

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

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CONTENTS

Suffering

Page 1

“Imitators of God”

Page 19

A Vessel For Christ

Charles A Coates

Page 30

SUFFERING

1 Peter 1: 10-11; 2: 21-23

Hebrews 2: 9-10

Exodus 30: 22-33

Revelation 21: 9-10, 18-25

RIW It will be evident from the scriptures suggested that what is in mind to consider is this matter of suffering. Many of the Lord's people have been called upon to endure it currently, and some in a protracted way. I think the Lord has His hand upon that and evidently, He is desirous that we should hear His voice in it. We perhaps think of suffering as simply a consequence of condition and circumstance, but I wondered if the scriptures we have read would encourage us to help us to see how it is regarded by divine Persons. The scriptures are full of suggestions of it, and the Old Testament is particularly full of the thought of suffering, which would indicate for us that it has a very prominent place in the divine mind.

I wondered if we could start with what we have read in Peter and consider the Lord as the supreme Sufferer. Peter speaks a lot as to suffering; he had been a witness of the sufferings; he says that later on in the book - a witness of the sufferings and partaker of the glory (chap 5: 1) - and they had left their mark upon him. As he writes to these sojourners, he takes up the thought and it is not long before he draws attention to Christ. He brings out that it was the occupation of the prophets, there was that which was testified beforehand, the spirit of Christ was in them; and he uses this beautiful expression "the sufferings which belonged to Christ". I feel very measured as suggesting this because the sufferings of Christ are a holy matter, but I think that the thought is that we get the divine view as to what this matter of suffering really means. Paul said to Timothy, "Take thy share in suffering" (2 Tim 2: 3), as if there is an allotted portion for Timothy to fill out.

Christ's portion was every suffering: "the sufferings which belonged to the Christ". It says of Him in relation to the people of God that "In all their affliction he was afflicted", Isa 63: 9. We are to be thankful for the spirit that was in these prophets, and for the scriptures that bring out something of the feelings of Christ in relation to those sufferings. Some of us were recently looking at the Psalms, and it struck me that the Lord, as we read of Him in the gospels, was largely

silent as to what it meant for Him to endure what He did. We have several occasions where He expresses it, Gethsemane being one of them; but how thankful we can be for the spirit of Christ which was in these ones of old who could bring out something of His feelings in relation to what belonged to Him. I wondered if it would help us and set our affections right to freshly consider the One who was the supreme Sufferer.

The scripture in the second chapter brings out that He is to be a model for us. It says, "For to this have ye been called". That is a remarkable thing, that suffering is part of our calling. So that things do not happen incidentally or by chance, but it forms part of what we are called to and Christ is the Model for us in it. And if He is the Model for us I think, as the writer of the Hebrews says, we need to, "consider well him who endured so great contradiction from sinners against himself", chap 12: 3. He is the Model so that we might "follow in his steps". We can be assured that whatever we are called upon to have part in, and we feel for many of our brethren that endure much, we can always be assured that we have the sympathy of Christ, and we can take account of Him - the One that has endured every suffering. I think if we are called upon to have part in that it gives the whole thought of suffering a great dignity. And so we are called upon Him to follow Him.

I thought we could look at the section of scripture in Hebrews which presents more the matter of suffering as the divinely appointed way. What lies before the writer is the "bringing many sons to glory"; that is what God has set out to do. But then there is the question of the way in which He is going to do that, the way He is going to accomplish His great purpose. And we have the Lord Jesus presented here as a leader for us. I was encouraged by the hymn we sang (Hymn 139) that He has gone before, He is the great Leader, and He has been made perfect, and is fully qualified to fill that office. As a Leader He is there too as a High Priest able to sympathise.

In Exodus, we have the matter of the anointing of the whole tent of meeting; the whole system was to be anointed. I think the thought of the anointing is what God identifies Himself with through the Spirit. The whole system was to be anointed with this oil and these instructions as to what was to be used in this anointing oil were given. I could not say what these ingredients refer to in their detail but myrrh was there, and the size of this ingredient was very prominent; so I think that there would have been the fragrance of it in the whole system that

was anointed. The assembly is now the anointed vessel. When Christ was here He was anointed, but God has publicly identified Himself now with His people by the Holy Spirit and it seems there is a suggestion of suffering in it.

Then in Revelation I thought of the Lamb's wife. John was called to view the Lamb's wife, a view of the great vessel, the assembly, which is here for the sake of Christ. He was here and upheld and maintained God's rights at all cost to Himself. John was told that the Lion of the tribe of Judah had overcome, but he saw a Lamb, (chap 5: 5-6), which is a diminutive thought, and I wondered if this great city which John sees is what has been established and maintained in the spirit of suffering. These very prominent features of the city, its foundations and its walls and its gates, are beautified here, and it is all very suggestive of what is being held for Christ in circumstances of suffering. I think we need to get a view of this so that we are ready to let go of natural thoughts and advantage and be prepared for suffering. That is my thought, but it is going to need the help of the brethren to bring it out.

RWMcC It is a very profitable line of enquiry. We speak of suffering but often at the same time you are conscious that others have been given much more than has been given us to suffer. But I think to start with the Lord and to see "the sufferings which belonged to the Christ" is a very tender and beautiful expression. And what it says in the chapter in Hebrews "to make perfect the leader of their salvation through sufferings"; it is the divine way that God has operated. It really characterises the dispensation.

RIW It helps us to see that in many ways "the sufferings which belonged to the Christ" involved that which we will never have to endure; we can be bowed in the sense of it, all that He has endured. Of course everything was effected for us by it, but I wondered if we would just get the sense that if we are called upon, and scripture tells us we are, then there is great dignity attached to it because Christ Himself has been a sufferer and supreme in it.

RWMcC So there are those aspects which man could never enter into; we could never enter some of those sufferings of the Christ: "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us", 2 Cor 5: 21.

RIW It affected me thinking about it, that the Lord spent a lot of time with His disciples telling them about His sufferings; and what He spoke of to them was largely what He would suffer from the hands of man.

You get the sense that He is seeking to teach them and prepare them for such a pathway. But then you have that moment in John's gospel, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour", chap 12: 27. He could not express in words what that meant to Him, words were not enough, it was beyond them to know and yet He would teach them in what they were able for.

RDP We think of suffering, and we think of physical things immediately, which it would involve, but I was thinking about the Lord Jesus when He was here: you said that there were things just hinted at in scripture. For instance, when He came down to Jerusalem for the last time, He wept over it (Luke 19: 41); "how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!", Matt 23: 37. I think I read somewhere that it was suffering for the Lord even to walk here on the street in a world that was so corrupted by sin. And that was suffering, not physical things which we would perhaps immediately think of; there was that of course, but what is special to Him that is just hinted at.

