

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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AMB These scriptures all refer to sacrifice, and I wondered if we could enquire into that matter together and get help from it. I noticed an interesting remark in ministry that sacrificing is, in a way, the very essence of Christianity (JT vol 86 p30), which is something to think about. In looking at any subject in scripture, it is good to start with Christ. In Ephesians we have read of Him as the One who “delivered himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour”. We might feed our souls on that matter as speaking together of the sacrifice of Christ in love - He sacrificed Himself for us in love for us. His sacrifice was to God, and it was excellent, incomparable, eternal and acceptable. That is conveyed in the thought of His sacrifice being “to God for a sweet-smelling savour”; it was altogether acceptable to God.

The scripture in Psalm 50 no doubt speaks of a day still to come but coming soon, when Christ will appear: “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined forth”, and when the believing remnant of the Lord’s earthly people, Israel, will be gathered, “those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice”. We might apply the scripture more broadly to ourselves, and to the principle of sacrifice. It conveys the thought of piety, of godliness, characterising those who sacrifice. These words, “those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice”, also show how God takes account of the sacrifices of His people. We are not speaking here about literal burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, which once were the part of the people of Israel, and we would gather will be so again, but the sacrifices that belong to God in the present time from believers who are acceptable to Him and are received by Him. The thought of a covenant with God by the sacrifice of the people suggests God’s recognition and approval of sacrifice, and also of moral power attaching to those who sacrifice, those who are prepared to give up what is theirs for the glory and pleasure of God.

We might consider the thought of sacrifice in relation to ourselves as believers in Romans 12 and Hebrews 13. In Romans 12 the apostle beseeches “by the compassions of God” that those to whom he was writing should present their bodies a living sacrifice.

Every one of us has a body and we are responsible for the deeds we do in the body, but it is to be yielded to the will of God, and we find blessing in doing that. We come to it that it is “the good and acceptable and perfect will of God”. The essence of sacrifice is that the will of God prevails, and that will is found to be acceptable by us. We would readily agree that it is good and perfect, but we are to accept God's will ourselves. That is the believer's offering now, our sacrifice of ourselves willingly and joyfully subject to the will of God.

In Hebrews 13 the writer speaks of praise to God as a sacrifice: “By him therefore” - that is by the Lord Jesus, the One who has “suffered without the gate” - “let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually to God”. I think it shows the breadth of the thought of sacrifice, and God is pleased with and accepts what is offered willingly to Him, in the power of Christ, by His own. It further elevates the thought of sacrifice. The writer uses the same word to describe helping one another: “But of doing good and communicating of your substance be not forgetful”. It is a very practical matter as well.

TM I was wondering if the type in Genesis 22 would bring out that great thought of sacrifice, “Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, Isaac”, v 2.

AMB What a test that was for Abraham, and he is the father of those who walk in the steps of faith, Rom 4: 12. It is remarkable how that test brought out Abraham's faith. We learn from the New Testament that he believed “that God was able to raise him even from among the dead” (Heb 11: 19), and in his faith Abraham was prepared to subject himself entirely to God's will, knowing that there would be blessing and life from it. What more would you say?

TM It says later in Genesis 22 that “they went both of them together”, v 6. I think it has been suggested it is just like John's gospel, the Father and Son, the two going on together. It shows how the Father really appreciated the sacrifice of Christ. I suppose one of His titles, “the Lamb”, would bring out that thought of sacrifice.

AMB That is helpful. It would remind us of how pleasing to the Father that life of Christ here was, and remains. The Father delighted in it, and His voice bore witness to it, the voice out of heaven; yet it was that life, so precious to the Father and so precious to the Lord Jesus Himself, that was given up for us - in love for us and in subjection to the will of God. It is a wonderful matter!

AGM There are two elements to the sacrifice: there is the object, and

then there is the cost. We see that with the Lord Jesus. The object was God: He offered Himself to God; but the cost was tremendous, and that is really the value of the sacrifice.

AMB “Christ loved us, and delivered himself up for us”. It is good to ponder the cost. It is a blessed matter for contemplation, is it not? The cost was great: the precious, holy, uniquely blessed life of the Lord Jesus was given up. It was of course taken again in a different condition, but that life here of such preciousness to the Father was laid down and His blood was shed. It should affect us.

AGM Does that really draw our attention to the fact that we are brought in as a result of that unique sacrifice? The Lord knew the will of God and He carried it out in perfection. But the will of God did not stop at Christ's death. He has brought in a whole company for God's pleasure.

AMB The motivation for it was love. These two verses are most affecting: “the Christ loved us, and delivered himself up for us”. We know that Christ loved His Father and loved His will, but Paul here in writing to the Ephesians says, He “loved us, and delivered himself up for us”. It is a very simple point to make, but it is profound, that this immense cost to the Lord, and also to the Father in delivering Him up, was because of divine love for us, to secure us for the divine pleasure.

JD Do you think then we can say that sacrifice is really the expression of love, and the giving of Christ is the supreme expression of love?

AMB Yes. Do you think it includes love expressed by Christ towards the Father, and love expressed towards His own; then there was the love of the Father for us expressed in it also? What a spectacle was seen by men, the humiliated and suffering Man, and the object of these taunts and sneering, but what was being expressed there was infinite love. It should call forth love from us, and does, do you think?

JD It is because sacrifice is the expression of love that enables us or allows us to become imitators of God.

AMB It is not a theological or philosophical imitation, is it? The starting point for formation after Christ and likeness to Him must be love. As the well-known scripture says, “*We love because he has first loved us*”, 1 John 4: 19. That refers to God's love.

WMP Regarding the Hebrew bondman, we can only understand His love for the wife by first appreciating His love for the master, Exod 21: 1-

6. That was the predominant thought, was it not? That would shed its own light on how much Christ loved the assembly, His wife.

AMB Very good. The context is that, if the master had given him a wife, then he could choose not to go free by saying, "I love my master, my wife, and my children". These are precious thoughts. It is not explicit in that scripture, but we can think of the feelings of the master in hearing these words, "I love my master, my wife, and my children"; the commitment that was made to be his for ever. It would remind us freshly, do you think, of the eternal effect of Christ's sacrifice?

