

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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GATHERING TOGETHER

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JB I It is very evident as coming together today that it is something that many have looked forward to - to be able to meet one another again and gather again together in this way. I am sure the Lord would bless the desires of the dear brethren to do that.

These scriptures speak of gathering, the basis for gathering, and the responsibilities involved, and as fulfilling those responsibilities, the great blessing that flows from gathering in exercise before the Lord. In the first passage, we read of one of the reasons why the Lord Jesus has died. We read what Caiaphas said, his motives exposed no doubt for what they were, but as we have been taught, what is added by the Holy Spirit is specially to be noted. The Lord Jesus "was going to die for the nation; and not for the nation only, but that he should also gather together into one the children of God who were scattered abroad". It is a comfort to know that John writes for the very day we are in, the day in which there is and has been grievous scattering. I wondered if we could enquire together as to how gathering comes about instead of scattering and in spite of scattering. We see that the death of Christ and gathering in appreciation of the light of it is essential to blessing and enjoyment of the privilege of being children of God. The Lord Jesus is the gathering point, and He is the Gatherer too.

We see that in the passage read in Luke's gospel. There was a poor state of things. What can we say of the present day anything other than that there is a poor state of things in Christendom affecting us all! But the Lord Jesus is intent to recover, intent to revive. You see His own movements here in relation to two who were going away. He listens to them and hears what they have to say, He hears their complaints, hears their despair and He gives an answer; gives a remarkable answer! He draws attention to His suffering, "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?". I believe we should take a note of that. The pathway is not easy, it involves suffering, the testimony is going through until the Lord comes as demonstrating

suffering, suffering indeed for Him and with Him. In Romans the Holy Spirit Himself witnesses “that we are children of God ... if indeed we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him”, chap 8: 16,17. We see that as the Lord Jesus proceeds in speaking with these dear souls that their eyes are opened. O that many of us should have our eyes opened, opened as to who He is and what He would lead us into! As they respond to that they returned, returned to Jerusalem. Who did they go to there? It says, “they found the eleven, and those with them, gathered together, saying, The Lord is indeed risen and has appeared to Simon”. The Lord comes into view, the Lord is recognised, the Lord becomes the centre, the centre of that company, the centre of that gathering. As a result of that conditions are such that He comes into their midst, “And as they were saying these things, he himself stood in their midst, and says to them, Peace be unto you”.

That leads on to what we read of in Matthew 18; that is, the responsibility on our side is to gather unto His Name. It would be good to enquire together what that means. The fact that it is “unto my name” means that He is not actually present. The gathering here is the result of being exercised and deliberate that there should be conditions to which He can come.

In John's epistle we see that the result of coming under His rule and recognising what is due to Him as Lord is that we come into the enjoyment of the Father's love. The Father's love is given to us “that we should be called the children of God”. The thought is “children of God” rather than “child of God” and so appreciated as being together. What a privilege to be together and experience that the Father loves us in the same way that He loves His beloved Son!

In Psalm 133 we see that it is at the end of the songs of degrees that there is cause for saying, “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity”. It is pleasant to us, but it is also good in God's sight. We see at the end of that psalm that Jehovah commands the blessing, “life for evermore”. Think of how as subservient to His will blessing comes in!

NJH It lies behind the exercise for gathering today. I was thinking of Christ in type; He rejoiced; He came “with rejoicing, bearing his sheaves”, Ps 126: 6. There is something in the heart of Christ that is the principle of gathering starting off; is that right?

JB Very good;, so I think the Lord would be rejoicing to see the

saints coming today with desire.

NJH Speaking simply of even our normal fellowship meetings we had, we have far more brethren today - so it is the burning desire in every heart to the principle of gathering.

JB Yes, to see that it was in His mind as He died, it was in His mind that there should be a gathering, gathering indeed of those "scattered abroad". We are in a day of much scattering. We feel as to those that have been lost, feel as to those that have gone away, but there is provision in the death of Christ that there should be a gathering. May we be gathered in that sense.

WMP In referring to the Lord Jesus Himself as the gathering point were you thinking of the next chapter, John 12, "I, if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all to me", v 32?

JB Yes, I am glad you draw attention to that: "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out: and I, if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all to me. But this he said signifying by what death he was about to die", v 31-33.

WMP There is other teaching in this gospel that He is going out of this world; so we gather on that principle do we, that we are going out of the world: we are not of it?

JB Yes, I am sure of that, that He has died that we should follow Him.

WMP That is how that gospel finishes, "Follow thou me", chap 21: 22.

TRC I know it is in the negative sense but the Lord says, "how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings", Matt 23: 37. Can you see the feelings of Christ in relation to His own, that as gathered the Lord's affections are behind it, and as we are gathered we find we are in an area of affection?

JB Yes, I am glad you draw attention to the Lord's own feelings. He had feelings in relation to those who did not want Him, those who would not be gathered, but His desire was to gather them. We should be governed by the feelings that are His feelings that in a world where He is rejected, not wanted, we should meet His desires to be gathered by Himself.

JCG The Lord in His prayer to the Father in John 17 says, "that they may be all one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee", v 21. The

greatness of the gathering is that there should be oneness. Do you think that despite the evident outward side of scattering, like small numbers available in different parts of the world, the Lord is drawing attention to the oneness of the assembly that we should be gathered together in view of one assembly; that is what is in the Lord's mind for rapture, is it?

JB Yes, it is good to speak of oneness, "that they may be one, as we are one", v 22. What a standard! What a lovely scene! Think of how the Lord Jesus speaks of His own desire that they should be so; it should be demonstrated, should be seen.

PAG Could you say something more about "together"? It would have been enough to say 'gather into one the children of God' but it says "gather together into one".

JB I would like you to say something about that. The word "together" is so often seen in scripture. Do you have something in mind?

PAG Does "together" suggest we have a link with one another? The death of Christ removes the things that would make us selfish and individualistic and brings us together, and one of the links we have is that we have a common object, but another link is that we have the gift of the Holy Spirit.

JB Yes, that is good; so we are "baptised into one body", 1 Cor 12: 13. The Holy Spirit is the power for bringing in oneness. The death of Christ removes everything that would cause us to be set apart as dealing with the mind of man and the will of man, and what is positive is seen in the love of the Christ and in the work of the Holy Spirit to bring us together.

AMB This is really a comment that the Spirit makes. John the writer quotes what Caiaphas says until verse 50, and then what follows is really the Spirit's comment, do you think?

JB I was thinking that and really it is special that John's hand is guided by the Holy Spirit Himself to show this aspect of the death of Christ and the fruit from it, the basis for being brought together as one.

