

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

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THE TESTIMONY

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RWMcC I wondered if we could enquire into the thought of the testimony. It is a big subject and has many facets, but I wondered if we could look at these three aspects that are in the scriptures that we have read. In Timothy it speaks about the “testimony of our Lord”; in Revelation “the testimony of Jesus”; and in Corinthians “the testimony of the Christ”. I wondered if we could enquire into those together.

The thought that I had in mind with regard to Timothy was the way that the testimony might be related to the assembly. If we think in general terms of Christendom, not to be critical, in principle Paul is in prison. Paul speaks here about “the testimony of our Lord” - that would relate to those who own the lordship of Christ. There are various aspects of Paul's ministry which are not held in certain parts of Christendom; that is a very sad matter. But what a privilege it would be to be in “the testimony of our Lord”. Think of how He was here and all that entered into every step of His pathway. Mary could speak of Him, “they have taken away my Lord”, John 20: 13. Then she recognises Him as 'my Teacher', v 16. I wondered if we might be encouraged in relation to that, the maintenance of the testimony of our Lord, not to be ashamed of it, and to hold fast to Paul's ministry.

In Revelation, John was in the island of Patmos; he was also a prisoner, and it says where we read that it was “for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus”. I thought about how Jesus, His personal name, is despised in the world and His name is taken in vain. We hear that such a lot. The name of God is too. The testimony of Jesus involves what it would be to be here for the Lord Himself as Jesus. The authorities had put John there in Patmos. It was not the church - the religious side which was involved in Paul's imprisonment initially - but it was the civil authorities. And yet we know that Jesus will have dominion. We know from that wonderful scripture in Philippians that every knee will bow to Jesus, chap 2: 10. We rejoice in that, but what it is to bow to Him now and hold Him in our hearts, to be faithful to that aspect of the testimony related to His Name.

Then in Corinthians we read a little more to get the context, but it was particularly this expression, “according as the testimony of the Christ has been confirmed in you”. My thought there was that the

testimony of the Christ was in the persons. We may look at the Corinthians and wonder at them, but we should not be too critical. We should be thankful for these epistles because of the way that they bring out the truth. Paul is looking at them and saying, "I thank my God always about you". He speaks about the assembly of God which is in Corinth, "with all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours", 1 Cor 1: 2. That is the introduction to the epistle and something that we should hold in our hearts, "all that in every place". There is just one assembly; we cannot divide it. We cannot say that an assembly in a place is one assembly and then another one in another place is a different assembly. There is just one assembly, "all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ". But then he goes on, "I thank my God always about you, in respect of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus", and he speaks of them being enriched. And then he says, "according as the testimony of the Christ has been confirmed in you". That is, there was a witness in the persons in Corinth to God's man, "the testimony of the Christ" was confirmed in them. Mr Raven says, "the testimony is of the Christ", vol 19 p466.

I trust we may get help together about these different aspects. In one sense it is all one because it is not as if they are separate pockets in the cloak of the testimony, but they are all part of the whole. It speaks of the Lord's body-coat that it was seamless, and woven through the whole from the top, John 19: 23.

DAB I am very glad you suggest this. I have been thinking as you spoke about the Lord Jesus; when He Himself was here, we can say that He was the Vessel of testimony, and He was the testimony; and yet He said that He did not bear witness of Himself. I wondered if that is something that we need to grasp. Mr E M Walkinshaw used to say that this scripture does not say, 'our testimony to the Lord', but "the testimony of our Lord". In other words, we are here to uphold the honour and glory of somebody else; we should therefore not ignore our state or anything, but think less about how things affect us and more about how they reflect upon the Lord.

RWMcC I do feel that; it is His testimony, "the testimony of our Lord"; but it is really an exercise and responsibility to be here according to His will. It is an administrative thought.

DAB I was struck as you had the scriptures read that the first two set the testimony in reproach. We had a word in the preaching last Lord's

day about the way that the Lord Jesus has been under reproach. I think it is very powerful to have that from time to time in the preaching, that we preach One who has been rejected. The testimony cannot therefore be part of the world that had no place for Him; it must be over against Him.

RWMcC I think that is important. Our Lord was here under reproach.

RMB I think one of the things we have been taught is that the testimony involves God bearing witness beforehand to what He is going to display publicly in the future, FER vol 18: p80.

RWMcC I did see that and I wondered about it; I would like help about it. It is the testimony to what God is going to display.

DAB That is interesting especially in connection with what you said about Corinthians, that there was something in them; because in that day when Christ will be displayed in glory He will be glorified in His saints. That is the display that is coming. That is what should be here in testimony.

RWMcC I think so.

RMB I was thinking too in connection with reference to “the testimony of our Lord”, that one thing that is going to be set forth in that day is the supremacy of Christ: His will and His rights will be supreme in that day. In the present time He is in rejection and publicly His rights are challenged; so would the testimony involve persons who are seeking to maintain His rights, seeking to maintain the ground for Him against that great day when He will exercise them publicly?

RWMcC I think so. I am often drawn to that wonderful scripture in Philippians, “and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father's glory”, Phil 2: 11. What a day of display that will be, and indeed the testimony would involve persons seeking to maintain what is His. It is what God gives in relation to what He will do and therefore it lifts the thought of the testimony in our minds. We might say of something, 'that was a bad testimony', or 'that was a good testimony'. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the testimony in the sense that persons have not witnessed Christians gathering in places of worship because of the restrictions. What you are saying elevates the testimony; it is about our Lord, about what God is going to do and hence we need to be exercised to be not ashamed of it.

BHC I was thinking of the flood; do you think there was a testimony before the flood? I was wondering about Noah when the waters had

receded, he came out of the ark and offered up a burnt offering. I wondered whether that was a testimony of the work of Christ? Would that be the first thought of testimony in the history?

RWMcC There was testimony before in Abel and Enoch and Noah himself, but in the cleansed earth there was that which was for the savour of God's nostrils: "Jehovah smelled the sweet odour", Gen 8: 21. That was really looking on to Christ.

PJW Does testimony involve the thought of witness? I was thinking of what the Lord said to His disciples just before He was taken up: "ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth", Acts 1: 8. I wondered if that was involved in the testimony.

RWMcC I think so. It says of the authorities in early Acts that, "they recognised them that they were with Jesus", Acts 4: 13. It was really a testimony to the Man that God was going to establish over all, who had been there amongst them. The testimony continues in the Lord's absence. It has been spoken of as relating to various things, and I think the thought of witness is one of them.

