesh”, and everything will be moving forward in His grace and power. In degree, as the service of God proceeds, we have some experience of that, do we not?

TWL “The flesh lusts against the Spirit” (Gal 5: 17) but it does not say, 'the Spirit lusts against the flesh': it just says, “the Spirit against the flesh”. It is a case of sensitivity and gentleness on the Spirit's part, and that is quite a thing because we may lust, or what is in our flesh may lust, against the Spirit, but sensitivity to the Spirit means that He will have the liberty to move as He chooses. I find that very testing. Does the Spirit have the liberty to move as He chooses? That is the service of God.

JTB I ask but it must be right, I think, whether the Spirit will indwell the assembly eternally. The Spirit dwells in the assembly now totally. From what you are saying, it must be that that pertains eternally. Would that be right? That does not mean, of course, that the Spirit will not serve in other capacities, but the 'residence of glory' (Hymn 221) will be the assembly, will it not?

DCB The hymn brings in -

The Spirit all pervading -

The Fulness pleased, at rest!

You see the wonder of the fact that everything is dependent on the Spirit, even in the day to come. He will be active with every family. He has acted upon everyone who is there in the eternal scene, so that they should be born anew; and, as He is the Spirit of truth, the light can only come to persons in whom He has acted. The whole sphere will be filled with different families, those who have been acted upon by the Spirit, and continue without the flesh's activity to be there available to Him for however response would go up to divine Persons.

TWL Whatever degree we touch heaven at the Supper is because the Spirit is able to act without hindrance in whatever degree that is. I remember my father telling us when we were growing up that you cannot just become holy on Lord's day, and that was when there was maybe more flesh active than was good for us. He used to say, 'You are not going to go to the Supper on a Lord's day morning and find it will all just fall into place'; it does not happen like that. It is important to remember that; if we genuinely want a touch at the Supper, it will be because we have had close links with the Spirit in the previous six days.

DCB So that brings in what Galatians brings in as to sowing to the Spirit, chap 6: 8. There is something of a reaping on Lord's day morning, some fruit from sowing to the Spirit seen in the responses there are, is there not?

DHM It is hugely practical and challenging, but there is quite a provision. First of all, you have what is private, what is individual; then you have what is in a household, and then we are very thankful we have brethren similarly minded to gather with on a number of occasions. These have been restricted, and now they are more or less back to normal, but these are things that can help us to sow to the Spirit. It can be quite easy to use these expressions. What does sowing to the Spirit mean? It means much more than I have mentioned, I know, but these

are things that would help us along the journey so that there is something that is fresh coming out of the preceding week when we gather together to remember the Lord Jesus.

KRC So hymn number 4 says,

Oft has the Comforter spoken of Thee.

I find that very challenging myself. That is really the expression from these prompts; it is again linked to the glory shining through, it is the Spirit's work in relation to that. I am touched by that operation, that that is what He is striving to do.

TWL He is seeking to implant something in you of the Man He loves, speaking carefully. The Spirit loves Christ, but He is seeking to implant something in you of that Man that He loves, so that you can bring it to God, and it becomes yours. That is quite a test, because if He does not have liberty, He cannot do that. That is not negative; it is just practical.

DHM We can have what may be a small impression, and it can develop here; it can develop as the week proceeds, whether it comes from what is private and what is collective; and that is the work of the Spirit.

TWL It is to be added to the collective whole; so you might say one thing, and somebody else will build on that, and another will build on that again; and that is what makes the saints as gathered together more than what they are in their individual parts. What is collective is greater than what is there individually because the Spirit works and adds, and your impression and somebody else's impression come together, and you get something fresh again, and that is how the Spirit works.

JTB The reference in Philippians chapter 3, "For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh" (v 3), is parallel with what we are saying, for circumcision means all these things that hold us back have been addressed. And then, "who worship by the Spirit of God" that is over to the positive side. We are ready to do that, "and do not trust in flesh". We referred to Romans 7. You can see how it all leads to "worship by the Spirit of God"; so He has free rein to secure our affections and direct them in that way.

TWL One of the things I find as I go along and get a little older is that I do not do things for fear of retribution, but I do not do things because of fear of loss of communion; I am going to lose more by touching or

thinking or acting in a certain way. I am going to lose intimate communication with the Person I love with my whole heart. Why would I do that? That is the point.

JTB Increasingly as we experience the Spirit announcing and speaking to us about Christ, the greater the stimulation just to act in that way.

Edinburgh

13th June 2021

Key to Initials (all from Edinburgh):-

G Bailey; T H Bailey; D C Brown; J T Brown; K R Cumming; K Grant;
T W Lock; D H Marshall

LOOKING FORWARD

Jo M Bedford

Luke 9: 61, 62

I felt led to read this verse and have in mind the words of the Lord, "No one having laid his hand on the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God". The hymn that was read at the commencement of this occasion has in mind the Lord's coming; reference was made in prayer to looking forward.