AMB Would you say more as to what is in your mind as to the death of Christ providing the basis? Paul has referred to the removal of what would keep us apart, and then there is more to it than that, I am sure.

JB My exercise was to seek help of the brethren as to what this

would mean for us. As contemplating the death of the Lord Jesus what was in His mind as going into death was not only that our sins individually should be dealt with but that there should be a gathering in oneness; that was His objective also.

AMB Having died, He is now risen and living, He is the object of every heart that loves Him; that gives a great basis for being together, shared love for the Lord Jesus.

DAB Have you any thought why these scriptures refer to us as children of God?

JB Is it as born of God? You help us.

DAB I am glad you say that; I think being the children of God is more of a privilege than we may realise. It is a mark of God's love according to the passage we read, we are called to be His children and He has imparted His nature to us. It must be a very distressing thing to God that members of His family are scattered, so much so that He has been prepared to give His Son to gather them together.

JB I think that is a good way of putting it. As children of God we are not individual units but are brought into the family. It has been said that the term "children of God" is given distinctively to the saints of this dispensation. We will not be referred to as children in eternity. Is that right?

DAB Yes, but we will have the divine nature and we will be gathered too! Even naturally speaking it is a very dishonouring thing which a father would feel if his family were at odds with each other and cannot go on together. God feels that so much that He has given His only Son that they might be gathered.

JB What it has cost Him that He should give His beloved Son, that He should die so that we may come into the appreciation of the privilege of belonging to Him and deriving from Him as His lovable family.

NCMcK So one other aspect of the death of Christ is that these links are not on a natural basis. They are on a spiritual basis because the death of Christ is the divide between these; born not "of flesh's will, nor of man's will, but of God", John 1: 13. That introduces us into the spiritual side of things does it not; spiritual bonds?

JB I am glad you have drawn attention to the beginning of John's gospel showing that the Lord Jesus "came to his own, and his own received him not" (chap 1: 11), but there were those who received Him,

and who believed on His Name. May we be amongst them, that we may come into the enjoyment of that, not of "flesh's will, nor of man's will". All that has gone in the death of Christ, and He has laid the basis for what is new and living in our relationships together, in our appreciation of the Father's love for us as His family.

DCB Do we get some of the practical application of it as we gather at the Lord's supper? In a certain wilderness way we are children of God, but then we gather together and the gathering point for us are the emblems before us, bringing to our minds and affections the death of the Lord Jesus. We are drawn practically together, our eyes are focused, our minds and thoughts are focused on the loaf and the cup, and therefore there is a practical enjoyment of what it is to be gathered together into one.

JB1 I think that is right. What a privilege to come together with a common Object, the Lord Jesus Himself - our hearts moved as appreciating that He has died. There are the emblems separated from one another, speaking of His death and there is a common bond as finding in Him the focus of affection.

WMP Mr James Taylor often said that when we gather at the Supper we also gather to 'meet the brethren' (eg vol 7 p137), we consider one another as we assemble. I think what has been said is helpful in that regard, because these are persons with whom we have a bond and we have affection.

JB1 I think it is important that you say that, that we are there early enough to see one another, and to see one another come in with a purpose of heart to make much of Christ. We are children of God with a bond, a bond of affection for Him.

PAG The death of Christ involved the cross and the shedding of His blood and it says in Ephesians 2, "now in Christ Jesus ye who once were afar off are become nigh by the blood of the Christ", v 13. So the blood is the answer to the requirements of God's righteousness; but then it says further down "and might reconcile both in one body to God by the cross, having by it slain the enmity" (v 16); the cross answers to the requirements of His holiness. The death of Christ provides a basis that meets God's righteousness and answers to His holiness, and it is a good thing then for us to align ourselves with that and to be together recognising that God is drawing us together on a righteous basis.

JB1 That is helpful - so that there are two matters, His righteousness

and His holiness. We can see reconciliation is not bridging the distance - it is removing everything that caused the distance. So God's holy nature is revealed.

PAG It is honouring to God that we should be together. He has given His own Son and His Son has died and shed His precious blood and the scripture says, "and that the death of the cross", Phil 2: 8. Surely it is honouring to God as well as a testimony that we should be together.

JB Yes, the testimony is seeing the saints together as one; it is a testimony to the world.

DAB God has gone to remarkable lengths in this time in which we are to secure this end. I was thinking of Israel - you might say that it was a miracle that the twelve tribes stayed together as long as they did, but they were bound by natural affinity. But in order to maintain this togetherness among those whose affinity is with God Himself He has brought in the death of His Son, His blood, His cross and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

JB Yes, so as we come into the gain of that, it involves the Holy Spirit, One who would bring us into the enjoyment of being together and being one.

DAB I was thinking when our brother quoted, "that they may be one, as we", that God has responded to that by giving His Spirit. And as His Spirit is made way for there is a unity that the Lord desired. But that is a gift that is special to the present time and is in pursuit of a more exalted thought of unity than God has ever pursued in the past.

JB Yes. What is meant by, "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God", Rom 8: 16?

DAB I was reflecting that a believer has the divine nature; God does not seem to rest with that, but that truth is reinforced firstly by the work of Christ and then, not only by the gift of the Spirit, but by the witness of the Spirit. Would you say these things all underlie one another, making a multi layered bond between the believer and God, but also between the members of the Christian company?

JB "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit". He bears witness with us so that there is a living bond between the Holy Spirit and the saints as coming into the enjoyment of this wonderful relationship together.

DAB And those passages in Romans 8 bring out the idea of children

of God being a matter of privilege. We tend to think of it as a testimonial responsibility, which it is, but in that passage in Romans 8, he speaks about “the liberty of the glory of the children of God” (v 21), and of the privilege of that relationship.

NJH In Luke 24 the Lord “having taken the bread, he blessed, and having broken it gave it to them”. It does not say they partook of it, but did it not mean that what impressed them was they were the same order as Christ, and therefore brought them back to the company immediately, “the same hour”?

JBH Yes; it says, “having broken it, gave it to them”; it produced a movement as their eyes were opened. I was thinking that as the Lord comes into this matter of recovery drawing attention to His sufferings, to His death, our eyes are opened to see. The passage we read later in John's epistle says, “See what love the Father has given to us”. We feel the need that all of us might be revived, and young ones appreciate and come into the experience of having our eyes opened - that there should be movement, movement back as necessary to the company where the Lord is loved and where the Lord is owned.

NJH The Lord was never rebellious; He was obedient to everything from the hand of His Father. But we have impressions individually and find that we realise we are of the same order of Christ and therefore it behoves us to be obedient to the coming together of the saints; is that right?