RB Are we challenged therefore as to our knowledge of God in relation to any sacrifice? The Lord knew His God. There was a time in Israel when they were sacrificing lame animals, blind animals, Mal 1: 8.

AMB Do you think we deepen in our knowledge of God by contemplating Christ's sacrifice? It was wholly suitable to God. And it was essential that God should have this sacrifice so that He has an entirely righteous, eternal and unchallengeable basis to bless us and to have us without distance or fear of any kind in His presence. The sacrifice of Christ has removed all that stood against us, and has established us before God for ever. As we contemplate that, we learn a great deal about the love of God and about His righteousness. These are matters to ponder and to affect us.

JL What is the difference between an offering and a sacrifice? Both are mentioned here together.

AMB I would be glad of your thoughts; it is a question that came up in my mind. They speak of the same thing, but in the sacrifice what is emphasised is the cost to the One sacrificing, and in the offering it is the intrinsic value of what is sacrificed. I would be glad of your thought.

JL That is much the same as was in my own mind. Some of the offerings in Scripture were presented by the priest, and someone else bore the cost of the sacrifice to bring it, but I thought when both are put together here, it emphasises the outstanding love of the Lord who bore the cost and yielded Himself up as an acceptable offering to God.

AMB That is very helpful. There is the object of the sacrifice and also the cost; and underlying it is the motivation which, as has been brought out, is love.

JL And we have the added thought here of the perfect acceptability of it. It is good to go back to the first example we have in scripture of an acceptable sacrifice, which was Abel's, was it not? It speaks of "the

firstlings of his flock” (Gen 4: 4); it was totally acceptable to God.

AMB It is described in Hebrews as “a more excellent sacrifice” (Heb 11: 4); it involved the shedding of blood, and that was acceptable to God. But “upon Cain, and on his offering, he did not look”, Gen 4: 5. That was the fruit of the cursed ground, but Abel appreciated that bloodshedding was essential if the sacrifice was to be acceptable before God. The “sweet-smelling savour” is a description that is used often in Leviticus as to the offerings, the burnt-offering in particular, and Leviticus also tells us that the Israelite was accepted on the basis of his burnt-offering, chap 1: 3. Now, that is Christ's offering. There is nothing that we offer that makes us acceptable. It is Christ's unique, blessed offering of Himself that secures our acceptance. His offering, being so absolutely acceptable and delightful to God, secures our acceptance before Him.

JD What has been said about the offering and sacrifice is helpful because it brings before us that there was never any question about the acceptability of this offering.

AMB He was “given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2: 23). Christ came into manhood and took up a body in order that He might lay it down in death and that His precious blood might be shed. That was all in the counsels of God in order that His purposes should be achieved.

TM What the Lord says in John 15 brings out these scriptures that you have read. He says, “No one has greater love than this, that one should lay down his life for his friends”, John 15: 13. That is His supreme sacrifice. He goes on to say, “Ye are my friends if ye practice whatever I command you”, v 14. That would involve our sacrifice.

AMB Yes. God is looking for an answer to the great expenditure involved in Christ giving Himself, and in the Father delivering Him up: “He who, yea, has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all”, Rom 8: 32. That is to have power over our affections, leading to commitment so that we become willing offerers. When we think of Christ's sacrifice and ours, we have in our minds that His was unique and beyond compare and eternal; our sacrifices are not like that, but the *spirit* of sacrifice is something that we take on ourselves, having Christ as our great model. You mentioned that in prayer this morning: the believer is to be formed after Christ. We use that expression, and it is a right one, and God looks for it, and then there are the practical consequences of being formed after Christ.

In Psalm 50, we have “those that have made a covenant with me”, with God, “by sacrifice!”. The context must be adversity, a prophetic allusion to what will happen in the great tribulation, and then the Lord's appearing to deliver His own people. In adversity these godly ones, these pious Israelites, are prepared to sacrifice. Well, we can apply that to ourselves. What would you say?

TM What you say is helpful. It is only as we appreciate the Lord's sacrifice that we will be able to sacrifice maybe a little ourselves. We must appreciate His sacrifice and what it involved, the suffering.

AMB You make a very important point there. Love underlay the Lord's sacrifice, His and the Father's affections entering into that matter. The children of Israel fell away from the inward meaning of sacrifice. Reference was made to them sacrificing the lame, for example. What God looks for is the sacrifice of “the afflicted and contrite in spirit”, Isa 66: 2. The scripture says: “But to this man will I look: to the afflicted and contrite in spirit, and who trembleth at my word”. There is another reference, quoted in Hebrews: “Sacrifices and offerings and burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou willedst not, neither tookest pleasure in”, Heb 10: 8. That is a quotation from Psalm 40, which clearly speaks prophetically of the Lord Himself. In verse 8 it says, “To do thy good pleasure, my God, is my delight, and thy law is within my heart”. These were the Lord's feelings. He gave His best; He gave His all; it was not a matter of fulfilling what was outward but answering to God's desire to have perfect inward formation in One who was entirely according to Himself. Would you go with that?

WMP Following on from what you have said, is making a covenant by sacrifice commitment? Is that what it means, a commitment to God and to the Lord and to divine things? Is that what is required on our part?

AMB Yes, that is helpful. The psalmist does not speak about the covenant that God had made with the people, although it would underlie this. But what He takes account of is a covenant that His people will make with Him “by sacrifice”. It will be fulfilled by godly Israelites laying down their lives in the tribulation, perhaps preaching the everlasting glad tidings and being martyred for it in that time yet to come, but soon coming. Now, at the moment we are not required to accept martyrdom. We never forget that believers in the past have given up their lives and, indeed, still do so in some parts of the world. But the principle of it is that God takes account of the spirit of sacrifice in believers, and that must be an inward commitment to Him, to His will,

and, as the brethren have helpfully been saying, in affection, not in servitude. It is willing offering, willing sacrifice, and that applies to us. I feel the challenge of it as seeking to speak about it, and the soberness of it.