I would like to encourage each one of us to keep looking forward, and to keep our eye on the Lord. The words of the Lord Jesus are, "No one ... looking back is fit for the kingdom of God". We have each in our measure committed ourselves to the Lord Jesus and, in that respect, we have put our hand to the plough. Therefore, we need to keep looking forward. I have never ploughed a field in my life, and I never expect to, but I think the idea is that we keep our eye looking forward. I am sure that was in the Lord's mind; as looking aside and looking round is not going to achieve the goal. Therefore, in the words of the Lord Jesus, do not look back.

I would draw on Peter's experience when he was walking on the water, Matt 14: 28-31. At the word of the Lord, he was able to walk on the water, but his failing came when he looked at the water and the waves and the wind; and I certainly do not exclude myself from looking around. I think if he had kept his eye on Christ, he would have reached where the Lord was. It says, "But seeing the wind strong he was afraid". We should not be looking around, and again it is very difficult not to. The word is to keep our eye looking forward and on the Lord.

I draw on Lot and his wife; they were told to "escape to the mountain", and, "look not behind thee", Gen 19: 17. Lot achieved that, but his wife did not; a solemn reminder of the word of the Lord, "No one looking back". We know the outcome with Lot's wife, and we know that while we are in the human frame it is very easy to look back. We should be looking forward. For our own good and that of the testimony, we need to keep our eye on the goal, keep our eye on Christ; and not look around and not look back. I leave this impression with us that we keep our eye on Christ.

May it be so for His Name's sake.

PRESENTING OUR BODIES

David J Willetts

Romans 12: 1, 2

1 Corinthians 6: 12-15 (to “Christ?”), 19, 20

These scriptures refer to our bodies. The apostle uses his spiritual persuasion to the saints that he is writing to: “I beseech you therefore”; it is a strong word. He says, “by the compassions of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice”. He is reaching the end of his treatise as to the gospel in this book. Having touched this doxology in the end of chapter 11, “how unsearchable his judgements, and untraceable his ways! ... For of him, and through him, and for him are all things: to him be glory forever. Amen” (v 33, 36), his mind immediately travels to this great matter of what we do with our bodies. We may not feel that we have much that we can give the Lord. We may not feel we have travelled far in the way of intelligence. It seems to me the apostle is using all the energy that he has in divine grace to appeal to the saints to present their bodies a living sacrifice.

I suppose if we want to see a perfect example of a living sacrifice, we see it in the Lord Himself. Perhaps that is where we should start. The Lord would have us take account of the fact, “thou hast prepared me a body”, Heb 10: 5. In that body He did what He says of Himself, “I do always the things that are pleasing to him”, John 8: 29. You can understand He did that in those early private years, largely unknown to us. Heaven is opened and a voice could say, “This is my beloved Son”, Matt 3: 17. The footsteps of the Lord Jesus, the actions of the Lord Jesus in every moment of every day, drew out the acclamation of the Father. He was a living Sacrifice; He was alive to God. We get that reference earlier in Romans: “in that he lives, he lives to God” (Rom 6: 10), which refers to His present position in glory. It is a remarkable statement; it goes on in that section, “so also ye, reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus”, v 11. The proof of being alive to God is what we do with our bodies, and that would take us to a passage in Romans where he says, “For even as ye have yielded your members in bondage to uncleanness and to lawlessness unto lawlessness, so now yield your members in bondage to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were bondmen of sin ye were free from righteousness. What fruit therefore had ye *then* in the things of which ye are *now* ashamed? for the end of *them* is death. But *now*, having got your freedom from sin, and having become bondmen to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end eternal life”, Rom

6: 19 - 22. I suppose the answer to that is seen in Romans 8 where he says, "if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live: for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *these* are sons of God", Rom 8: 13, 14. These are stupendous matters.

The apostle says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the compassions of God". What compassions he had enlisted in the earlier part of the book. What a way we have been taken, to use another prophet's words,

from the dung-hill he lifteth up the needy,
To set him among nobles; and he maketh them inherit a throne
of glory, 1 Sam 2: 8.

What our past history was in all its disgrace towards God we can now use that as being members committed by the power of the Spirit to God Himself. It speaks of a living sacrifice. It is not just getting through: it is living, a living matter. I suppose if we refer to our bodies, it takes in our every member. The Lord speaks about these things. He speaks about, "if therefore thine eye be single" (Matt 6: 22), and then he says, "if thy hand or foot offend thee, cut it off", Matt 18: 8. He speaks about the members of our bodies as if to remind us that God Himself is taking account every day of every movement in it of what we do with our bodies.

We each have a body; so however young we are or however old we are we can commit it to this living sacrifice. You think of it sometimes when you see some of the older saints and their bodies becoming very frail. Mentally, it may be, they become even more frail, but there is something there that is for the divine pleasure as being a sacrifice for God Himself. It says, "be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind". The renewed mind comes to light in Romans 7 where the mind serves God's law: it comes under new control, v 25. Each one of us, as having the Spirit, has been given the power to be superior to the influences the flesh can bring upon us.