JBH Yes, it is; it is His commandment, and we are privileged to address ourselves to obey, but what blessing comes as we are gathered to where the Lord is owned. I wondered if the emphasis in this passage is that there were those who were gathered and those with them, saying, “**The Lord** is indeed risen and has appeared to Simon”: “The Lord”! So the enjoyment of privilege that we are speaking about, the privilege of knowing what it is to be children of God, must be as recognising the Lord's authority.

ARH The Lord did not command them to return to Jerusalem; He did not tell them to go back to Jerusalem: they did it themselves! Is it spiritual instincts?

JBH How wonderful that the Lord should work that way so that there was something that came out in them to move spontaneously, quickly, back to the company where the Lord was owned.

ARH I feel how much it is needed that something should touch your

heart and you feel that you need the brethren.

JBI Yes, there was a spring in their step; they found the eleven and those with them gathered together; “And rising up the same hour, they returned to Jerusalem”. There was no delay, no dithering; it was a quickening with them, do you think? And that is what the Lord would seek in serving us as the One who would gather us, the One who is the gathering Centre and the One who is the gathering power.

DAB We get the point our brother is making in John's gospel too. The Lord sent a message with Mary; He did not tell her to tell them to gather, but they did! Where they were we do not know, maybe all over the city, but the effect of the message and the prospect that the Lord was risen gathered them. In a sense He gave Mary the easier task to find the eleven in the city whereas He devoted half the day to reaching out to these two. He did not send anyone after them, did He? He spent the large part of the resurrection day on this activity that you are speaking about.

JBI So in John's gospel it is not 'their midst'; it is “the midst”. There was a company there that was already devoted in affection for Him and speaking of what is centred in Him as speaking of the assembly.

JTB In Luke we have the reference, “And when the hour was come, he placed himself at table” with them, (chap 22: 14); does that suggest there was an element of preparedness among the others, the apostles, an alertness to what the Lord's movements were, really as having followed the man with the pitcher of water, do you think?

JBI So that it involved deliberateness and affection and responsibility as providing for what was for Himself.

JTB I was touched by, “we ... have all been given to drink of one Spirit”, (1 Cor 12: 13); we all derive from that common source in that sense of satisfaction and intuition as to what is pleasing to the Lord.

JBI Yes, that is very helpful to bring that in, one Spirit, so that we see that it is a wonderful resource for bringing in the divine pleasure, in bringing it about in the family, do you think?

PAG You drew attention to the Lord's word “ought not the Christ to have suffered these things” in your opening remarks; what did you have in mind about that?

JBI Is it not true that the testimony in the time which we are in is carried through in the preparedness to suffer? The assembly is the

Lamb's wife, she is prepared to suffer with Him.

PAG Occupation with the sufferings of Christ has a refining effect on the soul of the believer, and it also brings perspective. These dear believers got a different perspective when Christ spoke to them of His sufferings. Do you think that if we are exercised about recovery, as we are and we should be, if we are occupied with the sufferings of Christ then if we come into contact with someone who has maybe got away we will have something useful to say to them? We will not have something critical to say, or complaining, but will convey some impression of Christ. It has such a living effect.

JBI I am glad you draw attention to that, rather than our complaining about what seems to be disadvantage. We see that the Lord Jesus would draw attention to the fact that it is a suffering company - a company that loves Him so much that she is prepared to bear His reproach, and that it is worthwhile! Am I prepared, as coming to the Supper, to bear the reproach of honouring Him publicly while having in view that the saints as loyal to Him and suffering with Him will be glorified with Him?

TRC The two that returned brought something into the company that was not there before. Everyone is needed, everyone has experience with divine Persons, and as we gather together every saint is needed in our local companies.

JBI So that everyone is a contributor as based on the vitality of experience, the vitality that comes from seeing, having our eyes opened as to what the Lord is doing in His assembly.

WMP There are references to "himself" in these passages. These two had received a testimony that the Lord was risen, but "Jesus himself", and then verse 36, "he himself"; what would you say about that? Do we have to have that intimate connection with Christ?

JBI He was prepared Himself to draw nigh to those who were going away. It is important to see that He recovers to Himself; that link with Him motivating us to find fellow believers as those who also find in Himself the joy of what is divinely pleasurable.

DCB Also "he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself". Does that show the importance of the teaching, of divine teaching if we are to gather together, and also of what is prophetic?

JBI So as reading the Scriptures together great fruit comes from being engaged with Himself. The Lord Jesus becomes the Centre from cover to cover as we read the Scriptures, do you think?

DCB Yes. It is a very interesting passage in the detail of it. The Lord goes with them; we might think He could have introduced Himself immediately, but He gives them experience walking with them, and opening up the Scriptures to them before the point comes in which is made known to them. I wondered if we have got to have that experience, an experience with Him, and a process with Him, to be available so that we would be gathered together and responding as these persons were.

JBI Yes, such is His love that He would engage us with Himself in reading the Old Testament as well as the New! The Holy Spirit would engage us with the Lord Jesus so that we might appreciate Him personally. The Lord Jesus would recover us to Himself. The accumulation of this results in a company to which He can come.

JCG Do you think that there is evidence of the need for strengthening of faith or revival of the faith? They were told really that the Lord had risen and that He is living, "And some of those with us went to the sepulchre, and found it so", but they did not believe it until the Lord personally introduced Himself to them. I was thinking of what you said earlier about those that were scattered, revival of faith lies at the basis of recovery, acceptance as has been said of the death of Christ, and through faith and where He is in glory now.

JBI I think it is important what you say, that we may have faith, faith to see forward, and faith to see what the Lord is doing for Himself in gathering to Himself, that there should be a company that is according to the character of God.

AMB In relation to what has been said of the importance of the Scriptures, and the Lord opening them up to these two, we are very privileged in having meetings like this, reading meetings, not widely known among believers generally, but the Scriptures can be opened up by the Spirit and with the Lord as Teacher. Do you think also as we accept the teaching and it becomes food to us that helps us to have Jesus as our Lord: we accept His authority? You have been bringing that before us in relation to verse 34, "The Lord is indeed risen". I was just thinking of how important it is to be governed in our thoughts and our affections by the teaching of Scripture, and in willing and happy

subjection to Jesus as Lord.

JB I think it is important that you draw attention to that - it is a real privilege to come together for a reading. It is not possible if there are arguments about the truth. We should seek to enquire as to where the Lord Jesus is in every Scripture, and be together in it, and seek help of the Holy Spirit that there should be fruitful enquiry together. It needs conditions for that, does it not? The Lord's authority must be recognised, and we need to be ruled by His authority and subject to Him, subject to the revelation of the truth, and to be together in that and make room for the Holy Spirit.