BWL Are these persons that have been affected by God's sovereignty, "out of Zion"? I was wondering about Ephesians 1. God's purpose is set out there. Redemption was necessary because of what we were, and we are very thankful for that: we needed it. The purposes of God and what we were in His thoughts have to affect us too.

AMB Yes. The unfolding of God's thoughts will certainly affect the Israelites, the faithful remnant. They will see the prophetic scriptures in the Old Testament being fulfilled, and will understand that they relate to God's original promises for them, but for us it is His purpose. The greatness of the blessings that Christ's sacrifice has brought us into should so affect our hearts that we become imitators of Him and imitators of God. The appreciation by the Holy Spirit of the greatness of what God has in His heart for us would lead to these features that we are speaking about being demonstrated in us. It is what is inward being expressed outwardly.

JL At one time the Lord's supper was celebrated at the end of the meeting. That was changed because brethren came to it that we must begin by contemplating the supreme sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. That is what promotes and prompts responsive praise and what we have been speaking about here, the covenant made by sacrifice. Yielding our heavenly response flows out from that.

AMB His sacrifice is first in every respect. It must underlie everything that truly answers to God.

JD David really knew this covenant in Psalm 51: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise", v 17. The covenant we make with God from our side must involve what is moral.

AMB I am glad you draw attention to that verse. What is moral must indeed underlie what we are speaking about. Verse 17 is really a description of repentance towards God, and it is vital to know what that is. Repentance is not once and for all - although in one sense it is - but there is joy in heaven over "repenting" sinners, Luke 15: 7. It is to be characteristic, and faith in Christ is really inseparable from repentance.

JD It is "the goodness of God" that leads us to repentance, Rom 2:

4; so we must have faith in God that that should happen.

AMB In order to appreciate His goodness? That is a helpful scripture to bring in. The “broken and ... contrite heart” is inward as having to do with the Lord Jesus as the One who sacrificed Himself for us; and we have to do with God as the One who “delivered him up for us all”, Rom 8: 32.

AGM It is an interesting expression, “my godly ones”. You get the impression that God is so delighted in having these ones. “Godly ones” would involve persons that have such an appreciation of Christ. I was thinking of the previous scripture, the “sweet-smelling savour”. The fat in the offerings speaks of the excellence of Christ and that was so pleasing to God. It was for God alone. We must have an appreciation of what Christ meant to God. There is a hymn we sing:

And to know the blessed secret
Of His preciousness to Thee. (Hymn 277)

That really underlies the godly ones.

AMB The same word is translated 'godliness' and 'piety', is it not? It is a very practical matter, involving the expression of inward appreciation of what Christ has done. It requires repentance on our part, faith and repentance, with Christ as the Object, the Model. Having Him as our Model would bring about inward formation after Him and conformity to Him. It is not outward, but there *is* what is then expressed as a result of what is inward.

AGM I think that is right. Nothing of the first order is acceptable to God. It has all been removed in the death of Christ. We are to think of ourselves as what we are as in Christ. It is a test for me as to what is the result in my heart. It is not knowledge; it is the affections.

AMB Yes. As soon as we believe, as far as God is concerned we are in Christ, and He sees us in that way. Now, it may take us a lifetime to come to that, to work out that matter into result; but God regards us as in Christ. And if He does, so can you and I. That is something to come to, and in a sense we need to keep coming to it because we are to be maintained in it.

RB When we come to the Supper, the sacrifice the Lord Jesus made is before us in the emblems, is it not? And then there is to be the answer in ourselves: “none shall appear in my presence empty”, Exod 23: 15.

AMB Before we come to the meeting to remember the Lord together,

we are to think deeply about Him and what He has done for us. I am sure that all enters into “let a man prove himself”, 1 Cor 11: 28. We think about that scripture as making sure that we have put things right, perhaps with our brother if need be. But it is very important to spend time before we go out to the Lord's supper occupying our hearts and minds with the Lord Jesus, and His perfection and acceptability to God. I am not the object of that occupation; Christ is my object.

RB We are oftentimes reminded that the sin-offering lieth at the door, Gen 4: 7, note. It is all cleared at the door. “Gather unto me my godly ones”.

AMB Do you think the point is that, when we go to remember the Lord, everything is in order? We do not put things in order when we are there; that is not the place. It is to be done beforehand so that the Holy Spirit then has liberty to occupy us with Christ and make us sensitive to His presence and to His leading us.

JD We have been taught the passover precedes the Supper; that would be the sacrifice before the offerings.

AMB Very good, that is we are consciously in the good of the blood having been shed, do you think? Everything is set right morally. That is helpful.

CAMcK There was a time when Samuel had to say to Saul,
Behold, obedience is better than sacrifice,
Attention than the fat of rams, 1 Sam 15: 22.

Is that because these moral features were not operating in him?

AMB Saul went ahead of what Samuel had told him to do and offered the sacrifices before Samuel came. He seemed to think that what he had done was right, but he was being disobedient. He was occupied with himself, and the fact that he had a place as the one who was setting these sacrifices on, but Samuel the prophet had God's mind and he brings to bear what is moral. He really exposed Saul's state, and that was serious. We are in a time of grace for which we are very thankful, but we are never to be careless about matters, are we?

CAMcK Certainly not, but I was thinking too how attractive these features are, “obedience” and “attention” are seen supremely in Christ, but in us attention would be contemplating Him, and obedience would relate to what He has asked, to remember Him.

AMB Thank you for that. It is very important not to be taken up with

our own matters, but to be taken up with the One who is obedient, and to be attentive to Him.

DGC We are speaking about the matter of self-examination: we do not examine ourselves to the standard of ourselves. We must examine ourselves in the light of Christ. That then brings something into the soul. I am thinking in terms of the Supper so that, as you examine yourself and you consider the beauty of Christ, you then come with something and then we find at the Supper “of that which is from thy hand have we given thee”, 1 Chron 29: 14. It is of that character and standard and quality.

AMB It is very helpful to bring that in. We examine ourselves, “But let a man prove himself, and thus eat of the bread, and drink of the cup”. It is with a view to my enjoying the Supper, and more than that, that God has an unhindered response from my heart. The standard is Christ, as you say. Occupation with Christ is always positive; He delivers me from myself. The Holy Spirit loves to occupy us with Him. What an occupation Christ is!