I read this passage in 1 Corinthians 6 because I find it very remarkable. I do not suppose any of us would put ourselves into the awfulness of what the Corinthians had been involved in. It was known as the most corrupt city at that time. The Lord had secured personnel from there and the apostle is addressing them here. He says, "the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body". I find that interesting; the two things are very closely connected: the body for the Lord and the Lord for the body. It comes into Ephesians 5, "*He* is

Saviour of the body”, v 23. You may say, 'I commit myself wholeheartedly to the Lord; what does that mean for my body?'. At the present time people are very occupied with their bodies: what about being occupied with what our bodies can be for the Lord Himself? It says here, “for the Lord”. Each of our bodies can be a body for the Lord, in contrast to what they have been. There had been a dramatic change in the lives of the Corinthians, which became obvious to anyone who had known them in their previous conduct. He goes on, “Do ye not know that your bodies are members of Christ?”. That is a remarkable thought, that our “bodies are members of Christ”. I think what that means is that wherever we go, whatever we do, we take Christ with us. We often say that wherever we go we take the brethren with us, and that is true as chapter 12 shows. This seems to be a more specific matter. Perhaps it would involve a more delicate action. It says, “Do ye not know that your bodies are members of the Christ?”. Therefore, we take the Lord with us wherever we go.

The end of the section is very striking to me. “Do ye not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit”. That is something else that is profoundly encouraging, that as receiving the Holy Spirit He will never leave us. The body is to be temple of the Holy Spirit, a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. We have scriptures about not grieving the Spirit (Eph 4: 30); so that “your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God; and ye are not your own”. He gives the appeal again. There is something about the way Paul writes; he has affectionate appeal in the way he puts it: “ye are not your own? for ye have been bought with a price”. Who could measure what it has cost God to secure us in our bodies to be here for His pleasure? It says, “ye have been bought with a price”. What a price! He does not finish there; he says, “glorify now then God in your body”. You may ask if that is possible: Scripture does not present to us impossibilities. Scripture always presents to us what is normal. I think it is a normal thing that we would use our bodies to glorify God. I say these things by way of encouragement. We perhaps look back on our lives, and say we could have done more. May we be encouraged for the rest of our time.

That is another expression that comes into Scripture, “the rest of his time”, 1 Pet 4: 2. Whether it be short or whether it be long we know not, but we all have the rest of our time. What are we going to do with our bodies for the rest of our time? May we just be encouraged that we might be here for the pleasure of God.

“JEHOVAH HIS GOD”

Ron D Plant

1 Samuel 30: 1-6

“David strengthened himself in Jehovah his God”; this was David's God, with David at a very low point in his history; he had lost heart. He had become certain in his mind that the persecutions of Saul were going to be successful against him. He says, “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul”, 1 Sam 27: 1. He became low in his soul and he went away, seeking what he thought was refuge, to the Philistines, the enemies of God's people; he joined with them. This is David, the one anointed of God; he is so very low in his soul. He had lost heart; he had become afraid; the clouds, as it were, had closed above his head, and it is possible for that to happen to all. He comes back to Ziklag, because God had intervened and preserved him from joining with the Philistines against the people of Israel in battle. He comes back to Ziklag, and he finds the whole place devastated. The city was not only captured, and wrecked; it was burned with fire. It was destroyed and all the women taken as captives, including his wives and also the children; all the dependants - which is what they would perhaps represent in this scripture - they had carried away. Everything that was defenceless and dependent upon persons remaining strong and steadfast had been captured and carried away. The people were embittered, and they wept; and David wept amongst them. They spoke of stoning him, such was their anger and distress; what a low point! What does it say of David? “David strengthened himself in Jehovah his God”: “his God”.

We can speak about “the God”; Paul in that remarkable address in Athens speaks about this, “The God who made the world and all the things which are in it”, Acts 17: 24. Paul speaks about how He dispersed the nations; he speaks about the reason why He did that - that they might seek God. He set “the boundaries of their dwelling”, v 26. We can go through Scripture and find references to “*the* God”, His glory and His greatness, the great object of faith and reverence, but it does not say here that David strengthened himself in “the God”, but in “his God”.

Beloved brethren, it is open to each one of us here, and I am sure we do, to have a personal relation with God ourselves. We know what that is; He knows all about us, individually and personally. It is not

exactly the God who made the worlds, not exactly the God who maintains everything in life, not exactly the God who purposed before time was, although all those things would be true, but the God who speaks to *me*. He is the One that I know, the One who brought me salvation, the One who so loved that He gave, who knows us in the circumstances in which we are, so often, of weakness. David's weakness here was possibly the lowest point of his life: I might think he really was in no fit state to approach God, to take the ephod and speak to God. Yet he "strengthened himself in Jehovah his God", and if you read the Psalms, you see how David speaks about God and he speaks also about men, and he speaks as fearful of them. He cries to God that He might preserve him from them. Sometimes he almost runs away from situations in his thoughts. I have been reading the Psalms, and in many you see the struggle in the dialogue and conversation between his belief in God and the overpowering pressure from without that is upon him. You get a sense with David that he was one who particularly had a relationship with "his God". It says in Psalm 23 -

Jehovah is my shepherd ...
... he leadeth me beside still waters.
He restoreth my soul", v 1-3.