NCMcK It is striking too in verse 33 it is, "found the eleven"; it is an incomplete number, an acknowledgement of a measure of breakdown that had come in, and yet they are able still to enjoy this, are they not?

JB You are thinking of the number eleven. It was made up to twelve in the Acts, chap 1: 26. What you have in mind is helpful. We are in a broken day. Is that what you are thinking?

NCMcK I was thinking that; it is clear and it is helpful the Lord is the gathering point, but now on our side one of the grounds of our gathering is separation from iniquity, and that involves a broken day; it involves that we have to separate from what is not true to the Lord.

JB Yes. I think that leads us on to the passage in Matthew, that is gathering unto His Name. As taking what we have been reading of in Luke 24, that Christ as Lord was predominant in their affections, gathered unto His Name means there is a desire to provide conditions to which He can come, and that must involve separation as calling upon His Name.

DAB Could that verse in Matthew be regarded as an incentive to the work of recovery? I was thinking about the brother who has been offended going to visit to gain his brother, and he might take someone else with him. And they could say to the brother, 'Look if we were two or three gathered to the name of the Lord He would be there'; that would be the basis on which they could appeal to gain Him, would you say?

JB Yes; in these matters that exercise us it is in view of bringing about togetherness on a basis that the Lord can come to.

DAB I do not want to be negative at all but you can imagine if those that go fail to gain their brother, and he will not hear the assembly, they would say, 'The Lord is coming, and we did not gain our brother; we

were not able to gain him, and we shall meet the Lord and he will not be there'. These things work out very simply to be exercised on this line.

JB So it is “thy brother”! The brother would speak of belonging to the family, and a desire to recover is that the appreciation of the family should be known, conditions to which the Lord can come, and be honoured there.

PAG It has been said in ministry that gaining your brother might take years, but it would always be the attitude of your mind. You might say, 'Well, we have tried once or twice and it has not worked'; well, keep trying!

JB It requires patience, the long patience of God. It is a very practical exercise. We should not write one another off.

PAG I know of one brother who prayed for me for thirty-five years at least, and that is how long he kept on praying.

JB In the parable of the fig tree, time was given (Luke 13: 8,9); a time was given that they should be repentant in view of recovery.

NJH What has been said is testing because he remains “thy brother” even though he has sinned.

JB It is very testing as to whether love would motivate us to look for recovery, recovery on a righteous basis, the basis of repentance, but love such that it should be easy for repentance to come to light, do you think?

WMP “Again I say to you” - so the present time is in view, is it? The present circumstances of the testimony are in view.

JB “Again I say to you”; I would like to understand a little more what you are indicating there. Our brother is speaking about continuing exercise for recovery, but what have you in mind in this?

WMP The Lord is adding; He is adding something in view of the present time; He is looking forward to what would arise in the testimony: many companies claim verse 20 as the basis for their gatherings.

JB Does what would arise underlie His promise? “For where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Does it bring out the affections of the Lord Jesus that He is prepared to say, “Again I say to you”?

WMP Help us: what do these words mean; “gathered together unto

my name”; what does that entail?

JBI I would be glad of the brethren's help. Gathered unto His Name means I am honouring that Name. The Name is given in heaven, the place where He is.

DAB Believers who name His Name may imply that He is already identified with them. I might say in relation to someone else's children, 'Would your father let you do that?'. That is using the father's name, as if he himself was there. So if we gather to the Lord's name - in view of His coming, we are professing that there are conditions which honour Him.

JBI It is clearly associated with providing conditions where evil is repelled.

DAB If a company professes His Name, and He were to come, His presence would measure their profession; if it fell short that would become apparent to Him. So the Lord envisages that there would be conditions there with which He could readily be identified.

JBI I was thinking that “there am I in the midst of them” is His committal to where there are conditions that are pleasing to Him, is that what is in mind?

NJH It is to the name of the Lord; it is a continuous maintenance, not having done it once, but who “names the name of the Lord” in 2 Timothy days (chap 2: 19) means that we personally have to be in keeping with that.

JBI Well, that is a test: naming the name of the Lord Jesus.

TWL Would it be right to say that where these persons are there is a testimony to the name before the Lord moves, and because of that He has the liberty to move. Where they are gathered together to His Name; it is very interesting the way it is put, “For where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I”, not 'there I will be'. It is not exactly that He comes and that is the testimony, but the testimony is already established by those who have gathered to His Name and the Lord has the liberty to come there. Does that fit in with what you have in mind?

JBI I think that is good, there is that which is pleasing to Him, pleasing to Him as seen in those who honour His Name.

TWL It is a wonderful thing to provide the conditions where love has

liberty.

JB1 Yes, liberty that is instigated by Himself.

TWL The Lord has the freedom, speaking very carefully, to move as He chooses because the conditions warrant it. That is what happened to these persons who gathered together “unto my name”.

JB1 It is important to see that, that where He is not honoured you cannot say He will be there.

DS Does gathering to His Name show that the personnel are of the same character as the Lord Jesus Himself? They walk here in relation to the will of God as the Lord did when He was here. The Lord speaks of them as not being ashamed of such people, they are His brethren, the Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one, (Heb 2: 11); they are a separate people. So that walking here in the same character as Christ they are gathering to that Name and He is glad to come in amongst a company who are of the same character and mind as He is.

JB1 That is very good; so He is the Sanctifier. So that scripture in Hebrews says, “he is not ashamed”, and we trace it back to His own faithfulness with us that we should be set apart and that we should be a company that is like Him.

The side of realised, appreciated privilege comes about where conditions are existing where the Lord's authority is recognised and the principles of fellowship established. We get fellowship and the issues of fellowship at the beginning of John's epistle, and later in chapter 3 we have, “See what love the Father has given to us”. As taking up responsibility in relation to the Lord Jesus and His rights we come into an appreciation of the Father's intention for us, the Father's love for us, “See what love the Father has given to us”. As coming into a circle of affections amongst the saints we trace all back to the Father's love.

TRC That is very fine, not only are we brought into that position but there is a practical answer to it and a testimony that we are children of God.

JB1 It is the love of the Father, the love of the Father for the Lord Jesus, and He sees the saints as what is formed of the Lord Jesus Himself.

NJH You are not trying to better the world; it says, “every one that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as *he* is pure”.

JBI So there is no point in trying to better the world. It knew Him not; it is given up! It is alien. But over against it there is that which is so pleasing to the Father, a loveable company, a loving company formed as Christ.

PAG Is it encouraging then that fellowship involves how we are to be together, but privilege involves how we are to be together with God. Attending to the principles of the fellowship makes way for a blessing as it says, "the world knew him not" (John 1: 10); the world does not even know it; it does not recognise it and it cannot recognise it.