RMB The verse you have read starts with, "Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord". Why are we likely to be ashamed of it?

RWMcC I think that probably covers a bit of ground. It would include the defending of the Lord's rights and speaking His Name, and taking His Name on our lips in the company of others.

RMB I think what you have said helps. The very fact that the Lord is in rejection means that at the present time the maintenance of His rights involves suffering, and that is true even among the saints as well as in the world.

RWMcC Previous to that it says, "For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of wise discretion", and just prior to that he says, "rekindle the gift of God which is in thee". Mr Darby's very helpful note to 'rekindle' says, "'to revive, rekindle, what is drooping' ... The whole subject of the epistle is energy in the darkening state of the assembly'. I think that would link with what you say because if there is exercise not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, it is over against the darkening state of the assembly publicly, and therefore it would involve suffering and reproach.

JRW Does the fact that he says, "our Lord" enter into that? He is One

who is “despised and left alone of men” (Isa 53: 3), and there might be the tendency for some to be ashamed of that position at the present time, but He is our Lord and we should be glad to acknowledge and demonstrate it in our walk and our ways.

RWMcC Yes, “our Lord”. It was a feature of warfare in years past that they had a flag, a standard, the 'colours', and soldiers in times of difficulty on the battlefield were rallied to the standard. Does that link with what you are saying?

JRW I think that as the believer goes about his life here it should be, and I think we can say with certain confidence it is, evident that they are under the lordship of Christ in all that they do; so that there are certain places we do not go to, certain language that we do not embrace, there are certain things that we do not do; it is all a demonstration that we are governed by One whom we are pleased to call our Lord.

RWMcC It is not what we can do from our side, exactly, but it is standing with our Lord, owning Him as Lord.

AM Would it help us in our affections to see that the Lord Jesus Himself at the time of His rejection was not ashamed; He “endured the cross, having despised the shame”, Heb 12: 2? He did not accept any shame in relation to His sufferings and as we are attached to Him does it help to strengthen us that we should not be ashamed?

RWMcC It is wonderful to think of that, the Lord as the example. “When suffering, threatened not” (1 Pet 2: 23); He “gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously”.

AM No sin could attach to Him; He was greater morally and in every way than all that was around Him; and so is the testimony.

RWMcC It is. I was thinking as you were speaking that when He receives the voice of adjuration, He answers it and the testimony there is, “the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven”, Matt 24: 30. It is the truth that they used to condemn Him. It cannot be put to shame.

RJF In John we have the words of the Lord Himself, “I have been born for this, and for this I have come into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth”, John 18: 37. Does that encapsulate the thought?

RWMcC It is the testimony of what God is going to do. It was all seen in the Lord, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life”, John 14: 6. It is a wonderfully blessed thing to be in the gain of that in some measure and an encouragement to desire that. We speak about building up the

saints but we need encouragement and joy and that would be a feature of that, being occupied with the Man. We were occupied last Saturday in the address with the moral worth of the King of glory.

RMB Did you have more in mind as to Paul? You referred earlier as to Paul being in prison, and He links Himself to this reference to the testimony of our Lord.

RWMcC I wondered about it; it is “his prisoner”. It is not the prisoner of Rome or the Jewish nation or anything like that, but it is “his prisoner”. Paul was a remarkable vessel in the testimony and his conversion is still noteworthy even today, giving rise to the expression 'a Damascene conversion'. We think of Paul going out to preach, “And straightway in the synagogues he preached Jesus that *he* is the Son of God. And all who heard were astonished and said, Is not this *he* who destroyed in Jerusalem those who called on this name, and here was come for this purpose, that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?” Acts 9: 20, 21. Paul's conversion was absolute. I just thought that there are aspects of Paul's ministry that are despised. I remember my grandfather saying that he had spoken to somebody about some truth and they had just dismissed it, saying, 'That is only Paul'. I think that was about women being silent in the assemblies, but there are other matters, too. Paul is still a prisoner, the testimony in the Acts closes with that, and his ministry is dismissed in some parts of Christendom.

PJW There was one, Onesiphorus, of whom Paul says, “has not been ashamed of my chain” (2 Tim 1: 16); would that bear on what you are saying? That chain in the way you are applying it still exists?

RWMcC I think so. In this very epistle we find that there are those who have turned away. It happened very early, the decline.

AAC Do you think what Paul sets out in the second epistle of Corinthians helps, “I know a man in Christ ... whether in the body I know not, or out of the body I know not”, 2 Cor 12: 2. He had a vision of Christ in glory and in a sense that characterised everything that Paul ministered. He speaks of not receiving by word of mouth but directly from Christ. I wondered whether, if we are to be a testimony, we have to have some vision of Christ where He is today in glory. It is not exactly a historical thing that we present, as has been brought out; it is something yet to be displayed, but we see that, or something of it, as we see Christ in glory today, do we?

RWMcC I think so. People could have said to Paul that it was just a

myth, but he could say, 'No, I have seen Him. I thought he was an imposter, but He has spoken to me'. Paul had that real experience and no one could gainsay it. No one could have come to Paul, Saul as he was then, and say that there was nothing to it, because he had experience of it. I remember a brother saying that you cannot gainsay experience. I think you are right that we need to have some sense of that ourselves and I think that is something we would desire, to have a sense of the Lord where He is in glory, heaven giving Him the place that was due to Him.

RJF Paul says, "I know whom I have believed", 2 Tim 1: 12. That personal knowledge is so vital; it is not just a casual, 'I know', but "**I know**"; there is an emphasis to it and by having that experience then the testimony flows out from it.

RWMcC "For which cause also I suffer these things; but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep for that day the deposit I have entrusted to him". It is a wonderful founding matter to *know*. What a testimony there was.

RJF So much flows out from what you might think of as simple knowledge because the man who was blind in John 9 just had the one thing that he knew (v 25), but because he knew it and because he was able to speak about it he was there as testimony to what the Lord had done.

RWMcC And it does not end with his testimony to the Jews: it ends with giving the Lord homage, v 38.

In Revelation John sets himself as a brother, not exactly as the apostle although he surely was the apostle here - if you take one of the meanings of apostle as being messenger. But he says, "your brother and fellow-partaker". I thought how that linked with the way Paul speaks, as we have been discussing, "his prisoner": here John is "fellow-partaker in the tribulation". It says, "tribulation and kingdom and patience, in Jesus, was in the island called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus", the One despised by the world.