RIW He says "thou knewest not the season of thy visitation", Luke 19: 44. It is in Isaiah it says, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain", chap 49: 4. Think of what He felt because of the unresponsive character of His earthly people, "We have piped to you, and ye have not danced: we have mourned to you, and ye have not wailed", Matt 11: 17. The Lord felt all that in His spirit which as you say would have all been part of His sufferings.

RWMcC He would have known that this would have been the putting off of Israel. In time they will be taken up again, but I was thinking of the suffering that we cannot enter into.

RIW Yes, His ministry was largely to them, and of course there were those who had to do with Him and got the blessing, but there they were before Pilate, crying for Him to be crucified. He felt all of that, did He not?

PM John says at the beginning of his gospel, "He came to his own" (chap.1: 11): they were His own, but they shut the door on Him, "and his own received him not". How He must have felt that! "He came to **his own**".

RIW I think these things are to affect us and it helps us to have all of this in mind as we read the gospels, to see all that He was bearing.

Outwardly there was a wonderful ministration of grace towards men, and He was ever available. But the suffering would have been a daily thing, and He felt the utter rejection of the people to whom he came!

AM And He came knowing perfectly what was before Him. For us any sufferings we may endure tend to be what is laid upon us, but He came into a condition in which He could suffer and knowing all the sufferings that were before Him.

RIW And He was prepared for that path. At one point they were offended in Him because His face was turned to go to Jerusalem, Luke 9: 53. He had it all before Him, the whole course of suffering which was His.

TJH You mentioned testifying before of His sufferings and the sufferings that He would have at the hands of man, and these other sufferings of coming to His own: is it also in your mind that the glories that are revealed are also testified of before?

RIW There is always an answer to suffering. God will see to it; it is a moral necessity that sufferings must be answered in glory.

MIW The suffering in itself is not the end; it is a divinely appointed way in view of glory. The Lord could say that as to Himself to the two on the way to Emmaüs; it links with this scripture, "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory", Luke 24: 26. It is a principle for man established there, is it?

RIW Yes, and as you say it is not the end, but it is the means of proving the moral qualification to bear glory. I think that is something that is brought out as a principle with God.

DAB I noticed a distinction in relation to the sufferings in the last two scriptures. We have the precious stones in Revelation which are formed under pressure. You could not apply that thought of formation to the Lord Jesus, but it is the foundation of the holy city; there is what is abiding that has been arrived at in that way. But in the spices in the anointing oil, the crushing is used to release what is there. It is the only way of finding out what is there. It has its application to us, but it is very profound what Peter says, that the Christ must suffer. It is not simply because everything around is so bad, but it was God's chosen way to bring out the good that was there, do you think?

RIW I think it is expressed in the second chapter; it says, "when

reviled, reviled not again”; all of those things brought out what was there; it brought out moral perfection. The sufferings gave opportunity for it to be seen. The whole point to the anointing oil was that there should be fragrance. I suppose with us, God uses suffering to bring out what is of Himself; it is by way of a formed work within us.

DAB The tabernacle was God's dwelling place, was it not? The priest had liberty to enter in so far, but the whole atmosphere of the place was pervaded by what suffering had brought into expression. God chose that it should be thus.

RIW You use the word pervade and I was thinking of the city: “the lamp thereof is the Lamb”, the light was the love of One who had suffered; it pervaded the whole city. And the nations will walk in its light. It gives us an idea of what it is in the sight of God. It is to bring out what is there, of course intrinsically in Christ, but the sufferings do bring out what is of His own work in His people. It would be a matter of refining going on, bringing out what is precious, but nonetheless it is brought out by suffering.

AJMCK So what came out was for the divine appreciation; it was not appreciated by men, it was not appreciated by Israel, “He came to his own, and his own received him not”; it was for the divine appreciation: “*This* is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight”, Matt 17: 5. Think of what was bound up in that, an appreciation of everything that came out through that pathway of pressure.

RIW That is helpful, and the whole pathway of suffering was the means by which it was released; all that fragrance to God was released. It helps us to see suffering in that light, do you think?

AJMCK Yes, I love this expression, “sufferings which belonged to Christ”. We often think of His distinctiveness in relation to His glory, but His sufferings are an essential part of His distinctiveness as set apart from every other man.

RIW And such were these sufferings to the heart of God that we are called upon to follow Him in suffering. In Philippians Paul says of his desire to know Christ, “and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings” (chap 3: 10); that was a reference to the character of sufferings to which we are called to have part.

GMCK Would you give us a touch about this expression, “sufferings which belonged to Christ”? I think you mentioned those that were

unique to Him; there is something that we have no part in. There were sufferings that belonged to Christ. I wondered if it would be good to get a touch of that.

RIW Peter loved the Lord and expressed a desire to follow Him, which he did. Peter's heart was in the right place, he had a desire to be with the Lord in such a pathway, but there was a point where the Lord says, "thou canst not follow me", John 13: 36. It was not his part, not his place; it was the Lord going forward to become the Sin-bearer, to face the awful judgment and forsaking of God, all of which we will never know. It was not Peter's place to have part in that.

DAB I sometimes wonder as to Romans 8: 18, where Paul brings out that our sufferings and the glory are not to be compared with each other, that is how we are to view our own path. But I wondered if, when we consider the sufferings and glory of Christ, we would say there was an equivalence? Scripture says, "He that descended is the same who has also ascended", Eph 4: 10. While we cannot measure either, the greatness of the glory which He entered into did find its answer in what was expressed in that suffering way.

RIW Yes; we have the uniqueness of that suffering way brought out in the prophets and the psalms which bring out some of His feelings as to that. We were reading some of them not so long ago: for example, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", Ps 22: 1. It goes on to say, "Our fathers confided in thee ... and thou didst deliver them" (v 4), "But I am a worm" (v 6); that brings out something of what those sufferings were to His holy soul. It is beautiful to see the Spirit of Christ in such scriptures that give us a sense of what it was for Him.

GMcK It needs to be a deep thing with us, if we take up Him as a Model and a Leader, and we take our part, we have a very clear understanding that He has gone further than we will ever have to go on this line. There are things, such as the wrath of God, that He faced; we will never! And the forsaking, and other elements: I think it is good to contemplate that as we take up our part. His being a Leader does not mean that I can go anywhere near what He has accomplished.

RIW It is good to make that point. We can only adore when we think of all that belonged to Him.

TJH I was thinking of your reference to the uniqueness of the sufferings and the glory of the Lord Jesus. We have quoted already,

“Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?”. That is the model, His glory, and His sufferings are unique to Him, but we can follow as to that example, bearing in mind His uniqueness in it.