It is the same God; it is the same "God who has made the world and all things which are in it"; and gave life and breath to everything there. I believe none of us are very strong in life's circumstances; we all know what it is to have times where the clouds close over our heads and we do not know quite where to move and what to do. What a thing it is to have this link, this blessed unbreakable link, with the God we know who knows us and loves us 'notwithstanding all', Hymn 107.

Take a man like Peter who was a great lover of Christ, yet if put in certain testing circumstances he reacts completely out of character; he denies the Lord. He not only denies Him, he denies Him with oaths and curses. You may say that is just unforgiveable. It was at the time of the Lord's greatest need, you might say, as the cross and all that was to transpire was drawing near yet there is that lovely touch where it says, "the Lord, turning round, looked at Peter", Luke 22: 61. I think that was "Jehovah his God". It says he, "wept bitterly", v 62. He knew what that look was; perhaps no one else did. He knew what it was. What it is, beloved brethren, to develop; and I think in these times where we have been so restricted and things have been so difficult, we have learned something. It is the way that we know God; it is the way that we speak

with Him, not in a traditional way perhaps, but the way that we know Him.

Take a man like Nehemiah who was exercised about Jerusalem (Neh 1); he was the king's cupbearer, and there he is in his duty before one of the mighty autocratic kings of the captivity in the Old Testament, a man who was an absolute monarch, and Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer. He is sorrowful and exercised by news he had received about Jerusalem in ruins and the affliction of the people; and he comes to the king. You can imagine him bringing the king's wine, and his sadness manifest in his face to the point that the king notices it and asks why it is. Nehemiah becomes very afraid, and at such a moment he prays to Jehovah, v 4. You may think that it was not the place to pray: he is just about to serve the king his wine, but he could turn to the God he knew. He could turn to Him in those circumstances; he could turn to Him in the deepest straights. It did not need a special meeting room or an appointed time in that sense; he did not need a church or a cathedral. The God he knew he could speak to wherever he was, and he could draw strength and he could draw help and was dependent upon it. Do you know God like that? The strength of the local company would surely be underpinned on this certainty, and the growing security of us each having to do with "his God" and having to do with "my God".

Paul uses that expression, "my God": "my God shall abundantly supply all your need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus", Phil 4: 19. I would just encourage the brethren. David takes the ephod and he speaks to God. He has been away; he has been unfaithful in joining the ranks of the Philistines, and he speaks to God and he asks Him what he should do, and God says, "Pursue; for thou shalt assuredly overtake them and shalt certainly recover", 1 Sam 30: 8. You might ask whether God would speak to him; would He answer him? He answered him; it was 'His God', and he knew Him. David becomes adjusted, and you can read the rest of that history.

It is just that thought, beloved brethren, not only do we know 'the God' - wonderful blessing; in His majesty and in His glory worshipfully we would regard Him in all that way. But what a thing that the One who made the world, and all things that are in it, and gives life and breath to every creature is the One who loves me and the One who has to do with me. If you take the illustration from Scripture, it is the One like the Lord Jesus, seen in scripture as the Shepherd that went after the sheep; He puts it upon His shoulders and brings it back, Luke 15: 5.

May we be encouraged in this, to be developed in what it is to know what “my God” would involve at the present time.

For His Name's sake.

Words at a meeting for ministry, Birmingham

5th May 2021

GOD WORKING

Peter S Barlow

Luke 15: 24; 15: 4, 5, 8, 11-13, 17, 18 (to "... father"), 20-23

I would like to raise a question, dear hearers, in relation to the first verse we have read. Are you dead? Are you lost? I am not asking the question in an ordinary way, as we would normally do it; I raise it as a question that God would raise with each and every one of us, tonight. He raises it with me. What is absolutely vital and important in the glad tidings is that each and every one of us should have our own personal relationship and link with God. In Ephesians we are told: "*you*, being dead in your offences and sins", chap 2: 1. Is that how you feel? Does God mean anything to you? You may have sat under the gospel preaching many times, as I have. I have preached many times, but the question still needs to be asked in relation to my soul. Does God mean anything to me? It is so easy, beloved, to speak about things, but I feel the edge of the word myself. I raise the question with my own heart as I would with each one here - are you dead? Are you lost? Are you dead towards God? Are you lost and far from God, lost in your iniquities and sins? We move through a world that has no place for God. One who had some place in this world once said, 'God is dead'. The response later when he died was that that person was dead. That person will have to do with God as will each and everyone of us, have to do with a living God, an eternal God. The gospel is proclaimed, not to bring in agitation, but to draw you to a glorious God who desires your blessing.

What I wanted to bring out in reading this chapter is the way divine Persons are working; God is working for you. He has a desire for you, and has a desire that you should have part in what is for Him. I think that is wonderful! God in this blessed dispensation in which we are, a dispensation of grace, has fully made known His heart of love and continues to do so through the glad tidings. God has made Himself known in three divine Persons of the Godhead and we get them here in figure - it is the Lord's own parable, in His own words.