AJMCK Did you have a thought as to why he was exiled and what the force of that is? I was just wondering about the exhortation in Hebrews to, "go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach", Heb 13: 13. We have spoken about not being ashamed of the testimony but it says there before "bearing his reproach", "go forth to him", and here we have the testimony of Jesus; it is going forth to that Man. Is that what is to

attract us? And as we find Him we find others.

RWMcC I think what you say is helpful. Paul was alone in prison in principle and John was alone on Patmos. He was involved in what used to be known as penal servitude, but it did not preclude him becoming “in the Spirit on the Lord's day”.

RMB Is there a sense in which we may regard this book, the Revelation, as the testimony of Jesus?

RWMcC I think so, in the sense that you were referring to earlier, that it brings in what God has established.

RMB I wondered whether it can be regarded as His personal testimony. You notice that in verse 1 it says, “Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him”, and at the end of the book, “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the assemblies”, chap 22: 16. I wondered if we think of it from that light, it makes this book a very precious one; it is the personal testimony to us of Jesus Himself.

RWMcC It is very precious to see that it is bracketed like that. It says, too, “John, who testified the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ, all things that he saw”, Rev 1: 2. It was God's desire that the testimony should be raised.

JRW It says later on in this book, “the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus”, chap 19: 10. Do you think this book and John's part in bringing it out really demonstrate all that God will do by way of removing all the opposition here, and then what He will secure in that blessed One? Do you think that is involved in the testimony of Jesus?

RWMcC I think so. I know it is a different context but it speaks about heading up “all things in the Christ”, Eph 1: 10. I felt as to the Lord's personal name, Jesus, “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow”, God has given this revelation. “The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus”: it involves what God is going to do; He is going to head up everything in that blessed One.

JRW I wondered that, and the believer can hold that very precious thought in his heart because we know what God is going to do with Jesus, and the place that He will have, but He can have that place in the heart of the saints now, can He not?

RWMcC Yes.

DAB People find the book of Revelation difficult because they are

looking into it for an account of events, whereas I think it is actually an account of the moral character of everything that is in the world already, whether it is good or evil, judged by the standard set forth in this glorious Person. And then the ultimate exposure of all these things, whether for blessing or judgment, helps us to have a right judgment of them now when the standard is the same: it is still this glorious Person.

RWMcC We read this morning in the house in Matthew about the wheat and the darnel (chap 13: 24-30), and we spoke about how the separating is described in Revelation; and, yes, we can see what you say. Everything that is against the Lord is going to be met; God is going to establish it.

CHS Do you think that John was very qualified for this? Something of the human graces that we sang of are there in his ministry; the fragrance of them is there. Do you think it is important that it is just not what we know but it is how far we have been formed by it? He was prepared for this.

RWMcC He had his own personal link with this blessed One.

CHS The songwriter says:

His name is as ointment poured forth, Song of Songs 1: 3.

What do people think about when they hear our names? That is what it comes down to, this testimony, something very practical and very real.

RWMcC We referred earlier as to the Lord coming, “when he shall have come to be glorified in his saints, and wondered at in all that have believed” (2 Thes 1:10); that is a day of display. The testimony is really the test now.

DAB These verses recall the first engagement that Saul of Tarsus had with the Lord. He was oppressing fellow-partakers in the tribulation, and the Lord Jesus identifies them with Himself. I wondered if that is what John does here; they are fellow-partakers in the testimony of Jesus. I wondered if these things challenge us in our affections as to whether that is something we want to be part of consistently.

RWMcC Linking with what has been said, John was one that leant on His breast and he speaks of himself as one, “whom Jesus loved”, John 13: 23. He was conscious of that. It is in John's closing ministry, his gospel, as far as we know, that he speaks of himself like that. He does not bring his own name forward: because the Lord had loved him, he had affection for Him; that shines out.

RMB We see in the book how the Lord expresses His mind about things, first of all in relation to the seven assemblies and then in relation to the world in general. We get the Lord's view of those things, but do you think that raises a practical exercise with us as to the extent to which we really want to have the Lord's mind, whether we desire to have the Lord's mind about us at the present time? Is that not the spirit of prophecy, to know what it is to know what the Lord is thinking of us at the moment?

RWMcC I do think so and I find it a test. I remember a brother saying once that if I knew the Lord's mind for me, would I do it? That is quite a test. I feel for myself it is not that I should focus on me, but that I should focus on His mind. I think what you say as to prophecy, the link there, is important because we might think of prophecy as foretelling the future, but it is current.

DAB-w The testimony is Jesus; would that have been what Peter was trying to avoid when the question was asked, "And *thou* wast with the Nazarene, Jesus", Mark 14: 67?

RWMcC That is interesting to bring out, because he denied Him, denied Him with an oath, Matt 26: 72. How close it came, because just a few hours earlier he had been saying that he would die with Him and the Lord tells him that he would deny Him.

DAB-w I was just pondering in my mind what the testimony of Jesus is. John speaks about the fellow-partaker and brother, but I just think the testimony of Jesus is those that were with Jesus and are with Jesus. Is that the testimony of Jesus? It is what, I suppose in one sense, men know of Him, "a man called Jesus", John 9: 11. The testimony of Jesus is those who are with Him.

RWMcC It would relate to that, and I think, to confirm that, it speaks in the letters to the seven assemblies about those who have not denied His Name, chap 3: 8. I think that would link with your thought. That would be the name of Jesus, they were associated with Him. Even to Ephesus is says, "and hast borne for my name's sake", chap 2: 3.

DAB Following up what has just been said, two things were put to Peter: "*thou* wast with" *Him* and "thou art one of them", Mark 14: 70. I was thinking of what we had earlier as to our Lord, that - putting it very simply - the testimony I bear affects other people as well as the Lord Himself. Those two things we need to bear in mind.

RWMcC Yes. One says to him, "Did I not see thee in the garden with

him?”, John 18: 26.

DAB That is very challenging too because we enjoy our privileges, but even coming to the Supper is a testimony; we are showing forth His death. Is that in a sense being in a garden with Him?

RWMcC I think so, yes.

In Corinthians, “the testimony of the Christ has been confirmed in you”. I just had a thought that there was that in persons in Corinth, the assembly of God, where the testimony of the Christ had been confirmed. We have looked at the external and suffering side, and over against the darkening state of the assembly publicly, not being ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, and Paul, His prisoner. Then John's suffering in Patmos for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. But here it seems to lift our hearts that there was, in persons here, a testimony of the Christ, of God's Man.