RIW I am sure that is right. It really bears out the principle that the suffering in that sense must precede the glory. God will bring out everything, as the last scripture says, in glorious display to demonstrate what suffering is in its character under His eye.

DJW There is no shame in tears, is there? I was thinking of what Paul says to Timothy, “remembering thy tears”, 2 Tim 1: 4. We get the expression twice in relation to the Lord's tears, in relation to Lazarus (John 11: 35), and in relation to the nation of Israel, Luke 19: 41. I was thinking we need to be sympathetic with one another in regard of what we are passing through.

RIW I think so. We were speaking of the body earlier in the week and I think the feelings of one another are drawn out in relation to what one and another pass through; I think we prove that. What we are called upon to pass through is God's matter, but it brings out the side of feeling one for the other.

JMB We have spoken about the uniqueness of Christ, and I was thinking of Moses, who was a type of Christ, and he chose to suffer affliction, Heb 11: 25. You have suggested that the suffering is laid upon us, but Moses too was unique inasmuch as he chose to suffer the affliction along with the people of God.

RIW Yes, that is good! He was prepared for it. I suppose that confirms what we read in Exodus that the people of God were associated with a suffering position, and he chose to suffer with them. I think that we need to be prepared for it. We feel very measured in that; we should feel measured by it because we do not know how long it is till the Lord comes, but it seems to me at the present moment that His voice in current circumstances is raising the exercise with us as to our preparedness for suffering.

RJG The Lord's glory in obedience was seen in His sufferings, in bringing in the greatness of His person, He “loved righteousness” and “hated lawlessness”, Heb 1: 9. He loved the will of the Father; He was fully committed.

RIW Yes, it was His food in that sense, and it sustained Him through

His sufferings. He moved here in the conscious sense of the Father's love in all the circumstances; it was what sustained Him in it. He was morally superior to them but the sufferings were no less real. Even in the darkest hour, in the court of Pilate with all the false accusations, all the reproaches, He was morally superior to it. He "endured the cross, having despised the shame" (Heb 12: 2); that is His moral perfection!

PM In Genesis 22 we get the reference, "they went both of them together", v 6. Does that give us some impression of what it meant to the Father to see and be with His own beloved Son in going that way, step by step; and every step was perfect and every motive was perfect and every feeling was holy. What delight that must have given, the incense, fragrant!

RIW Yes, that ties in with what our brother was saying, what it was for the Father. We have His secret life, which was for the Father, but when He came out in His public service it drew the efforts of the enemy. I thought of that with the anointing; the enemy was concentrated against one who God had identified Himself with. But in such circumstances it brought out His moral perfection and all was for the delight of the Father.

PM It says as to the incense that it was beaten to powder (Exod 30: 36); how affecting that is in those movements of the Lord Jesus.

DAB I was just noticing in relation to what has been said as to obedience that the Lord says, "that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father has commanded me, thus I do", John 14: 31. The world has no taste for the fragrance that was expressed in "thus I do"; the features of moral worth that came out which transform our view of that dark time.

RIW I think I remember you suggesting that the ram caught in the thicket (Gen 22: 13) was a suggestion of what you have just brought forward; He was held in obedience, that "the world may know that I love the Father"; there was a testimony rendered that whatever the circumstances were - and also how He loved the Father - and come what may, He would glorify Him!

DJW Is that what the expression in Hebrews 2 means, "it became him". It is a remarkable expression. What precedes it is "he should taste death for everything"; He did not just go through it; it brought out some intricacy of His Person. It was suitable to such a One to suffer.

RIW It was proper to Him to suffer. It is a remarkable thing to think of!

RWMcK I think it could be rendered, 'fitting'. I am not suggesting that that is a better word than this, but it does help to give the sense.

RIW I was thinking about Moses, he could say after the incident of the golden calf, 'Thou sayest that Thou wilt bring us up, but show me the way', Exod 33: 12, 13. We were recently reading of the mount of transfiguration, and it says of Moses and Elias that they appeared with the Lord and they were speaking with Him as to His departure, Luke 9: 31. For the time they appeared in glory with the Lord but it did not appear in this record to be their occupation, their occupation was the way. They spoke of His departure, and I recalled that Moses was one that had been shown the way. It involved for the Lord that He might suffer death. We often say for Him death was death, that was something unique to the Lord.

AJMCK What is involved in "tasting death"?

RIW What can we say! For the Lord He faced it in all its awfulness, to Him death was death: 'And for Him death was death. Man's utter weakness, Satan's extreme power, and God's just vengeance' (JND Collected Writings vol 7 p169); the Lord tasted that.

DAB I wondered if it was what we were speaking of just now, what we cannot share. It is an inward thing, and we cannot share that.

RIW I think that helps, and the way for Him is that which we cannot have part in; He tasted death so that we will never have to.

AJMCK The scripture says, "he should taste death for every thing". I wondered if it just gives us a view of the depths of these sufferings we are speaking of, that at every step of that life, He had encountered what was touched by death, and He tasted death for everything. This is something that we cannot touch, only He could touch it, but He tasted it for absolutely everything.

RIW That is how I understand it: everything that came under the power of death by sin, He tasted death for. Now not all may come into the good of His work, but He tasted death for every thing, and it says 'every one' in the note, (note 'f').

RWMcC I often think of Ezekiel's bread; it speaks about being made with human dung, and God mitigated it when he cried out (Ezek 4: 12-

17); so it says, "I have given thee cow's dung". It was unmitigated for the Lord when He tasted death.

RIW What can we say as to it! It involved the extremity of what death was.

PM The Originator of life has felt the pains of death, "having loosed the pains of death", Acts 2: 24. He felt what it was to lie there in death! It is a mystery to us, but it was something that only He could feel.

RIW I am sure that is right. He lay in death. God was without His Christ.

TJH It goes on to "bringing many sons to glory", that is a result of what He tasted do you think?

RIW He recoiled from it; He could say, "My soul is very sorrowful even unto death", Matt 26: 38. He looked for sympathy, Ps 69: 20. He recoiled from what death meant, but in His obedience He went that way and He went through with it all; and in doing so opened up the way for many sons to be brought to glory. I suppose in the measure that we follow Him we follow Him in the way. The sufferings would bring out that we are sons by God's purpose; that is what He has set His heart on, but He brings out the moral worth and moral qualifications of the sons brought to glory in such a way.

DAB It has been said in relation to 1 Peter 2: 24 that we are not called upon to suffer *what* He suffered: He bore our sins in His body on the tree, but we are called upon to suffer *as* He suffered. I find that test enough! We speak about the momentary character of our afflictions, but in what spirit do I enter into them: are these moral features that were expressed in a pathway of Jesus, anything that anyone could see?