JBI It is important what you are saying. You reminded us a few years back of that address of Mr Raven's, *Fellowship, Privilege and Testimony* (vol 1 p58). The appreciation of privilege is after first coming to honouring the Lord on the principles of fellowship.

PAG Yes; fellowship would be how we can be together, privilege how we can be together with God, testimony how God wants you to be together with Him! We can reach out to persons, saved and unsaved, and say that God has great things in mind for them. I am not using 'we' in any exclusive sense; believers are entitled to do that.

JBI Quite so. Think of how receiving Christ as in the beginning of John's gospel, and, believing on His Name, we have the right to be children of God, chap 1: 12. That applies to all real believers. The opportunity is there to appreciate what it is to come into the divine family.

AMB And good in God's sight. You were making remarks at the beginning as to the psalm, and you spoke of what was pleasant and good.

JBI It is very interesting the way the Psalms are written, Songs of degrees, so that Psalm 133 seems to be a conclusion of ingathering as seen in other psalms that preceded in these Songs of degrees; they are like steps upwards. In Psalm 122 it says, "I rejoiced when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of Jehovah", v 1. Is it like the expression of the children as speaking to one another; they desired to go into the house of Jehovah. "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem", v 2. Then in Psalm 132 you see David's committal to finding a place for Jehovah, "habitations for the Mighty One of Jacob". "Behold, we heard of it at Ephratah", (v 5-6), brings in others. There is a gathering together of desire for making place for Christ in the centre of our affections. But then we see in Psalm 133 what is good in the sight of

the saints, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together"; how much more so in God's sight!

AMB That is a fine summary of these songs of degrees! Beginning in Psalm 122 it says, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee", v 6. It is a test for us as to what we pray for in relation to the prosperity of what is for the Lord here.

JB I am glad you say that. I find the prayer meeting a test in that we should pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and that what is to go forward in the remaining time that is left to us should go on prosperously amongst the saints in bringing about what is pleasurable to God.

WMP As seeing what it means to divine Persons, saints gathering together on right lines and making way for the operations of the Spirit, grasping that in our own affections would it encourage us and cause us to have these right desires?

JB Yes. What we see here is the experience of the flowing down of what is precious from the Lord Jesus as the exalted Head - "the precious oil upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, upon Aaron's beard".

WMP Say more about it for our help.

JB Well, would the hem of His garments be the saints? He is up there, He is exalted, think of how He is anointed, think of what is precious upon His head, the Holy Spirit, and then there is that which is flowing from Him right down to the hem; that is us as gathered together as one whole!

DCB Is there a fragrance with this oil? There was a fragrance in the anointing oil in Exodus (chap 30: 25); it is the same at the hem of the garment as it is at the head. Everything has the same delight to the nostrils of God.

JB It comes from the same source. Think of what is delightful to God, what is going up to God, the results of the saints being gathered together in this way with true desire for Christ to be honoured and become our object.

NJH The anointing oil was not to be imitated, v 32. You may say this is from God's side, but the way it is written, "As the dew of Hermon that descendeth", is very beautiful; everything has come down from the Head, is that right?

JB Yes; there is the idea of freshness in “the dew of Hermon”; you see the dew on the grass in the morning; the next day you see the dew again; the freshness that comes from appreciating the Lord Jesus where He is.

NJH And the manna came on the dew in the wilderness, Num 11: 9.

JB Yes, very good, day by day.

NCMcK It is “for there hath Jehovah commanded the blessing”; does that link with the earlier thought as to the assembly as those walking in the light of the assembly? There is an area where blessing is now to be found, but it cannot be in line with any sectarian ground at all; it must be on assembly ground.

JB I am sure of that. It is according to God's commandment - that would involve His will, would it not? In Ephesians you get three references to the will of God; you get “the good pleasure of his will” (chap 1: 5), “the mystery of his will” (v 9) and then you get “the counsel of his own will”, v 11. We sometimes, I speak for myself, shrink back from considering the will of God. It is all in view of blessing. As we come under regulation we see that there is blessing and there is joy, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”. If we try to come together on some sort of social ground, or religious ground it will produce nothing. But if it is under the command of God, “for there hath Jehovah commanded the blessing, life for evermore”, it goes on forever.

GLASGOW

23rd April 2022

A M Brown, Linlithgow; D C Brown, Edinburgh; J T Brown, Edinburgh; D A Burr, West Norwood; N C McKay, Glasgow; T R Campbell, Glasgow; J C Gray, Bo'ness; P A Gray, Linlithgow; A R Henry, Glasgow; N J Henry, Glasgow; J B Ikin, Manchester; T W Lock, Edinburgh; W M Patterson, Glasgow; D Spinks, Bo'ness

IT IS FINISHED!

Raymond B Clark

Hebrews 10: 1-18; 9: 27-28

Contemporary history records for us that the crucifixion was nothing unusual at the time we have read about. Despite its awfulness, it was a common form of capital punishment for those that fell afoul of the Roman system. Therefore, it is quite likely that the soldiers that participated in the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus may have been assigned similar duties in the past. It is also quite plausible that those that witnessed that occasion may well have witnessed things like it before.

But, at the death of this Man, Jesus of Nazareth, events took place which would have struck them as being a lot different. What must they have thought, for example, when the sun was darkened, from what would have been around mid-day until about three o'clock in the afternoon? The whole land was covered in what must have been a very eerie darkness. In his article, 'The Sufferings of Christ', Mr Darby writes that it was 'all dark, without one ray of light even from God', Collected Writings vol 7 p169. I suppose these soldiers, too, may have been familiar with the sounds that came from the crosses; the distress, the agony. But what must they have made of the statements that came from that central cross? The Lord Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do", Luke 23: 34. They had never heard that before. The Lord makes another statement; He says, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?", Mark 15: 34. It tells us that the crowds mocked Him; they said, "he calls for Elias", v 35. And then there is a final statement towards the end, which I think and understand from Mark's gospel and Luke's gospel would have been louder than all the rest, penetrating that darkened afternoon: the Lord says, "It is finished", John 19:30. "Finished": that was not a cry of defeat or abject acceptance. It was not a cry of surrender. Dear friend, that was a cry of victory! And everything that God had desired to find in the offering of Jesus had been fulfilled to absolute perfection in Him.