PJW Would it involve the anointing? It is particularly related to the title “the Christ”; it is God's anointed: “Now he that establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God”, 2 Cor 1: 21. I wondered if what we speak of as the anointed vessel would link with the testimony of the Christ.

RWMcC I think that. The Christ, the anointed One - “And I have anointed my king upon Zion, the hill of my holiness”, Ps 2: 6.

DAB Does this especially refer to the way that God looks for something for Himself here? The Christ was His testimony, was He not, and that vessel of testimony is no longer here; but that cannot mean that God does not have a testimony, because He does not leave Himself without witness, and therefore this raises an exercise what is there in us under God's eye here? I am not saying that it is not displayed to the world, but it is especially for what God seeks.

RWMcC That was very much in my mind. Whereas the other aspects that we have spoken of have an outward bearing, this is really not something that the world would understand. They might see some difference, but it is for God's eye, just as the anointed One is for the delight of God's eye.

JRW Peter says in his early preaching, “Let the whole house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him, this Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ”, Acts 2: 36. I wondered whether the testimony of the Christ is a testimony as to what God has done, the

place that God has given Him as being confirmed in us. We accept that gladly, what God has done.

RWMcC It is wonderful, not to dwell on ourselves too much, but to have that view of the anointed One, the Christ, the Man after God's heart, God's Man. We can be thankful to the Spirit for the way that He brought that into our hearts. I wondered if the testimony of the Christ being confirmed in you would have a link with the gift of the Spirit.

RMB There is a lovely series of addresses by Mr Raven called, 'The Testimony of the Christ' (vol 2), and if I remember rightly he shows how God has been bearing testimony as to Him ever since the beginning, so there has been in that way a wonderful setting forth of God's thoughts as to the Christ. Does this expression, "has been confirmed in you", suggest that there was a substantial answer in this local company to what God had set forth? The very fact that there was a body of persons in this city that could be described as the assembly of God shows that there was a substantial answer to God's testimony.

RWMcC I think that. God has been giving testimony to Christ. It says as to Esaias, "These things said Esaias because he saw his glory and spoke of him", John 12: 41. God has given testimony to His Man. And now there is a substantial answer in Corinth.

DAB God in that sense has moved forward a bit in the present time. In the Old Testament, He bore witness to Christ in so many different ways, the burnt offering after the flood, for example, Noah himself, and all these ways: they drew attention to One who was coming. But now that Vessel for the delight and pleasure of God has been here, He looks to see that testimony in His people. I wonder if that is a slightly more demanding outlook on God's part than what He looked for in the Old Testament?

RWMcC I would say that; I think that is important. The Lord has been here, the Christ has been here, the testimony has been borne to Him and witnessed. Thinking of the testimony of John the baptist, the testimony of the Father Himself; John the disciple was a witness to that too; he was with Peter, "being with him on the holy mountain", 2 Pet 1: 18.

DAB You could not say that of any man in the Old Testament. I know there were those who pleased Him, but none fully answered to God's thought as to man in the way that Jesus has, but now in the present day He looks for that answer to be continued and He has sent the Spirit of

Christ that it might be so. The world would not understand that because they do not recognise the standard that God has in His mind, but those who know Him ought to be exercised to be here for the pleasure of God on that line.

RWMcC The practical side of exercise in relation to these things is vitally important. I think we could say that when we get to the second epistle, we can see that foundational work that the apostle draws attention to here has borne fruit; there was much that he had to take up with them, but it bears fruit; it stands the test.

PJW He says later on in chapter 12, speaking of one body, “so also is the Christ”, v 12. That we understand is a reference to the assembly; would that confirm what has been said, there is that testimony here which is just like Christ?

RWMcC I think that. “Christians” was not a name that the saints exactly took on themselves; it may possibly have been in mockery in Antioch, but it should bear testimony to the Christ.

RMB I think it has been said before that this reference to, “the testimony of the Christ has been confirmed in you”, is like the ark enshrined in the tabernacle. Think what it must mean to God that there should have been this circle of persons in Corinth where the Man that He had been bearing testimony to for so many years was loved, and His rights were maintained. What that must mean to God to see His precious testimony as to the Christ being confirmed in that circle in the same way that the ark was the centre of that holy sanctuary.

RWMcC I remember a brother saying that it was a miracle that in such a city as Corinth there could be that which was in such contrast to what Corinth spoke about in its decadence and so on. I think what you say, as to the pleasure it must have given God to see that, is important. The link to the ark is very interesting; it carried the testimony, and there was that in Corinth. I think we need to be exercised about that; is there that in me? He can speak to the assembly of God in Corinth as one company. Now we are in a broken day, and no one company of Christians can claim to be the assembly in a place. These are '2 Timothy days', as we often say, which involve the prison, breakdown, scattering. Nevertheless, the testimony of the Christ is still being confirmed in persons because God has not given that up; He never will give that up: Christ in the saints.

KJM It is exercising to be “confirmed in you”. What could be said by

others as to what is confirmed in us?

RWMcC Although it may not have been understood by the world, it did distinguish them. I do not mean in a worldly way, but it must make a difference and it is a test.

Norwood

21st May 2022

List of initials:-

D A Barlow, Sunbury; R M Brown, Strood; D A Burr, West Norwood;
B H Clark, Maidstone; A A Croot, Sidcup; R J Flowerdew, Sunbury;
A Martin, Buckhurst Hill; K J May, Maidstone; R W McClean, Grimsby;
A J McKay, Witney; C H Smith, Chelmsford; J R Walkinshaw,
Maidstone; P J Walkinshaw, Strood

PREPARATION FOR THE LORD'S COMING

J Bruce Ikin

Matthew 25: 1-10

1 John 3: 1-3

Revelation 19: 6-8

Song of Songs 6: 10

I seek help of the Lord Jesus, dear brethren, to speak about preparation for His coming. We read of Mary; when she anointed the feet of the Lord Jesus, He spoke of her keeping that precious ointment for the day of His preparation for *burial*. We are in a time for preparing for the Lord's *coming* as anticipating that this will be soon. It is wonderful to think of what is being prepared on the divine side. Think of the things that God delights to prepare for those that love Him: "Things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard, and which have not come into man's heart", 1 Cor 2: 9! Think of how that is revealed, revealed by the Holy Spirit that is given to us. Then there is what the Lord is preparing too. The Lord Jesus is preparing a place for you and for me. What is that going to be like? It will be wonderful because He is there! There is going to be a reception. Who is going to receive us? *He* will! Think of what it is that He loves us so much that He is going to receive us in this way! And what is the reception going to be? He is going to receive us to Himself to be ever with Him, to belong to that place that He has prepared for us, along with Himself. What glory there is in that! And it is soon to be. The Lord is going to come; the Lord is coming that you and I might go into that place, received by Himself. What a joyous anticipation!