RIW Perhaps that brings us on to the thought of the anointing because Peter does go on to say, "If ye are reproached in the name of Christ, blessed are ye; for the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you", chap 4: 14. Do you think that would link with the way that we suffer?

DAB I noticed how the anointing singles out all the things that speak of Christ personally; the table, the lampstand, the altar, the laver and so on, but also the utensils. So that especially service, and especially service towards God, is looked for in the Spirit.

RIW Yes, I think the whole thought is really what would be for the

pleasure of God; the spirit of a suffering Christ, the way He suffered.

GMcK I wanted to ask what is included; you speak about these sufferings and anyone sitting here may be wondering what these sufferings are for us. What is included, in your mind?

RIW Well, men speak of suffering, and they do not get the thought as it is in relation to God. We have Christ for a Model, so, for example, He suffered for righteousness; that is doing what is right. Now in the current course and stream of things doing what is right will attract suffering.

GMcK You mean there may be reproach in it?

RIW The Lord knew what it was to face reproach, we read that it broke His heart, Ps 69: 20. We are called upon to suffer for Him, suffer for the Lord, which would require faithfulness to Him. It is a position of suffering that we are called to. We can see here that God identifies Himself with that position.

TJH If we do what is right then we may get contradiction; that is something of the suffering that we ourselves would bear. It speaks of the Lord Jesus suffering contradiction, Heb 12: 3.

RIW I suppose we have examples of the way in which we suffer; we have Stephen, Acts 7. Think of what was seen in him; he was called upon to suffer.

GMcK The man in John 9 that the Lord met was cast out; he lost his place altogether here, that would be included.

DAB-w We have been helped recently when it was pointed out that resisting temptation is a suffering; simply, my flesh would want to do it and resisting it involves suffering. That scripture where we have Christ who has been tempted in all things, sin apart, helps us even in relation to that, Heb 4: 15. Can we add that thought of suffering in resisting temptation to this thought too?

RIW We were reading of the temptations this week. There was nothing that Satan found with the Lord; there was no inward struggle there that we may experience, but He was tempted in all things.

DAB-w I wanted to know whether it would be right to make the link. Our brother referenced His walk at the start of the reading and how every step involved suffering, and it just struck me He was tempted on every hand in the way that the world was against His Father and He

endured it, sin apart. Is that another way in which temptation can impress us? He is able to bear it sin apart: does that extend the thought of being tempted in all things?

RIW I think being tempted in all things means Satan brought before Him everything that he brings before us, and he found nothing in Him, "sin apart". There was nothing in Him that Satan could appeal to. But He felt the fact that Satan would tempt Him. He could say to His own, "But ye are they who have persevered with me in my temptations" (Luke 22: 28); that is really suffering. He credited them that they had persevered with Him.

TJH Does Hebrews 11 help as to Moses? "By faith Moses, when he had become great, refused to be called son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction along with the people of God than to have the temporary pleasure of sin", v 24-25.

RIW I wondered if that would have some link with the verse that we have read that really the people of God are identified with the suffering position, and he would choose his part with them rather than to have all that was otherwise available to him by way of worldly advantage.

RWMcC I was thinking of what Jehovah says to David, how He went about in a tent and a tabernacle, "In all my going about with all Israel" (1 Chron 17: 6), and then it speaks about the house, but I wondered if that entered into the suffering side in the sense that it comes out in the tabernacle system that is set up. How He bore with Israel and went with them through the wilderness.

RIW Yes, and was prepared to identify Himself with them in that position.

CCDR I wondered if you could say something as to Exodus. I think in your opening remarks you spoke of what God identifies Himself with, and that you mentioned the Spirit.

RIW I wondered that, and we see the pattern with the Lord. He was there before the eye of God in secret as has been said, and there was the time that He came out in public service and He could speak of Himself as being anointed "to preach to captives deliverance". I am thinking of Luke's gospel (chap 4: 18), but John saw the Spirit descend upon Him (John 1: 32), and it really suggests to me that there is a public side to the anointing. God would identify Himself with the Lord, and He would identify Himself with what takes the suffering position now.

CCDR It might be a mark of approval.

RIW Yes, “This is my beloved Son”, Matt 3: 17.

CCDR You used the word Spirit, that is a capital 'S'. Do you think that is what the Spirit is striving at today, that there might be persons who are suffering that will be coming out in the same spirit, small 's', and manner as the Lord who has gone before?

RIW I wondered if the thought of that is in Peter as he says, “the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you”. In other words, just as the Lord was morally superior to the sufferings, the suggestion there of the Spirit of glory is that there is that which is seen to be morally superior to the suffering of reproach. The Spirit of God would suggest power for it as well.

DAB It is a touching reference that Peter makes. I understand that he is referring to the way that the glory departed in Ezekiel, but it did not disappear all in one go: there were places where it could rest. And even in a day when the public position is so dark the Holy Spirit finds a resting place amongst those who bear the reproach of the Christ. Does that suggest that the Holy Spirit also shares God's appreciation for its fragrance wherever it is found?

RIW That is helpful and I think these scriptures would help us to see that there is a divine estimation of these things, and it is very precious.

DAB Why would the glory linger? The public position was under judgment! Why did it not just go! Mr Taylor said it was reluctant to leave (J Taylor vol 47 p39) but there was somewhere it could abide. Peter says the Spirit of glory rests upon those that bear the reproach of the Christ.

RIW There was a complacency there, conditions in which the Holy Spirit could rest.

DJW How are we to arrive at what God is working out through the sufferings we pass through? It speak in Hebrews 12 as to “the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those exercised by it”, v 11.

RIW Help us, please.

DJW Sometimes we just try and shrug these things off, but that is not the point; the suffering is intended to have “the peaceful fruit of righteousness”.

RIW Do you think it would help us to see that God has got a definite end in view, something in mind to work out? In all these things something of the Spirit of Christ comes out which is for His pleasure.

AM The Lord Jesus did not accept His sufferings from man; he accepted them from God, and in Philippians our sufferings are referred to as a gift: it has been given to you to suffer, chap 1: 29. Do you think that part of our experience should be the acceptance of anything we have to pass through, as having been given by God for His own purpose? Is that how the result is to be worked out?

RIW Yes, and I know it sounds very easy to say, but we are not to shrink from it. We are given power for it, and we can prove the sympathy of Christ in it, and something of the Spirit of glory is seen testimonially.

PM There is a reference in 1 Peter, “put to grief by various trials”, but it says, “if needed ... that the proving of your faith, much more precious than of gold ... be found to praise and glory”, chap 1: 6, 7. Does that link?

RIW So that would suggest that we are not passed through anything that is unnecessary, and if we are called upon to take such a position then we know that God has something definite in mind to work out in it. These things are not just a matter of chance or circumstance.