In Hebrews 10 where we read, these first eighteen verses summarise that word 'finished'. It speaks throughout this epistle to these Jewish believers as to the law and the old sacrifices that were made, and they serve as a contrast to this new sacrifice. The Lord Jesus was here for the will of God and He fulfilled the will of God in

absolute perfection. That was all part of the Father's plan. You must see that the Father's plan, and the Son's obedience, go along together; they are parallel. You cannot separate them. Sometimes we use that word 'intrinsic' to describe features of Christ. I would say that would be seen here - the intrinsic quality of Christ in the Son's obedience to the Father's plan. It is like a coin; you cannot separate the two sides of a coin. You have a distinct impression on one side and you have a different feature on the other side; they go along parallel together. In the home this morning, we read about Abraham and Isaac approaching the sacrificial altar, and it says the two of them went up together, Gen 22. It speaks of the Father's plan and the Son's obedience. The Lord Jesus was here and He was "obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross", Phil 2: 8. The world had never seen a man like Jesus. It says of the Lord Jesus that, when they listened to Him, they "wondered at the words of grace which were coming out of his mouth", Luke 4: 22.

So, dear friend, are you listening? This gospel is for *you*! It is not only for us older ones, much as we need it; the gospel is for you. The Lord said when He was here, "Suffer the little children to come to me ... for of such is the kingdom of God", Mark 10: 14. The Lord Jesus loves you. There is a distance between man and God through the incoming of sin. God cannot have sin in His presence. The Bible tells us, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God", Rom 3: 23. We are all sinners; we have all done things that we should not have done, said things that we should not have said, thought thoughts that we should not have thought; that is sin, and it creates a gulf between man and God. And God presents Jesus to you, dear friend, in the gospel in order to deal completely with that sin. What a message we have! Well might we sing -

Hallelujah! what a Saviour! (Hymn 426)

Think of Him coming into this world; holy, blameless, undefiled, without sin. He went that way for you and for me. It says here in the epistle to the Hebrews that the blood of bulls and goats is incapable of taking away sins. It is a contrast, looking back to the days of old where they would offer up sacrifices to God. Think of the blood that was shed, but the sacrifices served for nothing other than this constant reminder of sin. But they also served as wonderful illustrations of the way that the Lord has gone, although in and of themselves they could not remove sin. It says at the beginning where we read that they were a shadow of the things that were to come. No repetition of a shadow could ever

make up the whole. God has provided a Man. And that was in the heart of God before all eternity, that He was going to provide a Man.

We could turn to Peter. He explains it well in 1 Peter 1: 19-20 where he says, "the blood of Christ, foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but who has been manifested at the end of times for your sakes". So even before the foundation of the world, God had a plan in mind for *you*. I remember, when I was quite a bit younger, trying to reconcile the Old Testament with the New. My interpretation, very feebly, was that God had a plan, but because of the incoming of sin, because of the fall of man, because of man's inability to keep the law, that plan failed; and so He brought in Jesus, almost like a second chance. But, if you go into scripture, nothing could be further from the truth! It was *always* in the mind of God that a Man was coming. We could go back to the book of Isaiah where it says, "he shall grow up before him as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground", chap 53: 2. Six hundred years before the incoming of Christ, Isaiah could prophesy that a Man was coming. Or we can go back further again to the Psalms. Psalm 8 says,

When I see ... the work of thy fingers,
the moon and stars, which thou hast established;
What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
and the son of man, that thou visitest him?", v 3, 4.

Or we can go back even further to the book of Genesis. Chapter 49 says,

The sceptre will not depart from Judah,
Nor the lawgiver from between his feet, v 10.

A Man was coming! - the Man of God's choice, the Man of God's purposes, the Man of His counsels.

So you come to the gospels. They start with Matthew 1, where the Lord was introduced into this world as a little Child. And it says, "and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for *he* shall save his people from their sins", v 21. You think of that incoming, in the fulness of time: God manifest in flesh, come near to you in the Person of Jesus, fulfilling the plan, the perfect plan, of the Father. Dear friend, does it not appeal to you? You think of these souls of old who made these offerings, a constant reminder of sin. The priest was to be always on his feet, entering in once a year into the holy of holies. By contrast you find here that the Lord is seated; He is seated in heaven. Why is He seated? -

because His work is complete, it is finished: that work is finished. What a gospel we can preach, of a Saviour who has died never to die again. His blood was shed. His blood will stand as witness to an eternal covenant. You think of the new covenant, and the very central basis of it being the forgiveness of sins. The blood of the Lord Jesus has been set there for you and for me, that you might put your faith and your trust in it. It says that He has "sat down in perpetuity at the right hand of God, waiting from henceforth until his enemies be set for the footstool of his feet". Dear friend, the Lord is coming back; in the meantime He waits. You might ask why the Lord is waiting. Well, dear friend, He might be waiting on you. The blood is there. The blood is on the mercy-seat. It is the ground of God's invitation to the sinner, that you might put your faith and trust in Him. One could say that the blood cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1: 7) - "all sin". You might ask if that is even your sin. Remember Paul, as he looked back upon his history and the things that he had been occupied in, and he says that he reckoned himself as being the *first of sinners*, 1 Tim 1: 15. Think of that. Paul would look upon the whole human race, all of mankind, every man that had ever sinned, as if they were to be ranked according to their disobedience and their naughtiness before God; and he would put himself right at the top, the first of sinners.

You may sometimes feel a bit like that in the gospel. Paul could say, "for this reason mercy was shown me", v 16. Dear friend, the blood is on the mercy-seat and the Lord Jesus waits for you. It says He waits until His enemies be set as the footstool of His feet. You think of the day when the Lord will come, and He will come in righteousness. You might think He is coming as a Saviour. Yes, indeed, He is coming as a Saviour, but He is coming too as Judge. This world will be judged by the Man whom God has appointed; it will be judged in absolute righteousness. You think of that day. You can read in Philippians that "at the name of Jesus every knee" shall bow, chap 2: 10. What a day that will be! Heavenly and earthly and infernal beings, and every tongue will confess that He is Lord to God the Father's glory. Even infernal beings, earthly beings, will bow before Jesus. Tyrants will bow before Jesus; make no mistake about it. The tyrants of this world will meet Him as the righteous Judge, but He sits in heaven right now waiting for you. What a Saviour we can speak of!

Finally, I would say a word as to the Spirit here. We have spoken of the Son's obedience and the Father's plan, but I add a word too as to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit bears witness to these things.

So the Trinity is occupied with the same thought towards you in the gospel. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are towards you. The Holy Spirit will write these things on your heart. He will testify to them. And He testifies to them through the living words of God. He writes these things on our heart that we might, through the reception of the Holy Spirit, have an appreciation of these things, an appreciation of the new covenant. It is that you might have an appreciation of Christ's relationship as Head over all things to the assembly, and as to the bride belonging to Him. He would speak that we might have an appreciation of the Lord's supper and entering into it. The Holy Spirit will give these things to you. The world cannot receive them. It says of the world that these things were foolishness to them. Dear friend, these things are for you. The Lord Jesus promised that the Spirit would come. He says, 'I will beg the Father, and he will give you another Comforter', John 14: 16.