And then there is what the Spirit is doing too; the Holy Spirit is preparing. We read here in Matthew that there was a cry, a cry in the middle of the night. That has already happened, dear brethren. It happened about two hundred years ago. The Holy Spirit has indicated and drawn attention to the Lord Jesus as the Bridegroom: "Behold, the bridegroom". His service is ever to make much of Christ, and He drew attention to Him as the Bridegroom. And the way He did it was really wonderful. We are in an age when there is instant communication throughout the world through electronic means. This was not so two hundred years ago, and yet throughout the world there was a stirring of heart as to the coming of the Lord Jesus; engaging believers with Himself. So it was the Bridegroom in view and that means the assembly is in His heart. Think of how He has the assembly in His

heart! It is His chief interest here.

Well, we are speaking of the coming of the Lord Jesus: what a wonderful thing it will be. He is going to raise those in the graves first. The dead in Christ shall rise first, our loved ones there, those that we have known. Think of the power of His gathering. In 1 Thessalonians 4: 15 we read, "For this we say to you in the word of the Lord, that we, the living, who remain to the coming of the Lord, are in no way to anticipate those who have fallen asleep; for the Lord himself, with an assembling shout, with archangel's voice and with trump of God, shall descend from heaven; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living who remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we shall be always with the Lord. So encourage one another with these words". The Thessalonians had thought - had been taught by someone - that perhaps the Lord had already come; they were in despair. What Paul brings in is that He is yet to come, and that He is indeed going to come. Indeed, the Lord is going to come powerfully, not for the world to see, but for every saint in the grave, and those of us who are living to hear. We shall hear His voice - it will be an assembling shout. What a gathering this will be! What a gathering - to Him! And it is by Him. He is the gathering Centre. What a moment that will be! Are you looking forward to it? Are you ready for it? Am I ready for it, ready for His coming, ready indeed to meet Him? So it is not a static thing. It is that we should go forth to meet Him. That is movement, movement in relation to Himself, to be ready for Him.

It says, "Now the bridegroom tarrying, they all grew heavy and slept". Well, that was the state in Christendom. That is what it was in those ages before, but in the time we are in there is a tendency, I feel it very much for myself, a result of the pandemic perhaps, that we become a little heavy, become a little sleepy, and perhaps influenced by the world around us where there is a lack of responsibility. May it not be so with us as believers but that we may be alert and ready, and ready to take up responsibility in the little time that there may be before He comes. So it says, "Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour", v 13.

We may look at the events around us; we may look at what is happening in this dreadful war and we may wonder what is going to happen, development of terrible weapons of warfare and the possible deployment of them. You may say, 'Surely the Lord is going to come'.

In actual fact, dear brethren, these indications are secondary. What is primary is what is in the hearts of the saints as longing for Him - an inkling you might say of the Lord's coming known by those who truly love Him. It is in the Father's hands when He will actually come and so it says, "Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour". This scripture shows that we need to be ready, need to be prepared, need to be ready to meet Him.

As we read in the earlier meeting, John in his epistle writes, "we shall see him as he is", 1 John 3: 2. "Beloved, now are we children of God, and what we shall be has not yet been manifested; we know that if it is manifested we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is". He now has a body of glory, and we shall see Him as He is. There were those who saw Him as He came out of the grave. Now He has a body of glory, and the wonderful thing is that when we shall see Him, there will be a wonderful transformation to become like Him. Morally and spiritually that should be so now. As looking upon Him in the power of the Holy Spirit we can be formed to be like Him, that we may be truly those who could be recognised as the children of God, as having the right to it, the right to it as receiving the Lord Jesus and believing on His Name.

John says, "every one that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as *he* is pure", v 3. So as looking at the Bridegroom, looking at Him, let our lamps shine that we might show forth our appreciation of Him. Looking up spiritually upon His face: what do we see there? We see the glad tidings of the glory of Christ; we see His glory there. What we see in the shining of His face is we see the outshining of God. That is to be in our vessels. So the Holy Spirit would help us that we may look upon Him and shine, shine in testimony, shine in appreciation of Him. What is the power for that? It is the oil. The oil is needed in the lamps. That is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the power for shining - the power for testimony until He comes.

Purifying ourselves is a testing matter and it comes right down to me and comes right down to you. "Purifies himself". What is the standard? "Even as *he* is pure". This is a necessary part of readiness for meeting Him resulting from having the hope of His coming in us. I feel the test of that - "even as *he* is pure". What is the power for that? It is in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the One who is against the flesh. What a friend we have in Him! He is the One who is able to empower us that we may judge what is wrong in ourselves and that we may purify

ourselves according as “*he is pure*”. That is the Lord Jesus in His purity. That is the individual side.

What we read of in Revelation is the preparedness of the bride, and the clothing that will be given to her. The reference is to the righteousnesses of the saints. Think of that. That is practical righteousnesses, what is actually seen practically in your life and in my life. There is an opportunity for every man, woman, child in this hall that through the display of righteousness according to His assessment, you might be a contributor to this wonderful clothing the Lord Jesus will present to His wife. It says, “his wife has made herself ready”. There is always an opportunity for the fulfilling of righteousness. In every relationship that God puts us in, husband or wife, or parent or child, or employee, whatever it might be, we need to fulfil righteousness. You may say, 'Well, that is impossible'. If we try to do that in the flesh we will fail, but it *is* possible because we are given the resource of the Spirit. That is practical righteousness.

There are other ways too in which we can fulfil righteousness - by remembering Him. An opportunity is given every Lord's day to remember Him. The Lord Jesus puts His own value on your simply remembering Him, in allegiance to Him in a dark scene. And thus, you and I, however old or young we may be, can be a contributor to the wedding garment. This wedding garment is being prepared now. It is *now*, dear brethren. It is *now* that it is being formed; it is now that it is being woven. Now that it is being prepared for the Lord's own pleasure and He is going to assess it. What is assessed as approved by Himself according to His own evaluation will be put into the wedding garment.