AGM This is to become characteristic with us, “my godly ones”. Characteristically they would have God in mind. Their whole life would be governed by what is pleasing to God. It is a test for us in a mixed condition, but we cannot be one thing during the week and another thing on Lord's day. That is a big test.

AMB Yes; we are to be governed by God's will, and God's will is that Christ should be honoured and glorified here in those that love Him, and that features of Him should be seen in the saints. God delights in Christ being continued here in the saints: it is a searching matter even to say it, but we ought not to draw back from saying what is right because we do not always feel equal to it. The standard is Christ, and the Spirit helps us to be like Him. We need, as brethren have been saying, to understand the thought of the covenant, which is commitment. Commitment is to Christ, and the Spirit will help me inwardly in that.

AGM I noticed a remark of Mr A J Gardiner that even in the giving of thanks for your food, there is a side that you are subject to the will of God, and the Father loves to hear the name of the Lord Jesus. Some may not use that title, but it is so precious to heaven. It is really keeping us in accord with the mind of heaven as to Christ.

AMB Yes, and we are reminded by what you say how important it is to be inwardly consistent with what we express outwardly. If I give thanks

for my food, as we do, is my heart really in that? It is a simple thing, but that is part of piety.

AGM It could be a matter of form, a sacrament or something like that, but I think the more we dwell on the greatness of Christ and what He is to God, the more we will be able truly to use that title, the Lord Jesus. It is the assembly title. It is very easy to drift into a form. I think the Spirit would help to maintain us in this living character.

AMB Yes. It is always good to mean what we say. I am not for a moment suggesting anybody would not, but it is good to have our hearts and minds engaged in this simple giving of thanks. I wonder too if that might relate to believers having moral power with God, conscious of being accepted in Christ. The spirit of sacrifice is acknowledged in what is spoken of here: “those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice!”. God honours what He sees in those who have sacrificed.

MB It would be our desire that in any sacrifice on our part, God has the glory. I was thinking about what has been said: it is deeply individual. Tomorrow morning, we will give expression to very fine things, but if we simply copy what others say, there is nothing in that for God, is there? What we say must come from our hearts. If we are going on with a form of things, we are giving ourselves the glory, but God cannot have the glory if we have it.

AMB God is to be glorified by believers who are like Christ, and who come out in that way. Everything that the Lord did was for the glory of His Father.

MB The Lord in walking here made nothing of Himself in order that the Father might be glorified in everything.

AMB He said that the works He did were the works of His Father, so the glory was for the Father. That was the Lord's object in His life here, the blessing of men too, but His great objective was and is that the Father should be glorified.

MB So in relation to the Lord's walk, we can have a very wide thought as to what constitutes sacrifice, can we not? Every step of His way was a sacrifice: it was all offered up for the Father.

AMB And He delighted to do that. It was not that He wished to do something else: He delighted to do what the Father wanted.

MB The matter of motivation comes into that, does it not? It says of the woman who cast in the two mites that it was “out of her need”, Luke 21: 4. There were those that cast in “out of their abundance”, and I have

always wondered if the Lord is suggesting that these were merely going through the motions: they were doing it to be seen of others. That woman “out of her need has cast in all the living which she had”.

AMB The Lord knew her heart, just as He knew the hearts of those that cast in from their wealth. The Lord will credit you or any one of us with everything that He can. If there is a stirring of our hearts towards Him and we are prompted to say or do something that is honouring to Him, He loves that.

JTW One of old said, “but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah”, Josh 24: 15. Does that fit in with this covenant that comes in here?

AMB Joshua not only committed himself to God, but his household also. Here we are speaking about “godly ones”, pious people, and it is a great thing to have pious households. That would be normal, would it not? I think the Lord greatly appreciates pious households. When young people set up their houses - and we are very thankful when that happens, how vital marriage in the Lord is - what is in view is a household for the Lord, in which the head of the house would say, “but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah”. Serving would involve sacrifice. The Lord loves that, to see houses held for Him.

BWL These would be good, practical features in a locality. It would be the element of moral power, leadership in a right sense.

AMB That is good. Do you think moral power must start with our relations with God Himself, but then it would come into expression through what we are in our localities?

BWL The local brethren would give us an opportunity to be on this line of sacrifice.

AMB Yes. How much the scriptures say about that. The apostle John says, “we ought for the brethren to lay down our lives”, 1 John 3: 16. Very largely that would be those that are near to us, though not exclusively.

RJC I was thinking of Aquila and Priscilla. They were taken account of in the epistle to the Romans. It says of them in chapter 16, “who for my life staked their own neck”, v 4.

AMB That was a household that had made a covenant with God by sacrifice, do you think? I am glad you refer to it. There was only one neck: Aquila and Priscilla were at one, and how useful they were. They had probably suffered a great deal - they had had to leave Rome

because of persecutions, but they made themselves available for the support of the testimony wherever they were and, in particular, to support Paul's ministry. What an accolade that was!

ADM Would the “sweet-smelling savour” mentioned in Ephesians as to the Lord's sacrifice be reflected in Paul when he speaks of his ministry? He says, “I am already being poured out” (2 Tim 4: 6) and in Philippians 2: 17 he says, “I am poured out as a libation on the sacrifice and ministration of your faith”. Is that really the same spirit that was seen in the Lord's service, providing “a sweet-smelling savour”? Paul was reflecting that in his service too.

AMB Paul was *par excellence* the imitator of Christ, was he not? He could say, “Be my imitators, even as I also am of Christ”, 1 Cor 11: 1. He poured himself out. He said he would “most gladly spend and be utterly spent” (2 Cor 12: 15) for the blessing of the saints. Few of us could speak about that at all, but that was the extent of Paul's sacrifice, and then literally he laid down his life for his Lord, we would understand.

JW Asaph, the writer of Psalm 50, says elsewhere that “my feet were almost gone” (Psalm 73: 2), but finally came to it that understanding was in the sanctuaries of God, v 17. I was just thinking in the psalm here; there is what we might be able to say about God in a general sense, and that is good. We think of God and who He is, in one sense beyond us, but then Asaph comes to this point when he says, “Our God will come”. The Lord Jesus says, “my Father and your Father ... my God and your God”, John 20: 17. This God is our God.