PM I wondered if it would be right to say that we get the gain of what the Lord is passing us through in His presence, not merely the acceptance, as important as that is, but we get the gain in His presence.

RIW And as we do, I suppose that our experience would be that He Himself comes before us as the One that has sustained everything, endured all.

I thought of this in Revelation, and we often speak about it, that John was given this glorious view; it is what is brought out in display. I thought of these features of the city, its walls, its gates for example, and the foundations that had this ornamentation to them, and I wondered if it brought out what is worked out. We have the thought of the wall, and we understand what that means, a sphere of protection, that which keeps what is not of God out, and the gates, the way things are worked out is often where we are tested. We often hold things almost as abstract truth, but, speaking for myself, the working out of them practically is where I fall down, because of the unpreparedness for

suffering.

RWMcC I was thinking of what it says of suffering: “afterwards yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those exercised by it”: if you take it on stoically you would miss that! You would miss being exercised by it. And I like what you say, that what has secured these precious stones is having been under pressure, like many rocks being under pressure, but there is something yielded from it and it is being brought to light; “peaceful fruit of righteousness”. But then God is able to use that for His glory.

DJW Do you think the variations these different jewels would suggest that suffering brings out personality?

RIW Yes, go on.

DJW I was thinking that all these jewels are different colours, there is no pattern to it; and I was wondering if it brings out personality in the saints?

RIW Yes. So what you are called upon is different from what I am, and it brings out something that is of God. Is that your thought?

TJH Is it your thought that all these precious stones are fitted together? It involves the whole city being glorious.

RIW Yes, it is suffering that is in moral correspondence with the Lamb - the Lamb's wife; it is a very meek and diminutive thought.

GMcK I think what you are saying is very persuasive, because if my view of what is laid on me is to have a part in some answering note to the suffering One, that is something that we can all be attracted to.

RIW Yes, and that would help us, do you think, in relation to the present time; to weigh things and to be prepared for the character of the position? The Lamb's wife would suggest what is maintained in care for the Lord. Much suffering has entered into the necessity for that over the history of the church.

GJR There is a character of suffering that we have not enquired into in detail, and that is the suffering that I have brought upon myself in God's government. Is that excluded from what we are considering?

RIW I suppose for ourselves that would form quite a large part of what we have to suffer, what we have brought upon ourselves. Is that what you are thinking?

GJR That is a fact. At first glance that is devoid of glory, it is part of God's ways in His government that we do suffer. I do not want to lower the level but can you briefly say something about that.

RIW I suppose if that is the case we recognise it as such. David was one who had to suffer under the government of God because of what he was, and he recognised it and accepted it. What can others say?

DAB-w Peter touches it near your first scripture, suffering for unrighteousness sake. We can do that and there is no glory in it, but He always has a purpose and uses it to bring us back.

RIW Peter says it is better to suffer as “well-doers than as evildoers; for Christ indeed has once suffered for sins”, chap 3: 18. It is anticipated that Christ has suffered for sins and that we should suffer not as evil doers, we should not bring it upon ourselves in that sense. Would that be the suggestion in that verse?

DAB We must get away from the idea that God's discipline for what we have failed in is punitive, because the punishment for sin is clear; it is not suffering: it is death. If God brings suffering, then He may have some lesson and some fruit in His mind.

RIW Thank you, that helps.

GJR Paul brings the idea in in relation to the Supper (1 Cor 11); he says, “On this account many among you are weak and infirm, and a good many are fallen asleep”, v 30. Do you think it links the moral state with their physical condition?

DAB I was thinking that there is a view in which Paul's sufferings would include the governmental kind that our brother is referring to, “for / will shew to him how much he must suffer for my name” (Acts 9: 16); in some ways that was an answer to the suffering he himself had inflicted; but he says, “I fill up that which is behind of the tribulations of Christ in my flesh, for his body, which is the assembly”, Col 1: 24.

RIW That would help, he had a sense that he was filling up something, that which lacked, so that what should be brought out in public testimony was a spirit of suffering. Paul was prepared to fill it up so that which was proper to His body, the assembly who he had persecuted, should be seen.

DAB I do not think God is pleased unless I allow the exercise He

brings to turn me to Himself. If it is simply regret and self-pity, God has no pleasure in that: these tears do not go into His bottle, Ps 56: 8.

Grimsby

8th February 2025

List of initials

D.A.Barlow, Sunbury; J.M.Bedford, Grimsby; D.A.Burr, Sidcup; R.J.Gardiner, Aberdeen; T.J.Harvey, East Finchley; A.Martin, Buckhurst Hill; P.Martin, Colchester; R.W.McClean, Grimsby; A.J.McKay, Witney; G.McKay, Manchester; R.W.McKay, Witney; R.D.Plant, Birmingham, C.C.D.Remmington, St Albans; G.J.Richards, Malvern; M.I.Webster, Buckhurst Hill; R.I.Webster, Buckhurst Hill; D.J.Willetts, Birmingham

“IMITATORS OF GOD”

Ephesians 5: 1-21

SMW This first verse of chapter 5 is a very profound verse, “Be ye therefore imitators of God”. I am not sure of how much I can say through experience as to that. We may get some help as together. In our reading on the previous chapter we spoke of putting on the new man, which verse 24 says, “is created in truthful righteousness and holiness”, and then too, it goes on to speak of being sealed with “the Holy Spirit of God”, v 30. I need help as to how we are exercised in this, as this first verse says, being “imitators of God”.

I wondered too if we could get help as to the character of it, “as beloved children, and walk in love”, then later on where we read, “walk as children of light”.

ILB We had meetings elsewhere yesterday on the verse, “God is light” (1 John 1: 5), and this chapter takes that matter up. The things that are spoken of here, from verse 3 onwards, relate to what is dark. It says of God that He “is light, and in him is no darkness” (1 John 1: 5), and that is brought out later on in the chapter. “Beloved children” relates to what derives from God Himself: “as many as received him, to them gave he the right to be children of God”, John 1: 12. This springs, of course, from the divine side, but our side is to “walk in love, even as the Christ loved us”. The reference to the burnt-offering speaks of the delight that God found in His beloved Son. In one sense we are left here, are we not, that such features that were found in Him should be seen in us at the present time? We must realise that it all relates to the way that God has moved in love to secure those who are unworthy; and yet they are able, as having received Him, to be called children, which relates to derivation and also dependence.