Then in the Song of Songs we see again the thought of the bride. “Who is she that looketh forth as the dawn ...?”. Her longing is for Him; her longing is for Him as coming in into this scene as the dawn. “Who is she that looketh forth as the dawn ...?”. Think of the countenance of the bride here. The Lord's desire is expressed in chapter two; He says,

Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice;
For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely, v 14.

Her countenance is as the dawn, “looketh forth as the dawn”, showing her longing for the Lord Jesus to come. And how does she express that? With the Holy Spirit. Think of how the Holy Spirit is with the bride saying, “Come”, Rev 22: 17. John testifies, “Amen; come,

Lord Jesus". What an expression - she

... looketh forth as the dawn,
Fair as the moon, clear as the sun!

It shows what the assembly does in faithfulness in His absence, until He comes. She is fair, clear as the sun. What does that convey? It conveys that she is drawing her strength and vitality from Him. Christ is spoken of here as the sun and the clarity of His shining is expressed in His assembly.

Then it says, "Terrible as troops with banners". Think of that, that there is a power, power in the saints, power given of the Holy Spirit against the great tide of evil that is flooding into this world. Isaiah says, "When the adversary shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of Jehovah will lift up a banner against him." chap 59: 19. That is what He is doing. There is "that which restrains", 2 Thess 2: 6. We are thankful when we pray - and we should pray for governments - that there is what restrains, but then "there is he who restrains" (v 7); and that is the Holy Spirit. How wonderful to see how active the Holy Spirit is in the last days before the Lord comes. He can be working directly; He can also be working through the prayers of the saints. How vitally important it is to be at the prayer meeting - to arrange our circumstances to be there - and with our brethren express resistance against the adversary and seeking that there should be that which restrains. When the prayers of the saints are no longer here, the Holy Spirit having completed His work in relation to what He is doing now, the power of the devil will come in like a flood. The awful course of apostasy is fast coming upon us; it has already begun. "The mystery of lawlessness" has already begun and there is what is restrained through the presence of the Holy Spirit here as expressed by the saints.

What is precious according to what the Lord is looking for in His saints in the assembly is to be maintained. The enemy is against that; the enemy is against that in many, many ways and he is getting more and more active in resisting and opposing what is of Christ as seen in His saints. Well, there is provision for that too. There is provision for that through overcomers. The Lord would speak to every place where believers are as having His own assessment of the conditions there. What He is looking for in each place are overcomers. Are you an overcomer? I feel tested in standing here to speak of it, but what the Lord is looking for is that you and I might be overcomers. What is the power for that? Again, it is the Holy Spirit. I find the main battleground

is in myself. I find there that what is of the flesh is opposed to God, but the Spirit's power is available that I might judge that and that I might be seen here as an overcomer. The Lord in that letter to Laodicea in appealing for overcomers says, "as I also have overcome", Rev 3: 21. So we can look to Him as the Overcomer as the One who is seeing His testimony through until He comes.

May you and I have a vital part in it in readiness, in preparation for His coming.

For His Name's sake.

Glasgow

23rd April 2022

ISAIAH SPEAKING OF CHRIST

Richard J Gray

Isaiah 53: 4-6; 42: 1-4

These scriptures are very well known and very precious. Mr Darby says that chapter 53 of Isaiah should be engraved on the heart of every believer, Synopsis vol 2 p236. It is remarkable to think of Isaiah speaking all these years ago, and prophesying as to the greatness of the Saviour who would come in, and the greatness of the salvation He would accomplish. You really wonder how much Isaiah actually understood the greatness and the far-reaching character of what he was speaking about. Peter refers to that in his epistle, "Concerning which salvation prophets, who have prophesied of the grace towards you, sought out and searched out; searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them pointed out, testifying before of the sufferings which belonged to Christ, and the glories after these", 1 Pet 1: 10, 11. I was struck with that, dear hearers, how men in the Old Testament such as Isaiah received such great prophetic light from God. But we are living in a greater day, the day of grace, when God has come out fully into the light; He has come out in Christ. The present day is a day of great opportunity, a great opportunity to be saved. I desire that none here would miss that opportunity.

Verse 6 of this chapter has come particularly before me. We might say that we could have a preaching on each of the verses of this chapter, there is so much wealth and greatness in them; but I was thinking of verse 6. One thing it sets out is our position and what we have done: "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way". But then the prophet says, "and Jehovah has laid upon him the iniquity of us all". That is what God has done.

There is what we have contributed; our sins, our distance from God, the fact that we have gone astray, "we have turned every one to his own way". Speaking very simply, that is not just an accident; it is not only that we have been turned aside and lost our way. I think, if we are honest with ourselves, being sinners involves what we have done deliberately. We have desired to do what we wanted to do. That comes out in very small things as well as great things. We wanted to do our own will; we wanted to do what we felt like doing. And that is what this describes, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way".

That is a very serious position to be in, dear hearers. It is not

just that you have to answer to your parents, or to your teachers, or others that might be in authority, but we have to answer to God. It is with God that we have to do. So I feel in that way that it is a solemn moment, and it is very important that you understand God's word and that God is speaking. God desires to have to do with you for your blessing. It is a serious thing to turn that aside or to say that it is not for me, because God is speaking in the glad tidings and He is speaking for your blessing. The beginning of that blessing is to recognise your true position before God. You might say that the excuses come to an end. There is nothing else that you can present before God, but that you are a sinner. You need to have to do with Him about that.

I was thinking about the preaching in the Acts, when the Jews ask Peter about the way in which the lame man had been healed. They ask by what power or what name had Peter done this (Acts 4: 7), and Peter speaks faithfully about "the name of Jesus Christ the Nazaraean" (v 10); and he goes on to say, "And salvation is in none other, for neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved", v 12. I say that simply: you must be saved. That is not a question to be put off, or to be left for another day. The gospel preaching is going out today and God desires that you might be saved, that you might have the knowledge of your sins forgiven, and that you might come into the assurance of eternal salvation. He desires that you should come to Christ and that you should find salvation in Him. How simple these words are: "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way". You might say, 'Well, do not sheep follow each other? Is not someone else to blame? I will follow someone else'. But no, it says, "we have turned every one to his own way". That, putting it very simply, is really what sin is, that we have done what we wanted to do. We should have done what God wanted us to do.