We read firstly as to what would speak typically of the Lord Jesus Himself and what He has done. He speaks this parable to those who murmured against Him saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them", v 2. You think of that, God came into this world in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ to draw near to sinners, to draw near to you and me, to remove and take away entirely that which marked us,

that which made us dead, that which made us lost to Himself. How God feels our state as being away from Him - His heart of love feels that. His desire is that all men should be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. What is that? Come to know Him as a God of love, as the One who has delighted to reveal Himself.

We get a beautiful picture here of the Lord Jesus Christ, a beautiful picture that shows that you and I, every one of us, are precious to the Lord Jesus. Here He goes off to find that lost sheep. It speaks of leaving the ninety and nine, but I think what that emphasises is that the Lord Jesus Himself has His eye upon each one of us and wants to have an individual transaction with you and with me; and that is most wonderful. It is so easy to share out your time with the many, but all Christ's time is for each and every one of us individually; it is impossible to understand, but possible with the Lord Jesus, for He is reaching out to *you*. What He has done is for *you*! He has gone to find the one, the one sheep that was lost, the one sheep that was dead towards God. There was once nothing for God: that was me, and He went and secured me, for He went "until He find it". Where did the Lord Jesus go, until He found it? He went further than any man ever could, and He had to go that way in order that the heart of God, the love of God, should be made fully known. It was in order that there might be a basis on which God, in all His majesty and greatness and His holiness and righteousness, should be made known. The Lord Jesus had to go the way of sorrow, the way of the cross, to shed His precious blood, in order that we might have a living, vital, relationship with God.

That which was most precious to God, He gave up, in order to secure me and you for Himself. We have had it more than once recently in the gospel here - if it was only you or only me that was a sinner, the Lord Jesus would still have had to have passed the way He went as coming into this scene. You wonder at that, the greatness and glory of the One who came here: in His own Person God, yet moving in wonderful infinite lowliness among His creatures. He came to His own and His own received Him not, for this world has no place for Christ, has no place for God, the Creator of the universe and all that is in it, the One in whose hand our breath is. Have you a place for Him in your heart? Or are you dead towards Him? Are you lost and far away from God? Beloved, one sin is sufficient to keep you forever banished from the presence of God. That is not good enough for God - He has given His only-begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, the One

who has gone to find that lost sheep and gone until He find it. Has He found you? Has He found an answer in your heart to what He is and what He has done? You know about that sin, that offence, that iniquity, that unease, that which finds its satisfaction here; but do you know what is for the pleasure of God? That which satisfies me and my will sets me against God; that is what sin is: does that burden rest upon you beloved? Jesus has taken it all away for those who place their faith and trust in Him. He has taken it away and more than that, for it speaks in this parable of finding the sheep, which, it says, "He lays it upon his own shoulders" and brings back; you are brought back to God.

Beloved, think of that beautiful touch. That is what the Lord would seek to do for you in all your need: He would take you upon His shoulders and bring you to where God would have you. He has borne a burden far greater than you ever could, for He has borne the burden of sin. Has He borne all your sins? He has borne the sins of all those who have placed their faith and trust in Him. He has borne them vicariously, bearing the judgment that was due to me and to you, Christ has borne that. He has borne that at the cross, the cross that man awarded Him, for this world has no place for Christ. What did they do? Wicked hands took Him and nailed Him to a cross of wood. Beloved, He went that way as suffering for me. I was lost, I was dead to God, but Christ has gone that way for me. He has borne all that which stood between me and God and entirely removed it. He has taken me upon His shoulders He has brought me to where God would have me. Can you say that, beloved? Can you say that Christ has brought you into wonderful blessing? All that burden, all that sin, all that offence gone and gone for evermore.

You may remember Christian, in Pilgrim's Progress, at the cross, where it says that the burden on his back rolled away into the tomb. Sin and sins have been put out of the sight of God forever - they are gone because Christ has taken it all and done it all. What fell upon Him, the wrath of God upon sin, is greater than we will ever know or understand. What took place in those three hours of darkness when my Saviour hung upon a cross; who can know it, who can encompass it? I thank God, that God is fully satisfied in what the Lord Jesus has done. His arms are outstretched in blessing to you tonight, for God does not want you lost or dead, He does not want you away from Him. What God wants is for you to come into the joy of His blessing. Through the glad tidings the opportunity for salvation is freely offered because the Lord Jesus has done it all.

This woman with ten drachmas impressed me. Maybe I am not using the typical teaching, but it struck me that the woman might speak to us of the blessed Holy Spirit's activities. There are ten drachmas, and one is lost. I speak carefully as we cannot say a divine Person would lose anything, but I think what it might mean is that if one is not in the enjoyment of salvation, there is something lost, something incomplete as it were, for God. We have to be careful; we have to be reverent, but I think you will understand what I am trying to say. If you are away from God, God has lost something. You think of the heart of God having lost something, for God feels it. The work done is complete to meet the need of every man, woman, and child. Sadly there are some with whom the opportunity of salvation is forever passed; let it not be so for you; let it not be you. Lay hold of the gift of salvation by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ whilst the opportunity is yet available. If you have not given yourself to Jesus, do so now; do not put it off, do not wait as He is coming again very soon for His own. Maybe in a few moments' time: what glorious joy and bliss that will be. Are you going to be there or are you one of those who are still dead, still lost towards God? What I seek to bring out here is that any seeking after God is the result of God's own operations as seen here in the Spirit. It is God moving in sovereign, divine unqualified grace.