AMB He has made Himself known in the most wonderful way, in Christ, and He has given us the most wonderful gifts too. He has given us Christ; He has given us the Holy Spirit; He has given us one another; He has given us everything. Our God is the Giver. That is a fine matter to have before our hearts.

JW We are to come to certain conclusions in our own hearts that nobody can shake us from. At the end of Psalm 73 Asaph says, “But as for me, it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord Jehovah, that I may declare all thy works”, v 28. We come to certain conclusions in ourselves when we are going through things morally.

AMB They cannot be shaken, as you say. Do you think Asaph going into the sanctuary in verse 17 in the psalm that you quote was a great help to him?

JW I need to go in there as often as I can.

AMB It is not possible to go in too often. We can always go in more. "Until I went into the sanctuaries of God; then understood I their end".

JL We delight to draw near, but God delights to gather. That is the expression: He is gathering the saints in verse 5.

AMB That verse expresses God's heart: "Gather unto me my godly ones". The Lord will do that literally. He will act to gather His people, His earthly people.

JL The people of God will be gathered into one, John 11: 52. They are very scattered at the moment; that will not remain so.

AMB What a gathering it will be when the assembling shout is heard.

JL An outstanding gathering!

AMB Yes, and then there will be those that are gathered out of the tribulation to form the earthly families, which will be a remarkable matter. God is a giver and He is a gatherer.

As to Romans 12, we have already spoken about much of what this scripture brings before us. It is an individual matter, "to present your bodies a living sacrifice". It means we are to be governed by the will of God rather than our own will. As has often been said, there is only room for one will in the kingdom; that is the will of God; and we see it all expressed wonderfully in Christ. It is open to all of us to display a sacrificial spirit because each of us has a body, and the question is how we use that. It involves not being "conformed to this world" but being "transformed" to be like Christ. And then, to "prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God". Is that will acceptable to me? It is to be, and I think a meeting like this helps us in that; and inwardly, we appeal to the Holy Spirit to help us.

TM Is this the answer to the Lord's suffering, "This is my body which is given for you", Luke 22: 19. The responsibility and the onus is on us to "present" our "bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God".

AMB It is a remarkable expression. We have spoken about the matter of acceptability: such a sacrifice is acceptable. What more would you say about it?

TM Do you think we appreciate what the Lord has done in giving His all, coming in with a body?

Behold, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me
To do thy good pleasure, Ps 40: 7, 8.

Would that help us to set aside our own wills and to be “holy, acceptable to God”?

AMB There is something infinitely greater than what I want or I think. I am to find my object in Christ, and He is to become so attractive, and He does, that my will is set aside.

RB Does this section produce moral courage? You have been speaking about moral power, but does this produce moral courage?

AMB Are you thinking about not being “conformed to this world” but instead being “renewed” in our spirits and in our minds?

RB One of things that is said at the beginning of Acts is, “God must be obeyed rather than men”, chap 5: 29. We are living in a very difficult society at the moment where God's word is being disobeyed and forced aside. Have we the moral courage to obey God?

AMB We should have, as believers in Christ. It must be His will and God's will that prevails, and we have to experience that personally. We are not doing this in our own strength: we call on the Lord as our Head. It is also good to draw on the Holy Spirit; as Peter says, “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”, 1 Pet 4: 14. It is a very fine thing to prove that. I cannot say much about it, but bringing the Lord's name in brings power. God can use that as a testimony. What more did you have in mind?

RB I was thinking of Deborah. She says,
... that I Deborah arose,
That I arose a mother in Israel, Judg 5: 7.

She did not rise up as a personality; she rose up as one who had influence and others took character from her.

AMB Yes, she was used to support the masculine side: Barak needed Deborah's support to do what he needed to do. These are things to be proved, are they not?

RJG A sacrifice cannot be recalled, can it? It is permanent. Is that part of the importance of “the renewing of your mind”? What we do in the sacrifice of giving our bodies is for God and cannot be recalled.

AMB The Lord's sacrifice was absolutely beyond recall; our sacrifices must be too. The word 'commitment' was used earlier, and that is what is spoken of here. When the apostle speaks about our bodies, what he had in mind would include the thought that the human

body expresses the inward motivations of the heart and the mind. The mind is to be renewed. Our bodies should express what God's will is, not ours.

JD The last scripture we read speaks about what is “continually to God”.

AMB We are to develop and grow in our sacrifice. Hebrews 13 elevates the thought of sacrifice, our sacrifice, extending it to “the sacrifice of praise ... the fruit of the lips confessing his name”. I think that includes, but must be more than, confessing in testimony. The service of God is in mind here, and God regards that as a sacrifice. It is acceptable to Him, precious and valuable: He sees Christ in it. We are to be exercised about the matter: responsibility is involved. We are not to put our hands to the plough and draw back in these things; we are to be committed, as we have been saying. It would also include what is testimonial - how God rejoices in that, but how He must rejoice when hearts that belong to Christ are united in affectionate and intelligent response to Him. It is our “intelligent service”, Rom 12: 1. That is not human intelligence; it is intelligence formed in affection in the soul in response to the revelation of God, God's thoughts presented to us in infinite grace and attractiveness in Christ.

JD 1 Corinthians 10 speaks as to “intelligent persons” (v 15), and has in mind the Lord's supper. It really has in mind what is offered up in the way of praise through the assembly, do you think?

AMB That is helpful. The children of Israel were to serve God. To what extent they did serve Him, you wonder. We are not really told, but God's mind was that there should be continual sacrifice, and His provision was such that that could be maintained. I suggest the same applies to the saints of the assembly.

AGM Could you say more as to that, “offer the sacrifice of praise continually to God”? We can understand it in the old economy where they kept the fire burning all night, but how does that really apply to ourselves? Is it more than just in the service of God? Is it something that continues through the week? It is almost like an attitude of mind.

AMB We spoke earlier about what was characteristic. Responding to and praising God should be characteristic. God should never be out of our minds. We are walking under His eye all the time so He sees everything that we say, think, and do; and my life should reflect that.