How old that question is! It goes right back to the beginning of Genesis. Man at the beginning listened to Satan, and listened to his own desires, and did what he wanted to do, rather than what God had said. And that is the history of the whole world, the history of every one as a sinner. If you read the early chapters of the epistles to the Romans, you see how that downward spiral continued. By getting away from God, what degradation man has got into. We cannot just say that applies to someone else; that is you and me as sinners. We did not think good to have God in our knowledge, Rom 1: 28. The apostle Paul outlines the state and wickedness of man as away from God. But I

was impressed that when we come to chapter 3 of Romans, Paul speaks about the righteousness of God being manifested, "righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ towards all, and upon all those that believe", v 22. There is something remarkable in that about our position as sinners. If we are convicted by the hopelessness of the situation and the wickedness of our hearts, we would say: what will God do about it? And we find that He has moved to bring in the answer Himself, not by condemning man but by providing a full and free salvation: "righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ towards all, and upon all those who believe".

Mr Stoney often uses the illustration of a child who has broken a clock and is sent to his room in disgrace until the clock is mended. He asks what could the child possibly do to mend it; where could he begin? He would only damage it further. Then the father says, 'I will mend the clock myself'. Mr Stoney says that shows two things; one is that the father loves his child and does not desire the distance to continue - he wants the relationship with the child to be restored. And the second thing he says it proves is that, if the father mends the clock, then it will all be done to his own satisfaction. Nobody can say anything against it because the father has mended it, eg JBS vol 6 pp1 and 94. That is only a simple picture, but you think of God seeing the plight of man away from Him and coming in in grace in Christ. What could we do to remove that distance, to come back to God? We could do nothing. We were lost and away from God, and yet God comes in with the answer Himself. It says, "I have laid help upon a mighty one", Ps 89: 19.

And so the prophet says here that, "Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all". The Lord Jesus has been here, and He has been that suffering way to the cross. He was perfect in Himself, but He went that way for you and me. I would like to appeal to all here, that if you feel your position as a sinner before God, then I would point you to the finished work of our Lord Jesus. There is One who has borne the judgment of God against sin. God has not overlooked anything, and His righteousness has been upheld. Can you say that the Lord Jesus has suffered in your place? It is a very simple but profound soul experience when you come to it that your salvation is not based on what you can do, or anything in yourself, but that you must look to the precious Saviour who has borne the judgment on your account: "Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all". Paul says in Romans, "righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ towards all,

and upon all those who believe". So that the work of the Lord Jesus upon the cross has satisfied God's holy claims as to sin. I feel the need for myself to get a greater sense of that in my soul, that it satisfies God's claims of righteousness. If it does that, then surely I can be satisfied too. The hymn writer says:

God is satisfied with Jesus,
We are satisfied as well. (Hymn 410)

Are you satisfied, dear hearer? Are you satisfied in the finished work of our Lord Jesus? It is towards all. It is not limited to the Jews who were under law, but God having come in in Christ must involve the blessing being available to all, without any limitation whatsoever. And then that scripture says that it is "upon all those who believe". I just want to point you to the Saviour, that you might lay hold by faith of what He has accomplished, and that you might believe, if never before, that He took your place. The judgment has been exhausted, and God is free, because of that finished work on the cross, to come out in blessing towards you. You can be assured that God is towards you in Christ because "Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all". There is no uncertainty about it. And if the Lord Jesus has borne your sins they have been taken away and they do not need to be borne again. I would appeal to all here afresh as to the greatness of what the Lord Jesus has accomplished on the cross, that He has shed His precious blood, and that God can come out in blessing to you as a sinner because of what He has done. The moment is urgent; there is no time to be lost. It is the only Name given whereby we must be saved. I cannot promise you tomorrow; I cannot promise you any more time. Today the gospel message is going out. It is this message to point you to the Saviour and to His precious finished work.

God was prepared to give up that which was so precious to Him. Scripture says, "He who, yea, has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him grant us all things?", Rom 8: 32. How that brings out to us the greatness of the love of God, that He was prepared to deliver up His own Son so that you and I might come into blessing. Are you going to turn the word away? It is not the preacher that you are rejecting, but it is God's word that is coming, and God desires that you might be saved and come into the greatness of the blessings that are in His heart: "how shall he not also with him grant us all things?". Think of the greatness of the blessings in the gospel: salvation, peace, hope, the gift of the Holy Spirit, a link with

the living Man in the glory. How precious these things are. Are they yours?

It has been said, I think, that it is good that there are believers at the gospel preaching because you can see examples of persons who are in the good of the gospel. You might be a young person, and you sit next to others who have happy faces, who are restful in the face of adversity, who are confident as to the future, and you might ask how they can be so certain about those things. Maybe you do not have those things, but you can come into the good of them as you come to Christ and as you come into the gain of all that He has accomplished. You come into it on the basis of repentance. The apostle says, "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ", Acts 20: 21. How important that matter is, is it not? We must recognise our true position before God and look away from ourselves to Christ. We must see Him as the Sin-bearer; we must see Him in our place. The greatness and extent of His completed work involved that He went into the grave; it involved His breaking the power of death and that He has been raised and glorified. You can have a link with the precious Saviour risen and glorified. How great the gospel is!

There is so much more that can be said about Isaiah 53 and I am limited in speaking about it, but it is very precious how the prophet prophesies as to the sufferings of the Lord Jesus and His willingness to go that way. It says in verse 11, "He shall see of the fruit of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant instruct many in righteousness; and *he* shall bear their iniquities". Think of the great extent, dear hearers, of the work of Christ, the work of redemption. It can include you as you come to Christ: lay hold of the greatness of His precious finished work for yourself.

I read the scripture in chapter 42 of Isaiah simply because the prophet says, "Behold my servant", and again it is a reference to Christ. God in the glad tidings would point to Christ. We need to look away from ourselves. How important it is to do that initially; we might be weighed down in our need and by our sins. How real these exercises are. We need to get a view of the Lord Jesus, to see where He is now crowned with glory and honour and to see the place that God has given Him because of what He has accomplished. You can see Him there and lay hold of Him by faith. You find that He is available for you as a Saviour. But then Christian exercises continue, and we need to continue to look to Him, to look away from ourselves, to realise that

there is nothing in ourselves. As it says in John 3, “as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, thus must the Son of man be lifted up”, v 14. That incident in the wilderness with the brazen serpent was towards the end of the wilderness journey. The children of Israel had been through many experiences in the wilderness, but in the type they needed to look to Christ for deliverance. I feel the importance of that for myself, as we go on in our soul history and other deep exercises as to sin in the flesh and as to deliverance and as to walking in the Spirit. All these are important matters. You think of the Lord Jesus lifted up: “as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, thus must the Son of man be lifted up”. Have you got a view of Christ in that way, bearing not only the judgment of your sins, but having taken away the whole sinful order of man in the flesh from before God? So that the believer is no longer in Adam, but in Christ. What precious truths these are.