And then what a note there is in these verses to end on. God says, "I will write them also in their understandings; and their sins and their lawlessnesses I will never remember any more. But where there is remission of these, there is no longer a sacrifice for sin". You think of that; how the Lord has set sin completely aside for believers. Sin has been defeated in the precious shed blood of Jesus at the cross; put your faith and trust in it, dear ones. As the psalmist could say of sins, "As far as the east is from the west", Ps 103: 12. He will never remember them any more, - never, never remember them. That is not an act of weakness: we forget things because we are weak, because we may be mentally frail, but this is a willing act of God. This is a deliberation of the grace of God, that He will not remember them any more. He will set them aside. Why does He not remember them? - because they are nailed on the cross, gone and gone for evermore. Put your faith and your trust in Jesus. Do not put it off. There is nothing, there is no other sacrifice that needs to be given, there is nothing that I could ever add to what Christ has done. It says He has sat down in perpetuity. His blood stands forever and it stands unique.

I have told this story before and I do not mind telling it again. When we were in Scotland once, we went out to a little island in the river Forth, called Inchcolm; there was an abbey there, an old monastery, which dates back to the twelfth or thirteenth century. Monks would go and live out there, isolating themselves from all creature comforts, from the rest of civilisation. Day after day they would labour over the Word. And when they felt they had sinned they would flail themselves, self-

harm themselves. They missed the point that the atoning sufferings of Christ mean that there is nothing else that I need to do to atone for my sins. It has been done in absolute totality and perfection in the blood of Jesus. There is nothing else that I can add. If I were to say that anything else could be added to my sacrifices, it would suggest that the blood of Jesus was not enough. Dear friend, it was perfect in every way. It stands supreme.

Now you might say that it talks in the Scriptures about presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice, Rom 12: 1. It talks in the Scriptures about our lips bringing the sacrifice of praise. Indeed, but that is not to attract God's mercy; rather a response to His wondrous love and grace that Christ lives in heaven as the great High Priest. He lives for you. The stone is rolled away from the tomb of Jesus. That speaks to us of the abundance of life. Christ is seated in heaven as the great High Priest. What a Saviour, dear friend.

Well, may you put your faith and your trust in Him. And may the Lord bless the word. Amen.

Aberdeen, Idaho

20th March 2022

“THE SAME”

Mike T Holland

Nehemiah 9: 5-7

Psalm 102: 25-28

Hebrews 13: 8

I have been encouraged by what has been brought before us. I was thinking of the hymn right after the one that has been referred to. Hymn 349 has often encouraged me with these words:

'Tis everlasting peace,
Sure as Jehovah's Name;
'Tis stable as His steadfast throne,
For evermore the same.

Our love is oft-times low
Our joy still ebbs and flows;
But peace with Him remains the same;
No change Jehovah knows.

We change - He changes not,
Though changing years roll by.

We often sing that hymn; and I have been thinking of this name of God, since we had it in a different form in Isaiah. In chapter 41 we get a sense of this Name. We get “I am HE” (v 4), which the note says is the same name as this: it is literally 'I, THE SAME'. That name has been before me and we have it in these scriptures. We find this name also used by Hezekiah, Isa 37: 16. We get, “the same”, as a phrase, used a large number of times really, but not as frequently as I expected as a name of God.

These references I have selected highlight what we have in that hymn. I think of what has been set before us in relation to the love of God, an aspect of God that does not change, which has been shown to us wonderfully in the Person of Jesus Christ, of whom we have read in Hebrews; it does not change in thousands of years before or thousands of years later.

In reading these verses in Nehemiah, I was thinking of how this Name comes in even before they go over a lengthy history of the people of Israel, and how very much, as that hymn says, they had changed constantly and how their love had been oft times low. That recounting of their history in chapter 9 is full of that; the last few verses specifically,

feelingly so. The history as recounted itself is interesting. What it says of the people in contrast to God is very affecting because it is very much the same as we might say of ourselves. It says in verse 35, "And they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land that thou didst set before them, neither turned they from their wicked works. Behold, we are servants this day". It highlights that, despite their unfaithfulness, God was "the Same", the same God.

We mentioned this in our readings going over that Name in Isaiah: "I am HE". We have it specifically in chapter 41: 4, "I, Jehovah, the first; and with the last, I am HE". That is the self-existent One, the One who is uncreated; He is "the Same", the same God who is spoken of here in this wonderful section. The wall has been built. Chapter 7 begins with "And it came to pass when the wall was built" (v 1), which is a really wonderful statement considering all that has gone before. Think of all the feelings expressed in the previous chapters, all the work that had gone on in those chapters and all the prayers that had gone up. "And it came to pass when the wall was built"; there was a changing world around these persons and yet God was "the Same". How encouraging that is!

When we go to the Psalm, and if we read the heading of this Psalm we get,

A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed,
and poureth out his complaint before Jehovah.

(This heading is unlike some of them where you do not get the same level of detail as you get here.) You can read of the weight of the affliction of the writer found in the prayer in this Psalm. That heading really spoke to me; it would speak to anyone who considers the current times around us. How we might feel some level of this affliction! He desired to pray to One who is "the Same". He speaks much of the affliction, and as we know the Psalms are full of this language which is descriptive, very feeling, and describes a real depth; and yet as we have -

Of old hast thou founded the earth, and the heavens
are the work of thy hands:
They shall perish, but *thou* continuest".

I love those italicised words: "*They*" and "*thou*". There is a stark contrast between what changes and what changes not. The God of the universe is the same,

But thou art the Same, and thy years shall have no end”.

We spoke on Lord's day about what is established, what is certain; and that is how this Psalm ends. What a comfort to one who is afflicted. What a comfort to any who feel any sense of what it says in the heading

... when he is overwhelmed and poureth out his complaint.

You certainly see the heart pouring out. What a comfort to cry out and to pray to One who is “the Same”.

I was speaking to a brother over the past couple of days, and something that came up is this wonderful verse in Hebrew 13. It is a wonderful opening up of the Name that was previously known as “the Same”. We have the One who is “the same”: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and to the ages to come”. We spoke on Lord's day about knowing the One in whom we believe and having an intimate, personal relationship with Him. He is a God who is not far off, the God of old, who was at times referred to in that way. Jesus Christ, who came so near to man, “is the same yesterday, to-day and to the ages to come”. It is not put as a capitalised title, 'the Same' here, but it tells you who “the same” is and it tells you what “the same” means.