AGM As we are reading the Scriptures or ministry, a certain feature of

Christ comes before us. Our hearts should go out to God regarding that. Is that what is involved in it?

AMB That is very good. Response to God is to colour the life of the believer.

BWL At the golden altar the incense was continual, was it not? There were the offerings that did not involve death, but when we come to the golden altar there is that which is really the fragrance of Christ continually before God.

AMB That is the believer's appreciation of Christ before God. We should never drop from that level. We have responsibilities that occupy us in different ways, but whatever we say or do should be consistent with our appreciation of what Christ is for God. We need to be careful that we do not say things that are unreal, but what you are bringing forward is not unreal. It is to mark us: we should be people who are characteristically affected by appreciating what Christ is for God.

JL In so far as it is referred to as fruit, is it the product of the Spirit's work within us, bringing out this answer in the service, an answering response in the affections of the saints towards God through Christ?

AMB One thing about fruit in natural things is it reflects the health of the tree. It is the manifestation of what is within and what is for God within the believer is the result, as you are saying, of the work of the Spirit. We often say, but it is well worth repeating, that the Spirit always occupies us with Christ.

Cullen

11th October 2025

List of initials:-

R Bain, Fraserburgh; A M Brown, Linlithgow; M Buchan, Peterhead;
D G Coull, Aberdeen; R J Cumming, Aberdeen; J Drummond,
Aberdeen; R J Gardiner, Aberdeen; B W Lovie, Aberdeen; J Laurie,
Brechin; A G Mair, Cullen; T Mair, Cullen; C A McKay, Brechin;
A D Melville, Grangemouth; W M Patterson, Glasgow; J Webster,
Fraserburgh; J T Webster, Fraserburgh

CONCEALED THINGS

Alistair M Brown

Proverbs 25: 1, 2

1 Corinthians 2: 6-16

2 Corinthians 4: 17-18

I desire to say a word for edification as to what the passage in Proverbs speaks of as things that are concealed, and then as to searching out things. There is a strong connection between things that God has concealed and “those that are not seen”, the unseen things that we have read of, the “Things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard” in the reference in 1 Corinthians.

It is interesting that the men of Hezekiah transcribed these proverbs of Solomon. Solomon was known for his wisdom, and Hezekiah must have had a particular appreciation of these proverbs. Perhaps they had not been available before, but he and his men searched them out and transcribed them, and the king saw to it that they were written down. Hezekiah is a very interesting person: his history is given three times in Scripture, in 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, and Isaiah. There must be something quite special about him that the Spirit of God has recorded his history three times. A feature of Hezekiah is that he gathered up what had been before in Israel, but had been forgotten about. His father, Ahaz, was not a good king at all. He had neglected (and that would be putting it mildly) the house of God. He had shut up and corrupted the temple, and all sorts of bad things had happened in the kingdom of Judah.

When Hezekiah came to the throne the first thing he did was to open up the house of God and cleanse it - he ordered his servants to cleanse it, 2 Chron 29. During the reign of Ahaz, divine things had gone out of the view of the people of Judah. But Hezekiah cared about the things of God, he cared about the house and its holiness, and wanted to restore it to the standard that was due to God. He also cared about the service of God, and he restored that also, “according to the commandment of David” (2 Chron 29: 25), including the instruments of music. It seems that these things had been lost sight of, and Hezekiah restored them. He had regard to things that had become concealed. Of course God had not concealed them - it was the unfaithfulness of the king and of the people of Judah. Hezekiah also had God's thoughts about the people. He was concerned that the people of Israel should

join with the people of Judah in holding the passover, 2 Chron 30:1-11. You can read all of this; it is a very interesting study. There were things that had gone out of the sight of the people of Judah. Hezekiah searched them out and he was true to them. He did not depart from God's thoughts about His people.

I just mention all that as background to Hezekiah's men transcribing these proverbs of Solomon, and the first was this one: "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the glory of kings is to search out a thing". It is not saying that God is hiding things so that the people cannot know about them. God has in mind that everything that He has revealed about Himself - and He has revealed everything that can be known of Himself, in His well-beloved Son - should be searched out by lovers of Him who want to know about them. Hezekiah was one such; I know he failed at the end, but I think Hezekiah was a lover of God who searched out diligently the things that had been before in Israel and he sought to recover the people of Judah and of Israel to them. When God conceals a thing, or if he allows things to become concealed, it is for His glory. He conceals things so that they might be searched out, not to make them difficult to access, but so that we might be exercised about them.

The New Testament speaks about the mystery. There is "the mystery of the glad tidings" (Eph 6: 19), for example, and the great mystery of the assembly, Eph 5: 32. The apostle Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write these things. In Scripture, the idea of mystery is not that things are mysterious and therefore unknowable. It is that, with the key to the mystery, believers are able to understand what God is saying. You may feel, dear young person or any of us, that some things are hard to understand and are mysterious, but God has provided the key to them so that we can know everything about Himself that He has chosen to reveal. This Bible and all of Christianity is to do with God making Himself known, and providing the means whereby we might know Him.

He has given faith. The gift of faith is available to every one, and I trust that all in this room who are able to understand have received the gift of faith. What a giver God is; He gives faith so that we might believe in Him and believe in His well-beloved Son. God loves that. It says in Hebrews 11, the faith chapter, "without faith it is impossible to please him. For he that draws near to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who seek him out", v 6. A person who seeks out

God is marked by faith and desires to know God; faith stirs up that desire in your soul, and you become one who seeks out God. You become a searcher, one who searches out a thing. God of course is much greater than any thing. But the things that God has prepared, referred to in 1 Corinthians 2, are to be sought out. Things concealed by God are searched out by kings. In Christianity, it is people of faith who search out such things. I think “kings” would refer to nobility and dignity, and also to wisdom. These should be features of kings, and through faith and the Spirit that is what believers become. They become dignified and wise. One of the great results of the gift of the Holy Spirit is wisdom. We are given resources by God Himself that we may be able to search out the things that God has concealed. They are precious, wonderful things that God has prepared for those that love Him, and has concealed. They are not material things. God of course provides things that He does not conceal - His providential mercies, the provision He makes for us to have houses to live in and food to eat, all of which we are thankful for. These are not things that God has hidden. The things that God has hidden are not material; they are precious things that are so valuable that God conceals them and makes them available to people of faith, to believers, who have the Holy Spirit. I say that to help us to see that material things, although they are needed and we are thankful for them, are not the precious things that God has concealed. What is precious to God should be precious to us. I would encourage myself and all of us to regard the concealed things as the most precious.