DAB Chapter 1 refers to adoption (v 5), and we spoke in the service of God this morning about adoption, how we are brought into relationship with God and indeed with His beloved Son as well. He “has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts” (Gal 4: 6), that we might fulfil that relationship. We associate the idea of sonship with adoption, do we not? But the idea of children is not on a lower level. It corresponds to what John speaks about, being “begotten of God” (1 John 3: 9), and what Peter speaks about as to “partakers of the divine nature” 2 Pet 1: 4. I thought it was interesting to see in this passage that simply having the divine nature is not enough: we have to *walk* in these

things, walk in love and walk in light. They are God's nature, but if we are going to walk in them, that requires overcoming of those things that belong to our fallen nature. I was thinking of the enquiry about how we should be in the good of this. Paul does not present it as enough to appreciate that the relationship exists, but there has to be positive committal to walking in it.

ILB There is what we speak of as status, is there not? But then there is the requirement on our side, and there is every resource that we should walk according to the place that we have been given. We might wonder, from verse 3, that Paul should have to say such things to the Ephesians, but we know what our own hearts are, and therefore it is a constant matter, and the resource of the Spirit is the only power by which we can, in any way, be “imitators of God”. But “children of God” is our status, is it not?

DAB Reference has been made to John 1: 12, “the right to be children of God”. It is not just a label, is it? The right derives from the way we receive Christ; that is the proof that we are children of God - that we see Christ in the same way as God does. That is what we have here, is it not? He is presented here as an object and a standard that we would aspire to, a very high standard. That aspiration is the evidence of the divine nature being there, but it practically requires the overcoming of all these manifestations of the fallen condition in which we are.

SMW So John in his epistle also says, “See what love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God”, 1 John 3: 1. What the Father has given to us is Christ, is it not? So that we can then “be called the children of God”.

DAB Well that shows how elevated the idea is; it refers to God's highest thoughts for us. He expresses His very nature to us, He would count us as members of the divine family; and those things should act, do you think, as a very strong lever to see the contrast with these carnal things that he speaks of?

GMB In view of what has been said, it would be right to say, would it, that only the children of God can be imitators of God, because only they have His nature? But that does not mean that merely because we are children we are imitating. Is that the responsibility that Paul is bringing out?

DAB Yes, it is an interesting analogy with the natural family: not every son, not every child, is like his or her father. Some of them strike out on

a separate course, and they want to be different, and so on. They have their father's nature, but they do not want to imitate it, and they want to develop their own identity and all those kinds of things. That is the way the world goes on. But there is evidence of something more: there is the status that has been referred to, but imitation is a matter of nurture. It is not only God's nature, but the nurture in ourselves of His work, and what we do to answer to the love which He has shown us. Is that right?

GMB This links quite closely with what we were speaking of last week, as to the "new man", because we are to be preserved from any thought that what is born of the flesh can imitate God, are we not? The old man has no part in this. But the children of God have His nature; they are born of Him. They are to recognise that there is that within the believer. Someone was mentioning a couple of weeks ago that people in the world tend to say that everyone is a child of God, but the scripture that has been quoted in John 1 makes clear that that is not the case. This is a particular status, but then it means that there is something in us that can imitate God, and that is not true of all, is it?

DAB That idea that everyone is a child of God leads implicitly - although people may not say this - to associating all this kind of profanity which Paul describes here with God Himself, and that is a moral impossibility. We would shrink from the idea. The Greek culture was very profane, and God used the conversion of the Ephesian brethren to show how different moral order is. And yet, people think that they can live in this dissolute way, and still identify themselves with God; that is not possible, is it?

ILB "God is light, and in him is **no darkness**" (1 John 1: 5): you might have said, "God is light" is enough, but that emphasises what you say, that *nothing* of this other order can be associated with God at all.

AAC So do we see the first two verses of this chapter as standing over against the first three verses of the previous paragraph - "estranged from the life of God by reason of the ignorance which is in them", Eph 4: 18? We took account of the activity of love, which is what our passage here is drawing our attention to, as to walking in love. And the key to it is in verse 18 of our passage, "filled with the Spirit". We cannot be filled with the Spirit and be in ignorance. But as by the power of the Spirit we are able to take on this imitation. We should make clear for the young ones that this is not what we may speak of as imitation by something that is false, but rather it is something which is genuine in its expression of the original. This imitation here is a testimonial thing, is it

not? It is apparent. The work of the Spirit within, as distinct from what is natural, is that which stands over against estrangement “from the life of God”. It is not just familiarity with it, but *it becomes us*. It becomes a demonstration of it.

SMW That is helpful, and the only way is if we are marked by the character of the new man, and, “filled with the Spirit”, which is a challenge. I was thinking too, it is to “walk in love”, that indicates that there is to be movement, do you think? There is the testimonial side; so Christianity is not a stagnant thing. It is a living system that, putting simply, is all centred in a blessed Man.

AAC And again, drawing on our previous paragraph, it is over against those who “walk in the vanity of their mind”, Eph 4: 17. It is a separate walk from the world's walk, and we cannot mix the two. We cannot seek to walk partly in the way of the world and imitate that which is of God; it cannot be so. As has already been drawn attention to, God is holy, and He cannot be associated with that which is of any other character. Hence this passage would help us as to the need for separation, and setting our face to walk separately, in a different way to that which was naturally our way and the way of the world.

DAS Is the motive for this brought out in the second verse? Christianity is a living system; it is not a legal system either. But the power for it is as we contemplate that we “walk in love, even as the Christ loved us, and delivered himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour”. Is the contemplation of that a motive, do you think, for the walk?

SMW I think it must be as you say. The “offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour” is more the side of the burnt-offering, which was for God, was it not, as seen in the life of Christ? Maybe you can help us as to that.

DAS We are contemplating, in that verse, the way that the love of God has been manifested to us sacrificially. That would affect the heart of the believer. He desires to answer to that love. What God looks for in that is that we love Him. I wonder whether that is what it means to “walk in love”; as affected by that love, we desire to walk pleasing to God. The old system is pleasing ourselves, and there is a change wrought in the believer, so that we should walk here in answer to the divine love.

DAB Did you have some more thoughts as to the burnt-offering?

This is a very high standard, because the offering of Jesus is illimitable, is it not? The fragrance of that offering, the lustre of it, is unique. But the character of it, the spirit of it, is to mark the children of God. I was thinking when you read it of putting it alongside what Peter says, we “should follow in his steps ... who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree”, 1 Pet 2: 21, 24. We cannot go there, but as has been said, Paul is not suggesting that we do *what* He did, but we do it *as* He did it. I wondered if we have the burnt-offering here, and the sin-offering there. They stand as illimitable examples, do they not? And yet the character of that is to mark us so that if we do things in love, we express the divine nature in the way we do things.

SMW That is helpful, and it is helpful to make that distinction between the sin-offering and the burnt-offering. As you say in relation to the sin-offering, only Christ could have gone that way; there can be no thought of any imitation when it comes to that, can there? But when we contemplate the way the Lord Jesus went, and that life that was so pleasing to God, we take it up in the same spirit that Christ did.