We find that the years change, men change and our circumstances change. To prove the point, just yesterday we had a quick turnaround in terms of restrictions from the government; clearly, governments change. The past two years have taught us that very clearly! Constant change is the only constant, and yet we can cry out, we can pray to One who is “the Same”. We have mentioned that in our readings together, but I think it is a great comfort to look around and see change, mysterious and severe change in many cases, concerning changes to those of us who believe; and yet to have relationship with Jesus Christ who is the same through all of the changing years, “yesterday, and to-day, and to the ages to come”. I simply hope and pray that it will be a comfort as we know that if we are left here, He will continue to be “the Same”; change will go on, but He will remain 'the same'.

May it be a comfort to each one of us and an encouragement to each one of us, for His Name's sake.

Word in a ministry meeting in Calgary

9th February 2022

TOGETHER

Darryl C Drever

Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12

Genesis 33: 13, 14

I felt confirmed by our referring again to Acts 2 and what we enjoyed on Lord's day, and in particular verse 44: "all that believed were together". I have only a simple thought about being together; my exercise is for myself, and I would hope it is with each one of us, in the way of encouragement, that we should be more in the enjoyment of being together with one another; and more importantly being together in our walk with the Lord Jesus.

I read this paragraph in Ecclesiastes, thinking particularly that the "threefold cord" is the most important point of that paragraph; but I was affected to think of the encouragement it is to ponder that "Two are better than one". Each of us might understand that in a different way. Having a friend or perhaps a partner in our lives here is a wonderful thing. We begin with ourselves as two individuals, and having the Lord Jesus. We have referred to the paths of life and I was thinking that, while sometimes we walk a path just by ourselves, it is an enjoyable thing to be able to walk with somebody else, to enjoy company with one another. That is the encouragement to think of being together, first and foremost with the Lord Jesus. It is not only being together having two objects, but it carries the idea that they are close. It is encouraging to think about what there is to be enjoyed with other persons, fellow believers. It is good to see that when scripture says, "Two are better than one", it is not just two random people. It would have in mind two of the assembly, two saints being together. That is a wonderful thought; it is encouraging that we can be linked together even with just one individual who knows the Lord as we know the Lord

The threefold cord is an important thought; it is not only a question about who we might be linked to down here: are we linked together with the Lord? That would particularly bring in our households. Each one of us can be in the good of it in the paths of life. We can go in that way with the Lord Jesus. There are a few different examples of how we can be a help and a support to one another, and I think we find that in being together. Even in a simple occasion such as this, we gather together. What is there that we can enjoy with one another? Each time we gather together we can enjoy fellowship with

one another. That is my exercise, whenever we gather together: am I looking for something fresh? Am I looking for something from the Lord each time that we come together? The Lord delights to see us together with one another; it should be a place of strength, a place of safety, to be together with one another. Verse 12 refers to what can be withstood. It is encouraging that we can find strength and support in being together - not only in gatherings where we gather to meet for the Lord's things or to read the scriptures. There is fellowship in our households too. We were speaking about the importance of households. I think some of the times I have felt the most encouraged were in my own household, when we have the saints together at the table and we give thanks. That simple thought of fellowship, bringing households together, bringing individuals together, is a wonderful thing. It is an encouragement that we would be more in the good of that, more in the enjoyment of that.

I referred to the scripture in Genesis 33: the simplicity of Jacob's attitude is what really stands out to me; the love that he has for those that are his. He brings in the thought of children and the flock and going together at the pace of the children. I have wondered about that recently as to the children being tender. We are all children, in one sense, even when we get older; we are always children. It is good to be freshly reminded of that, that we are all children of God. We had not too long ago the thought as to being dependent and simple as a child, depending on the Lord. As we look at those around, there are a number of children that we can be thankful for in our families, and in our circle of fellowship. Children are tender. We are all tender at times in our lives; we could speak of those who are slightly older as weak. The children are tender. Being together is a wonderful place for the children to be brought up and to be brought up in the good of these things, what we can enjoy together. Speaking respectfully of others, we certainly would not want to be together, to spend our spare time, with those who do not have an appreciation for the Lord's things. I say that carefully because we are to be a good testimony and spread the word of the Lord. But there is a special place for fellowship, security and enjoyment in being together with those who have love for the Lord Jesus.

At the end of verse 14, the pace is brought in; "the pace of the cattle that is before me, and according to the pace of the children". I was thinking how we want to go on all together as one, in unity and in the love of the Holy Spirit. It does not mean that we can only learn slowly, but we would desire that we would all be moving together. There would be progress in each one. There is a difference with driving

on, driving on herds or things like that could sometimes be a hard thing. But we are to go “on at my ease according to the pace”; that would be the Lord's desire, that we would always be moving with one another, constantly growing, but going on at ease. It would not be a rushed or a hurried thing or a stressful thing, but we are to go on and enjoy fellowship with one another. We are to learn more about the Lord's things so that there might be growth in each one of us.

My impression has been about the joy and encouragement there can be in being together with one another, first and foremost together with the Lord, always looking steadfastly on Jesus in our pathway. Then there is so much that can be enjoyed in the fellowship and what we have here on earth in the body, in the assembly.

May this be for our encouragement. May the Lord bless the word.

Word in a meeting for ministry, Calgary

6th April 2022

GOD'S MESSAGE AND HIS MESSENGER

My dear brother,

I have no doubt that it is just in so far as one *lives* in the good of the glad tidings of the grace of God, that one thinks of others, and that one is in any feeble way the able communicator of the blessed message of God to others.

When I was a child, I used to be sent sometimes on messages. My mother had a peculiar habit of saying to me at the last moment, and after giving me all her instructions, 'Now, Harry, *who* are you going to and what are you going to *say*?' It was my defect as to the last part of the question that she often had to correct in me; I was generally least prepared to answer this part to *her* satisfaction. It often comes to me that if brethren who desire to evangelise would go through beforehand with God what I had to go through as my mother's messenger, they would have people to go to and something to *say*, and they would leave off and go home, as I used to, when they had said it. We should then have less wearisome discourses, which, alas, sometimes fail to present *good news* at all (I am not speaking of *yours*, as you know). Then my mother would finish up by saying to me, "and mind you tell them *who sent you!*" What do you think of these three points in my mother's training for an evangelist? 1. 'To whom are you going?' 2. 'What are you going to *say*?' 3. '*mind you tell them who sent you*'.

I must thank you for your letter, and especially for your prayers for me, as you say I have no doubt that we all feel (and it ought to exercise us) how feebly we preach the gospel. But it is quite another thing to conclude as you suggest, that you had *better not take it again!* I think you must know (while feeling fully your own weakness) whose voice *that* is: John 8: 44, gives the clue. I send this by post. The time is short, and I do not know when I may see you.

Love to all yours

Your affectionate brother,

HENRY CANSTEY

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