So the prophet says, “Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth!”. As we read those words, I just get the impression that God is not thinking of anyone else; He does not have any other person before Him but Christ. How precious He is to God! I desire that He might be increasingly precious to each one here. May our souls find delight in Christ and may we look to Him for everything and find our soul satisfaction in Him. The reality of these things is experienced in the power of the Holy Spirit. How important that gift is. As you come to Christ by faith, God would desire to give you His Spirit who would be a present link with the precious Saviour in glory. The Lord spoke to the woman in John 4 about the living water. What a remarkable figure that is, the satisfaction and joy that you can have as receiving the Spirit.

These things are available in the glad tidings, and I trust that each of us might come to Christ and see Him at God's right hand by the eyes of faith and through the Spirit. May each of us have our faith and trust firmly in the Lord Jesus as Saviour and in His precious finished work. He is also able to help us in the spiritual exercises we go through, but we must look to Him. I feel the importance of that; I need to look away from myself and look to Christ. May we find the blessing, the continued blessing and joy in looking on the Lord Jesus where He is, and may we be increased in our appreciation of that precious One. The prophet says, speaking on God's behalf, “Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth!”. You think of God's delight in Christ. We too can find our certainty, our joy and our

satisfaction in Him.

May it be so increasingly with each one of us.

For His Name's sake.

Linlithgow

15th May 2022

JESUS IN COMPANY WITH HIS DISCIPLES

John G Bellett

We are aware by how many different ways our fellow-believers try us and grieve us, and no doubt we do them. We see, or we fancy we see, some bad quality in them, and find it hard to bear it, or to go on in further company with them. It has occurred to me that we may observe that just in those same ways the mind and heart of Jesus were tried and grieved by His disciples in the days of His flesh, and yet He went on with them we know, as I need not add, "*not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good*" (Rom 12: 21, KJV) - the evil that *was in them* with the good that was in Himself. I would mention some of these wrong things in them that must have grieved Him, and the influence of which upon our own thoughts and feelings towards others we well understand and continually experience.

Vanity in another tries us - an air of self-satisfaction, or the esteeming of ourselves and the putting of ourselves forth to admiration. The Lord was tried by this spirit in His disciples. The mother betrayed it, and His kinsfolk, John 7: 3. Peter was thus self-confident when he said, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I", Mark 14: 29. And all of them were guilty of this when they contended who should be the greatest, and also when they *forbade* those who followed not with themselves.

Ill-temper is a very fretful thing, it so interferes with us. Martha tried the Lord with it when she complained to Him of her sister (Luke 10: 40), and so did the apostles when they urged Him to send away the multitude, just because their privacy and repast had been intruded upon, Mark 6. Any shew of a covetous, grudging spirit is very hateful to us. Jesus must have discerned this (and therefore had to bear with it) on such occasions as Matthew 14: 17 and 15: 33.

Unkindness, whether towards ourselves or to others, is very irritating. Peter's inquiry in Matthew 18: 21 covered, I believe, what the Lord must have seen to be the workings of an unkind and malevolent temper, as also we see in Matthew 15: 23.

Indifference to others and carefulness about oneself is very vexing to us also; it is so selfish and cold-hearted. Jesus was tried enough by it in His disciples. He asked them to watch with Him, but He found them sleeping (Mark 14: 37); He spake of His death, but they were thinking of their place and honours in the kingdom (Luke 9: 44-46); He spake of leaving them, but none of them asked, "Whither goest thou?" (John 16: 5); and in the ship it was of their own safety they

thought, Luke 8: 24. These were instances of cold indifference.

Ignorance is very apt to try us and make us impatient. Whoever found more of it in those He was continually teaching than the Lord? Some of the plainest lessons they had not learned; and when He spake spiritually or mystically to them they listened to Him as *in the letter* - they were asking explanations of the simplest parables.

Unspirituality of mind in fellow-disciples is a trial to us. How much of this amongst His people was the Lord continually suffering! and He was always right in discovering it. We often, through vanity or self-esteem, mistake mere nonconformity with ourselves for it.

These are among the ways in which the disciples must have tried the mind of the divine Master; and these are some of the tempers and characteristics which to this hour try and fret us in our brethren. It may be thought that the instances here adduced are but faint and minute expressions of these different wrong tempers. That may be. But we must remember how pure and perfect the mind of Jesus is, and then we shall know that though the instance was faint, and the occasion a small one, yet His finer sensibilities gave it more than the importance of the greatest occasion. And comforting, let me say, it is to see the Lord going before us in such trials as these. But if He has gone before us in the trials themselves, He has also left us an example of a series of victories over them, and in these victories He has told us to follow His steps; for not only in His ways with His adversaries, but in His ways with His disciples is He our pattern. If, in not answering reviling with reviling, nor wrongs with threatenings, He is an example to us, so also in His going on still with His disciples, in spite of naughty outbreaks and many shortcomings among them. For we have returned to Him as "the shepherd and bishop of your souls", in all things as the One who is a pattern to us - how we should carry ourselves to all, adversaries and brethren, 1 Pet 2: 21, 25. And He, as I said, was never overcome of evil that was in another, but ever overcame it by the good that was in Himself.

Thus did He suffer from His disciples, and thus did He conquer. How ready are our foolish hearts to plead our right to part company if another does not please us. But this was not Jesus. The pride, the indifference, the ill-tempers, and the low unspiritual mind which the disciples were continually betraying did not tempt Him to withdraw from them. For at the end of their walk together He is nearer to them than ever, John 14: 16. He did not part company with them because they

gave Him much exercise of heart and were continually drawing upon Him. He warned and instructed them; He rebuked and condemned them; but *never gave them up*. Blessed, perfect Master! Lover of our souls at all cost!

O Lord, Thy heart with love o'erflowed,
Love spoke in every breath,
Unwearied love Thy life declared,
And triumphed in Thy death.

And Thou hast taught Thy followers here,
Their faithfulness to prove,
By yielding to Thy sweet command,
That they each other love.

May we this sacred law fulfil,
In every act and thought,
Each angry passion be removed,
Each selfish thought forgot.

Teach us to *help each other*, Lord,
Each other's burdens bear.
Let each his willing aid afford
And feel *his brother's* care.

From *Goodly Words*, 1932 said then to be previously unpublished

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