DAB Leviticus starts with the burnt-offering. We might say if we are approaching a God that we have been estranged from we would start with the sin-offering, but it sets the level of everything for God, that there was that perfection. And what Paul speaks of here as “an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour”. That colours the whole of our relationship with Him.

SMW And because it was “a sweet-smelling savour”, and so acceptable to God, if we desire to take it up ourselves, it will also be acceptable to God, do you think, as we take on that exercise?

AAC Drawing from Leviticus 1: 4, it says, “And he shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt-offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him”. I was helped to see that atonement has in view being at one with God. I wondered whether that is essential for us to see in what the passage before us brings us, that all that was contrary to God's will has been removed, and we can be at one, as “imitators of God” in the knowledge that the sin-offering in all its attractiveness is essential for the removal of everything. But the Lord Jesus stands as perfect before God, and we recognise that we are at one with Him.

DAB I think it helps to have it drawn to our attention that the reference to being “filled with the Spirit” is the key to this, because if you had said to an Israelite, 'There is the burnt-offering; now you imitate that

perfection', you would have been implying that you could improve the flesh to that point, but what the flesh is has been covered by the atonement. God does not look on it; He looks on the perfection of the offering. And now the divine nature, by the Spirit, can express something that answers to the burnt-offering, which is a big advance on what was true in Israel.

GEW It says in Romans 12: 1-2, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the compassions of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your intelligent service ... that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God". I was thinking of that side of it being "a living sacrifice"; it is not a dead system, is it? I found it very searching just the other day, reading that what we see in Christ in His pathway here was One who was fully taken up with both 'the will and glory of God', A J Gardiner, Piety and Other Addresses p365-366. I was thinking about what we have here as to the "perfect will of God", but also what He was occupied with was what was for God's glory. I find it very searching to speak over these things, feeling how one comes short of it all.

GMB I was thinking of the verse you have quoted, because the verse we have been speaking of brings out that love is expressed sacrificially. I think it has been suggested that that is a general principle as to the way that this love and this walk is manifested, that it is sacrificial. The Lord said, "No one has greater love than this, that one should lay down his life for his friends" (John 15: 13), and we are told as to what love is in 1 Corinthians 13: 5 that it "does not seek what is its own". That is a suggestion of what is sacrificial, is it not?

GEW It has been said that if we place our bodies on the altar, we do not take them off. So it is very searching in that way, as it is not simply something that may be for one point in the week. What we are saying, brings out the responsible pathway, and that it should really be a permanent thing.

GMB This is something known to the believer, because it is the way that the love of God has been expressed towards him. I suppose if you asked the unregenerate man what it meant to be an imitator of God, sacrificial love is not what would come to their mind. This is the way that we have been brought to know Him.

DAB Would it be right to say that "delivered himself up" is not confined to the way He died, but also the way He lived? We get the

same thought later on in this chapter in relation to His love for the assembly. I was thinking about what was said about the will and glory of God, that they came out in His death, but they also came out in the way He lived.

GMB In no one else was the thought of presenting their bodies “a living sacrifice” seen like it was seen in His life here, was it? He never sought what was His own.

DAS That would be confirmed in what He says, “I do always the things that are pleasing to him”, John 8: 29. That was the character of His whole life, and it was a sacrificial life really from beginning to end.

DAB It comes out too in relation to the other part of what was referred to. What you have quoted may reflect His obedience, but He also says, “I do not seek my own glory” (John 8: 50); so that was also seen. Then He says, “I honour my Father, and ye dishonour me” (John 8: 49), there was that contrast with the way He lived and the way it was seen by others.

SMW In relation to the Lord Jesus here when He was walking amongst men, there is a side of suffering in what it meant to Him to see men away from God. Would that too bear on what you were saying as to the way the Lord Jesus went? He delivered Himself up, and when He was suffering that was what it actually meant to Him to see many in unrighteousness and unholiness before His God.

DAB Yes, I wondered if that is the force of that verse, “separated from sinners”, Heb 7: 26. It is not exactly implied there that He is separated from sinners by going to heaven, but there was something about the spirit and motive and spring of His life that set Him apart from everybody else. The idea is that an independent or disobedient will was working was entirely absent. He “knew not sin”, 2 Cor 5: 21.

GMB I was wondering if there was more in mind, in that regard, about the thought of separation, because the Lord Jesus never took character from the world. We have spoken of the character that belongs to the children of God, but what we have in verses 3, 4 and 5, is the character of the world. Is that more likely to mark us if separation is not maintained?

AAC The importance of that struck me as we looked at this passage. The Lord Jesus “steadfastly set his face”, Luke 9: 51. He was in the world but not of it, and that is said of us, John 17: 14, 16. We are left in the world, but we are not to be of it. We cannot practice these things

unless we take account of the need to be kept from it.

GEW You referred in an earlier reading to the “fine flour mingled with oil”, Lev 2: 4. I was thinking of that as you were speaking about this side of separation, that the Lord Jesus, in the entirety of His life here, was absolutely in precious perfection for the satisfaction of God. What a lovely scene it must have been; if we think of the fine flour, how distinctive Christ was in His life here, and that life had to be given up.

AAC Yes, Paul in writing these epistles, was not one who had actually witnessed the Lord's pathway here, but he knew the Lord Jesus as the One who was wholly pleasurable to God; and what he had learnt of Him directly, in communication with the Lord, would have convinced him that all the Old Testament scriptures speak of Him was true in Him. He writes that there should be something established as a result of the sacrifice that Christ has made that should be true in us; the holiness that is appropriate. We fail in all respects, but we take account of the One who, as you say, was always in the character of that offering of an oblation before God, wholly pleasurable to Him.

SMW We have spoken of this as a living system of things; I was wondering if there can be some help as to the end of verse 5, “has inheritance in the kingdom of the Christ and God”.

DAB I was just looking at the earlier part of that verse, and I think it is important to understand that the descriptions in that verse are characteristic of people. As Paul says in verse 8, “ye were once darkness”. So it is not that someone can lose their place in the kingdom of God, but someone who has not been converted from this character will not have it. It does bear on what was quoted from Romans 12, that this is coming under the will of a new kingdom.

SMW I wondered if that is where the light is known. So as we come into the enjoyment of the inheritance that is ours, it is in the kingdom, and if we frequent ourselves there, that is where we will experience the light, is it?

DAB Perhaps the plague of darkness in Egypt is a picture of this (Exod 10: 21-23), because there was a whole nation that was not affected by that, they “had light in their dwellings”. It did not light up the world exactly, but it showed that they were under a different authority.