There is this one drachma missing, one drachma lost. The ten drachmas in the times of this parable would speak of a necklace worn by one who was betrothed but now there is something incomplete. Are you the one who makes things incomplete? God is reaching out to you tonight in the gospel. The drachma is lost but the wonder is that what is lost is found by light; what is suggested is a divine Person as it were taking a lamp and seeking it, searching for it. I like to think of the light as being the revelation of God through the gospel, shining on *you* tonight. The Holy Spirit seeks to work in you - but quite often at first things actually seem to get darker in someone's life. This has been suggested in relation to the beloved apostle Paul: the Spirit of God was working in him even at the stoning of Stephen, but you see how dark Paul got before that shining light exposed him. That drachma was found on the Damascus road, and the light revealed to Saul what he was. That is like the work of the blessed Holy Spirit, like the operation of the gospel as the Spirit speaks in the glad tidings. They bring you into the light of the countenance of God to reveal what you are. We have the sweeping, and the removing so that nothing is hid, and it is all to reveal what you are. Then there is rejoicing as you come to yourself in the presence of

the light from God.

That is why I read of the young man and his “coming to himself”; I think that speaks of repentance. You come to the realisation that you have a need, and get a view of yourself as God sees you. The answer to that need is available and presented to you in the gospel, for “the word is near thee ... that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from among the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom 10: 8-9), no more dead to God, nor to be lost and far from God. What joy there is in heaven as you come to the knowledge of what you are and find that the answer is in the Lord Jesus Christ; and look to the One who has died, the One who was crucified, the One who was put in the tomb. That glorious One has come forth and come forth triumphant and He is glorified on high, and that is who God is presenting to you in the gospel. This is the alone way of salvation for the beloved apostle says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16: 31) - how simple the glad tidings are. Come now to a realisation of what you are and find that your Saviour is Jesus, whom God has raised from among the dead, has “highly exalted him” (Phil. 2: 9), and “crowned him with glory and honour” (Heb. 2: 7), and you will be brought into glorious nearness and relationship with that One.

My desire in this passage is to bring out the glory of the gospel as seen in all that God has done. Here we have a young man, and his actions in asking for the share of the property that falls to him said that his father was dead to him. If you read the footnote to “what he was possessed of” it says, 'what they had to live on,' as 'substance'. We were talking a little earlier today as to what God provides, for He provides for all our needs. The danger is that what He provides becomes the object, and not the Giver. I feel that in my own life; what it is that may fill my time and draw my attention away from the Giver of all good, may have no hold on you or be of any interest to you, and what you have may be of no interest to me; it is God's wonderful provision for us. What He provides and always will provide, whatever our circumstances are, may be what draws our attention away from the One who gave it. That means we are getting into a half dead state. I suppose it would be a good example of the parable of the good Samaritan. Beloved, we begin to move away from the wonder, joy and blessing of the glad tidings.

God will provide; God will bless; God will bring us through: there

is no shadow of a doubt on that. The question is whether I seek that He brings me through according to what I want, or will be satisfied with what He provides. That is the challenge to me more than anyone here. That is what I thought to bring out simply here. Here was a young man, and he had taken no account in figure of God, the One who had provided for him. He had been set in the very best place. You think of Adam and Eve set in the garden of Eden; yet they believed God had held some good thing back. That was the serpent's insidiousness work, for they fell to his subtle wiles and believed him rather than God. I know that in my own heart; I believe I know better what I *want*, but the truth is God knows infinitely better what I *need*. Not what I want, but what I need. How gentle the father is here; he gave; even though the son had pretty much said to him he was dead to him; he gave what fell to him. Soon it was gone. Beloved, it does not last; if you get out of the Father's presence there can be no satisfaction. Satisfaction is alone to be found with the Father. The younger son comes to himself; that, I believe, is repentance; as the light shines in and reveals what you are, you realise that there is only one place where true satisfaction and joy is found, and that is as bowing to the will of Another, bowing to the Father's will. The son arose and went to the father; what did he find there? Did he find retribution? No, he found there the father's love. You too can find that - how rich and full the gospel is. As soon as you move in the way of repentance, as soon as your heart turns towards God, God is there, the Father is there, and He is there in wonderful compassion. What joy and delight are in His heart as He finds one who was dead, one who was lost. He finds now that that one is seeking Him out, and seeking the blessings that He delights to give so freely.