We come to that in 1 Corinthians 2. It is a remarkable passage, particularly when you consider what the apostle goes on to say to these believers in Corinth. Things were happening in Corinth that should never happen in any Christian company. But Paul writes here about the things “which God has prepared for them that love him”. That was an appeal to the hearts, and no doubt the consciences too, of the Corinthians. The apostle sets before them the greatest things - things that they perhaps were not thinking about too much. You would gather that some of the Corinthians at least were taken up with earthly things. We understand that Corinth was a wealthy city, and some of them would have been taken up with material things. Paul sets before them the things that “God has prepared for them that love him”. He speaks of “God's wisdom in a mystery”. The apostle was acknowledging that the wonderful things of God were not open to every one, but God wanted the Corinthians to take them on, and to be interested in them. Paul

goes on to help them as to how that would be.

The apostle's reference to "God's wisdom in a mystery" is to be contemplated. We speak about these things in a meeting like this, but it also repays our time to think about what the scripture says, and the thoughts that scripture brings before our hearts. "God's wisdom in a mystery" does not mean that God's wisdom is shut up from us and therefore unknowable. God has revealed His wisdom in the Lord Jesus, "who has been made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and holiness, and redemption", 1 Cor 1: 30. He has been made to us everything that we need, and one of the things that He has been made to us is wisdom. And the Holy Spirit has been given to us also, the One who, as the Lord Jesus said, "shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all the things which I have said to you" (John 14: 26), and "shall guide you into all the truth", John 16: 13. That is the resource that the believer has in the Holy Spirit; He guides us into things that have been concealed. They are concealed from the wisdom of the world, but made known to those to whom Christ has been made wisdom. What a blessed matter that is. We are put in touch with the greatest possible things, things that are not material but unseen and eternal, as we get in our scripture in 2 Corinthians. They are things we will enjoy eternally. My desire is that we should enjoy them now: we are given the resources in Christ and in the Spirit to enjoy them and to rejoice in them now. I say that with complete conviction. The extent to which I have entered into these things myself is another matter; but I would desire to be increased in capacity to understand by the Spirit the great things of God and the things that God has prepared. As believers we know something of them, however small our capacity may be.

We all know that God wants us to come into the joy of our sins forgiven. That is to begin with. What a wonderful matter that is, not to be troubled by conscience because you have placed your faith in the One who has sacrificed Himself for us; He has delivered Himself up for us. We have our guilt lifted from us because it has been borne by Another who has so fully satisfied God in offering Himself. That is an unseen thing. An unbeliever does not know about the joy of sins forgiven and of peace with God, but the believer does. Then the Holy Spirit is given that we might enjoy these blessings and appreciate that they have come from the heart of God, who loves us; and because He loves us; He desires to bless us and to have us near Him. That is what God has in mind for every one of us; indeed He has it in mind for all men.

God “desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth”, 1 Tim 2: 4. No one is left out, and there are no second-class citizens - God has all in mind for the greatest of blessing. These matters are spoken of so appealingly by the apostle, no doubt to stir up the Corinthians to see that although it appears they were largely occupied with material things there were very, very much greater things in view. We have responsibilities as regards material things; we are not to ignore them and we are not to live as hermits, and they have their place. But the great things of God, the things that God has prepared for those that love Him, are much greater.

The apostle goes on to say, “which God has prepared for them that love Him, but God has revealed to us by his Spirit”. That corresponds to what we read in Proverbs as to the glory of kings to search things out. Believers search things out by seeking the help of the Holy Spirit, motivated by love for our Lord Jesus and interest in what He has secured for us by the sacrifice of Himself. That goes beyond the relief of our need. It goes as far as the satisfaction of the heart of the blessed God Himself. What God has in mind, among these things which He has prepared for those that love Him, is that we should be companions of Christ, we should be with Him as His brethren, enjoying the blessing of kinship with Him. And not only that - how often we say 'and not only that' as to the blessings that God has prepared for us: there is more and more - God has in mind the blessing of sonship, for every believer; what a matter it is! Such a thing never came into man's heart. If you want proof that Christianity is a wonderful divine matter, of God, you can find it in the things that never entered into man's heart, but God has prepared. Not only have these things entered into God's heart, He has prepared them for us so that we might enjoy them. In the giving of Christ, God has secured the things He has prepared, and in the giving of the Holy Spirit, He enables us to enjoy them, livingly. You might think, this is for the eternal day when we will know what it is to be sons set free in the presence of the Father Himself. Brethren and friends, they are for our enjoyment now. The Holy Spirit is with us now, as He will be eternally. He is in the hearts of believers, enabling us to search out and understand and enjoy these wonderful things that God has prepared for those who love Him. What a matter it is to love God. It is not difficult to love One who so desires to bless and has given so much in order to bring about our blessing.

The reference to “the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God” is very fine: things that have been wonderfully hidden in the

depths of God are searched out by the Spirit and made available to us. It has also been remarked that the Spirit also searches the depths of God in the hearts of the saints. He helps us to share thoughts about the Lord Jesus - impressions that you might have are made available to me, and impressions that I might have become available to you. How important it is to appreciate the hidden things, the unseen things, in our hearts. The Spirit helps us to enjoy them individually, but He also draws out impressions from our hearts and makes them available to one another. How blessed the work of the Spirit is, to search all things and to reveal them, to make them known. The passage goes on, "who of men hath known the things of a man ...?". The apostle has been speaking about the things of God, and he then applies the thought to us: "who of men hath known the things of a man except the spirit of the man ...?". He is saying, 'You are living, your natural spirit knows all about you, your interests; it knows your motivations and indeed is the source of motivation and affection and all these things'. Then he says, "thus also the things of God knows no one except the Spirit of God". The Spirit of God is the One who indwells the believer. What a blessing that is. We have been given the Spirit of God that we may know the things which have been freely given to us.