GEW The word “dwelling” is quite an exercise. It is not something that we occasionally frequent. Would that bring out what you were saying as to where they were found?

DAB I appreciate that that brings in a dimension which we do not have in this chapter, that believers have that responsibility. So that it is not just that I am to be personally free of these things, but I hold what is mine free of them as well. The kingdom has that side to it; it is not simply that I am a citizen, but my household is identified with it as well. That is changing the subject a bit.

GEW That is helpful; I had not appreciated that. I was just linking on with what had been said as to what is living - to use a simple term, it was everyday life.

GMB I would like help as to the way the kingdom is described here. This is a unique reference, is it not? Why is it not just referred to as the 'kingdom of God'?

DAB Well, it is God's pleasure that Christ should give character to it, and that bears on all that we have said about Christ, and the spirit of His sacrifice and His love, and in moral features, and the way that none of the things mentioned here were named in Him at all. Does it bear on what we have been saying about separation, that the kingdom of God does not have these characteristics at all? It is not that they are there and controlled, but the fact that it is "the kingdom of the Christ" would suggest that they do not appear there in any way. Is that right?

AAC "The Christ" - can we have help as to that?

DAB I understand that "the Christ" is God's testimony; so that all that God wanted to express about Himself and about His kingdom, will find its personification in Him.

GMB The first feature of the kingdom is righteousness, Rom 14: 17. That would immediately disallow all of these things, would it not? And it is "in the Holy Spirit", which would emphasise the need of being "filled with the Spirit".

DAB It is very fine to think that we have a place, or we can have a place, in this kingdom. If you look at the United Kingdom for example, the government of this country is taken up with trying to manage what is evil. But there is a kingdom which does not have those things in it at all, and Christ gives character to it. Our inheritance in it depends on us being free of all those things through conversion, and by the Spirit too.

AAC In that analogy, the United Kingdom is anything but united. But this kingdom is perfectly united.

SMW It is perfectly united because it is all centred in Christ. The

subjects of that kingdom will answer to what He is, because “the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth”: those are all three features of Christ, are they not?

DAB And all that is the product of God's work and the Spirit's work? Paul goes over things that would not have troubled a carnal Greek at all. They were things that belonged to that culture, deeply engrained in the way they behaved. And Paul is saying here that those who have turned to Christ have left all those things aside, they are not even named among them, and they belong to a kingdom in which those features which are seen in Christ will come into expression in God's children. So you might say, it is a kingdom administratively, but it is also a family.

ILB I have noticed the references in these verses to thanksgiving (verses 4 and 19). The idea of the kingdom includes that there is thanksgiving from those that are the subjects of it.

DAB I think that is a vital feature of the kingdom. The kingdom is a system of supply; it is a dispensation and so on, but there is also a return; there is also thanksgiving. There is an answer to God for all He gives in His kingdom. We see that in David, “now, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name”, 1 Chron 29: 13. That is the kingdom working, so that the circle that begins with what is from God is complete.

ILB I was noticing that, interjected between these features of darkness, it says, “as it becomes saints” (v 3), and “but rather thanksgiving”, v 4. We get so used to a kingdom where there are complaints all the time, but that cannot be possibly associated with this kingdom. One of our hymns says,

But to adore? (Hymn 5)

The only result of it is to be thanksgiving.

TNC I was impressed by the praise and response, and the eternal nature of that response. I sometimes think of it as the echoing noise of that response in the eternal day.

DAB Unless these things come out in the saints, God is poorer as far as the world is concerned because Christ is in heaven. That may be a difficult thing to understand but we find thanksgiving in the life of Jesus. He says, “I praise thee, Father” (Matt 11: 25); that was in the midst of the darkness. He is not only down here praising the Father, but the

children of God are, and thus you might say that the testimony Godward, that started in Christ, is found among the children of God, which is a precious manifestation of how the kingdom works. It is not simply that the subjects of the kingdom are supported, like a city under siege with supplies getting through to it, but there is an answer to God, as there was in the life of Jesus.

GMB Thanksgiving is presented here as an occupation, is it not? “Giving thanks at all times for all things”. I was struck by what has been brought in, that the opposite to “filthiness and foolish talking, or jesting” is not just sobriety, or something like that, but *thanksgiving*. There is another occupation, is there not?

SMW What the latter verses we read bring out is that there is great variety, do you think? “In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and chanting with your heart to the Lord”; it is all the character of Christ but there is a great variety.

DAB The children are rather like stars, are they not? They shine in the night. And it says, “star differs from star in glory”, 1 Cor 15: 41. It also says, the “stars sang together” (Job 38: 7), which is what we have here, that that variety is harmonised in God's service.

SMW “Submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ” - there may be some impression that is brought in; what we enjoyed this morning, for instance. But we would desire to link ourselves on with that impression, and that would then further the occasion.

Sidcup

14th September 2025

List of initials (all local):-

G M Barlow; I L Barlow; D A Burr; T N Clark; A A Croot; D A Smith;
G E Wallace; S M Webster

A VESSEL FOR CHRIST

Charles A Coates

A tiny vessel, Lord, to Thee I bring,
A heart that sought from every earthly spring
To gain its longing, but was empty still;
I bring it now to Thee, to take and fill.

Thy grace, that measured once the distance deep
Of Calvary's woe, to seek and save Thy sheep,
Has touched this heart, and made it long for Thee,
Thyself its Treasure and its All to be.

Thy glory now at God's right hand above,
Supreme of all in that blest scene of love,
In sonship tells that heart its wondrous place
In Thee accepted by the Father's grace.

Thy fulness, Lord, of light and love divine,
No thought can grasp, or human mind define;
The whole vast scene of glory will display
That fulness in a quickly coming day.

When all things filled by Thee are wholly blest,
And God's deep love eternally shall rest
In that which ever speaks to Him of Thee,
Thy greatness, Lord, the universe shall see.

But ere that day of bliss and joy supreme,
When Thou shalt be of every tongue the theme,
Let this small vessel prove Thy gracious power
To fill and satisfy it every hour.

Thy beauties, Lord, Thy holy, precious worth,
Surpassing far the fairest joys of earth,
Shall then absorb its true and constant love,
Thyself its Object in those scenes above.

And filled with Thee, and formed through grace divine,
By all that fills it, hold it, Lord, as Thine;
To be, in joy and peace that knows no fear,
The happy vessel of Thy pleasure here!

(1903)

A project is in hand to collate from various sources articles of ministry given by our brother Bert Taylor, who was taken just over a year ago. The material available is enough for five volumes. The first of these is now available, and the second will be shortly. The books are to be entitled, 'The Waiting Time and Other Ministry by Bert Taylor', and can be ordered at www.lulu.com – as paperbacks or e-books.