I remember a story that I read and it was of a father and his daughter who, reaching a certain age, decided she knew better and went off to another city. Every day the father looked out the window for her return. She went to the city and soon became very much like this younger son, she fell into gross immorality, became much in need and want, but could find no satisfaction. She feared returning home, because of what her father would think. In the end she reached such dire straits that she knew that the only thing she could do was to go and throw herself at the mercy of her father. Every day he had looked out the window for his daughter's return. There was no retribution or judgment when she returned, for he received her with the love of a father that was unchanged. How much greater a Holy Father's love, as the living appeal of the gospel reaches you and you turn again and find

the Father's love, the love of a Holy Father who has in mind only the best for you and has provided the answer for you. It is the best robe; not any robe will do, only Christ. The best robe speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ in all His worth, that is the robe that the Father provides so that you are suitable for His house: Christ Himself. Think of the ring, the seal of love, that unbroken ring, it would speak of the sealing of the Holy Spirit.

Have you received the precious gift of the Spirit? Ask the Father, for He would freely have you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, the One who makes you suitable, fit for the presence of the Father's house. As set free, you can enter into the merriment, the joy and the dancing that belongs in the Father's house. Dead? No, alive. Lost? No, found. That is the portion that the gospel offers, that God offers to you now, to find your place amongst those that love Him and whom He loves, a love unchanged, unfailing, unceasing. Beloved that is what the gospel offers, and it is for the Father's delight, maintained and kept even in the scene in which we find ourselves as being shod with the Father's own provision, sandals for our feet. We are kept in this scene, but belonging in the Father's house, belonging amongst those that love the Lord Jesus. That is why we have the precious privilege of knowing what it is to be part of that glorious vessel which is for Christ Himself, His assembly, those with whom we can know the joy, the merriment, the liberty of the Father's house and as one we can be together and enter into it. What do we eat there, what are we appropriating, what are we partaking of? The fatted calf, Christ Himself, that glorious One, so that we are formed like Him. What wonderful blessings, beloved, not dead, not lost, but living and found.

May it be the portion of each and every one of us. For His Name's sake.

Sunbury

28th March 2021

CHANGING AND CHANGELESS

Jim T Brown

Genesis 22: 14

Joshua 4: 8 to “had spoken”, v 9

Judges 15: 18-19

We spoke last night after the prayer meeting about the rapidity with which the Lord Jesus can effect change in us. When He comes at the rapture, what changes will take place in the dead and the living. The dead in Christ, millions and millions of them down from Abel, all bought by the precious blood, will be raised in glory and incorruptibility. But the living too, those who are His, will be changed. These frail, mortal bodies of ours, will put on immortality. Think of the swiftness of it all: “in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye”, 1 Cor 15: 52! What mighty, irresistible divine power will effect it all. Those who have been in their graves, some for thousands of years, will for a brief moment, stand on the earth, such is the power of resurrection. What a triumph! Who else could do that but the One of whom we sang in our hymn, “the blest incarnate Word” (Hymn 11)?

How glorious a Person He is! It should really lay hold of our souls, that we are connected with a blessed Man who is able to effect such change. We live in a time of change, but when we are changed at the rapture, we are ushered into a scene that is changeless, which never can be affected by death again. Can we better appreciate what immortality means? A deathless, ageless condition! How miniscule is man's tiny span, but we are to be changed into a condition that death can never touch; it defies comprehension. It fills my heart with wonder and appreciation that I am destined to have a condition that is immortal, and that we shall forever dwell in a timeless, unchanging sphere. Not only that but we will be like Christ. When we see Him, we will be like Him; how wonderful that is! This body of humiliation will be transformed into conformity to His body of glory. We have a sorrowing family among us here, as bereaved - and indeed we all sorrow, but what a comfort that the power of death has been broken as a consequence of the work of Christ, and this blessed prospect is before us. Whatever may intervene in our circumstances or in our lives, we have the assurance that all is well.

So we live in conditions of change but there are certain things for the believer which never change. The Lord Jesus never changes:

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and to the ages to come”, Heb 13: 8. We have an anchor for our souls. These three scriptures I have touched on often affect me because they refer to things, though spoken about and experienced in Old Testament times, which reach on in their bearing and fulness to the present day. They are still as current as the time to which these verses refer. “Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh; as it is said at the present day, On the mount of Jehovah will be provided”. So that whatever our need in this changing world, it can be met by the Lord Jesus as we look upwards to “the mount of Jehovah”. Our hymn touched on it:

Our hearts are led to Him above,
And we with Thee are blessed.

Colossians tells us to have our minds on the things which are above, and thus to elevate our sights, chap 3: 2. The mount of Jehovah suggests a sphere of heavenly blessing and divine resource; that is where Jesus is. What comfort and satisfaction are there. If we need food, spiritual food, we find it in Jesus. He is the Bread of life, and he that comes to Him shall never hunger, John 6: 35. If it is consolation we seek, and how much we need it currently, we find it in Jesus, our great High Priest, who is fully able to sympathise with our infirmities as having been tempted in all things in like manner, though sin apart, Heb 4: 15. How blessed and plentiful the resource we find in Jesus. But at what a cost. These words, so well-known to us, can hardly be taken in: “Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slaughter his son”, v 10. Isaac, of course, was spared: what a comfort for Abraham that must have been. Yet God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all (Rom 8: 32), that these blessed things might be made available to us. What it meant to the Lord Jesus! What it meant to the Father! We had reference in our hymn to the blessed relationship which existed between the Father and the Son. Oh, the affections of the Father for Jesus! Think of the Father's feelings as He saw those wicked men drive the nails into the hands and the feet of the Lord Jesus. Think of what it meant to the Father as that soldier pierced His side with a spear. Think of what it meant to God to be without the Lord Jesus during these three days and three nights when He lay in the heart of the earth. So what divine expenditure there has been that these blessed things should be made available to us, but there it is, “as it is said at the present day, On the mount of Jehovah will be provided”. Whatever our need, we will find it met in Jesus. His sympathies are as real as when He was on His pathway here, though He is now in heaven.

What a comfort that is.

When we come to Joshua and the crossing of the Jordan, what a scene of victory unfolds. At the Red Sea, Israel were brought to believe in a God who would deliver them from Egypt and bring them to Himself. How wonderful that is. The Lord Jesus has died for our sins to deliver us out of this present evil world; we can sing redemption's songs. But the crossing of the Jordan connects us with a heavenly land. How very fine to think of that. There are two remarkable aspects. First, twelve stones are taken up from the bed of the Jordan, by divine prescription, from the place where the priests' feet stood firm, and laid down in the lodging place on the other side - glorious testimony to Christ's triumph over death. But then, what Joshua himself did is worthy of note. We might say it was really his own exercise: "twelve stones did Joshua set up in the midst of the Jordan". It was as if, when he saw the ark of the covenant and the flowing waters retreat irresistibly before it, his impression, typically, of the mighty power of Christ in annulling death and raising us up in life with Him was so great that he placed these stones in the bed of the Jordan. And they are there to this day. How very fine that is. Right to the end of his pathway, Joshua would have that reminiscence that the stones that he had placed in the Jordan were still there. For us, it would be a perpetual current remembrance of the power of Christ in annulling him that has the might of death, and indeed that death itself has been annulled. For the believer in Jesus, faith asserts that death has been abolished. I suppose the casual observer, even the next day, would look at the Jordan and would see no difference. The waters had come back again; it would seem as if nothing had happened. And, to the world, I suppose, believers are in that sense a bit mysterious, men being unable to comprehend why they have no fear of death, baffled by the certainty they have that the power of death has been conquered by Jesus. What comfort for our loved ones who are sorrowing at this time that death has, for faith, been abolished. Our dear brother is with Christ, and what a day it shall be when the Lord comes and that body of his, weak and feeble though it was in latter days, will be raised incorruptible. He is with Christ actually; his spirit is with Christ; he is with Him whom he loved! He is absent from the body, present with the Lord. He awaits that final, perfecting divine act, when the Lord comes and he is clothed with a body of glory like Christ's own.

Well, the stones "are there to this day". Our brother knew the certainty of that. The believer reaches the end of his life with the

unfailing assurance that the death and resurrection of Jesus for ever ensures that the power of death has been broken. What a comfort for us all.

Finally, in Judges, we have this reference to Samson. Sometimes we get a little jaded and weary; we may even seek to do things for the Lord, and yet become a bit disconcerted and discouraged if there is no obvious immediate outcome. And here was Samson, just an ordinary person like you and me in one sense, although distinctively the subject of divine workmanship and prominence in another. And here he was, taking issue with the circumstances in which he found himself after a mighty exploit. Effectively he was saying to God, 'Are things really to end like this?'. He says here, "and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?". But our God does not operate in such a way. He is the God of all encouragement, 2 Cor 1: 3. So God clave the hollow rock. Think of God's solicitude and care for His own. In Exodus 17, Moses was instructed to strike the rock with his staff, alluding to the sufferings of Jesus in order that the Holy Spirit should come, but this scripture brings in more the side of God's compassion for His own. God clave it. Think of God coming so closely into Samson's circumstances to cleave the hollow rock in order that Samson's thirst might be appeased. What a God we have!

In 1 Corinthians 10, we learn that "they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them: (now the rock was the Christ)", v 4. Think of the Lord Jesus following us in our Christian pathways, meeting our needs, refreshing our spirits. The rock followed them: the weakest, the most infirm among them, would benefit from the following rock. These blessed divine resources are available in undiminished supply today. It says, "Therefore its name was called En-hakkore", or, as the note says, 'the caller's spring'. Thus we can call on that heavenly spring, whatever the need. When we feel down or weak or in need of consolation, we can call on that resource.

Well, these things are very affecting. We live in a changing world but there are certain things made available to us which are changeless. As we look upwards, we see Christ there, seated at God's right hand, and able to meet our every circumstance. His triumph over death was complete, and its efficacy remains. We have the abiding testimony to His victory in these stones in the midst of the Jordan, which "are there to this day". And then we have the caller's spring. At any moment of our day, any time of our lives, we can express ourselves to

God, to Christ, to the Holy Spirit, and ask for a fresh supply to satisfy our thirst and meet our need. What an encouragement for us all in this gathering at the present time.

For His Name's sake.

Word in meeting for ministry in Edinburgh

13th July 2021