I challenge myself as to what I know about this in practice. I think we know enough to desire more. That is a great feature of the things that God reveals to us: He reveals things and the effect is that we desire to know more. All things are available to us in the Spirit. Our appreciation and understanding of them, our capacity for them, is increased on the principle of desire and obedience. It is interesting that these are the features in the believer on the basis of which we receive the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is given on the basis of asking. The Lord says that in Luke 11: a father knows how to give good gifts to his children; "how much rather shall the Father who is of heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (v 13), and Peter refers in Acts to "the Holy Spirit also, which God has given to those that obey him", chap 5: 32. What great principles these are; they are moral matters, of interest and desire expressed in requesting, and of subjection expressed in obedience. How important this is; the way to understand the things that God has prepared for us is through the desire to know them and through subjection. The service of the Holy Spirit is current: "the Spirit, communicating spiritual things by spiritual means". He is doing that now; it continues.

I need to be more sensitive to hear and to understand what the Holy Spirit would communicate to us. That means preparing ourselves morally and spiritually to receive the Spirit's communications. He helps in that too.

The Scriptures describe immense revelations that were unique; they were special. Think of what was revealed to Daniel, a man greatly beloved (Dan 10: 11): that was a wonderful revelation. Paul the apostle had an immense revelation in being "caught up to the third heaven" (2 Cor 12: 2), and "heard unspeakable things said which it is not allowed to man to utter", v 4. John the apostle wrote the book of the Revelation, which requires application and the Holy Spirit's help to appreciate and understand it as we should. These were special revelations. But then Paul prayed for the brethren in Ephesus "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of him, being enlightened in the eyes of your heart, so that ye should know what is the hope of his calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints", chap 1: 17-18. The word "spirit" there implies what is characteristic in the believer, although of course by the indwelling Holy Spirit. It was not special to the Ephesians; it would be the desire of each heart to be given the spirit of wisdom and revelation; to know what things these are, to be conscious by the Spirit of divine things made known in our hearts. The more we go in for these things, the more the Spirit will be free to reveal them to us, and the more we will prove what it is to be given the "spirit of wisdom and revelation".

We read in 2 Corinthians 4: 17, 18. There are things bearing on the spirits and on the bodies of the brethren that we all feel; we feel for one another. That is a great principle: "if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it", 1 Cor 12: 26. We are to feel and carry one another's burdens, particularly in prayer, something that I challenge myself about. The apostle speaks here of "our momentary and light affliction". He could speak in that way of his own suffering. Paul's afflictions were very far from being momentary and light from the viewpoint of any one considering things naturally. We know something of what he suffered. But what he says is that these afflictions work "in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory". He had suffered for Christ, but in the certainty that these afflictions work "in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory". We do not suffer afflictions as Paul did, but I think this emphasises the overcoming spirit among

believers, overcoming what would hold them back, overcoming limitations in health and all these things. That is all taken account of as we overcome for Christ's sake and for the testimony.

I wanted to draw attention to these words: "while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen". I challenge myself as to how much that is true of me: am I really looking at "the things that are not seen"? What is my attention fixed on, what is it that interests me, what is it that draws out my heart? I need to look more at the things that are not seen; the things that God has in mind, blessedly, for our enjoyment. We will know these things in their fulness when we reach eternal conditions, when there is absolutely no hindrance, nothing of the flesh or even of nature to weaken, distract or hold back. But what a blessing there is in knowing more of these things that are not seen now. The apostle adds, "the things that are seen are for a time", so we keep them in their place, "but those that are not seen eternal". There is no limit to what is eternal. I would just leave that thought in the hearts of each one of us. What blessings God has for us. They are hidden from the world's wisdom, and the world's eyes. They are hidden from the natural man, who cannot understand them, but they are available and are revealed to us by the Spirit who gives us the power and the motivation to go in for them. It requires commitment on our part, and then God loves to pour in a blessing. I think He takes account of anything that is done for Christ in a sacrificial way. God takes account of that and He blesses it a hundred-fold, certainly, and more than that. His blessing is known in the making known of things that are not seen but are eternal, and which we are to enjoy now.

For the Lord's name's sake.

Cullen

11th October 2025

THE GLORY OF CHRIST

Richard J Gray

Matthew 17: 1-13

2 Corinthians 3: 17-18; 4: 1-7

Acts 9: 3-6

1 John 3: 1

I feel impressed to say a word as to the glory of Christ, and what I was thinking of particularly, and the reason I have read these scriptures, is that a view of the Lord in glory and the knowledge of His present position is to have an adjusting effect upon us, it is to change us.

I recall the incident in Exodus 33 where there was a question of Jehovah going with His people and Moses in speaking to God says, "Let me, I pray thee, see thy glory", v 18. God answers that by saying, "I will make all my goodness pass before thy face", v 19. Jehovah says to him that he could not see His face, "Thou canst not see my face; for Man shall not see me, and live". "And Jehovah said, Behold, there is a place by me: there shalt thou stand on the rock ... And I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see me from behind; but my face shall not be seen", v 20-23. Moses was able to see something of God's ways historically, but it was not a dispensation in which God had been fully revealed, so that Moses' view in that way was limited. In contrast to that I thought about the present dispensation and the greatness of the time in which we live, a time marked by the Lord Jesus enthroned in glory and the Holy Spirit here. John records, "the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified", John 7: 39. That looked on to the present time: the Lord Jesus is glorified. Speaking very simply, I think a view of the Lord in His present position changes everything; it changes our outlook on everything here and gives us a view of God's thoughts and God's desires; and we see that His purposes are all centred in Christ. It is a great point to get hold of, that everything for God is centred in Christ. We might make plans for this world, but the Lord Jesus is not the centre of this world, He is the centre of another world, and as we get a view of His glory it changes things.

I thought of this scripture in Matthew 17. Peter, James and John had already come to the Lord Jesus and they had given up everything to follow Him here. I suppose that, at this point, they still thought that Jesus was going to restore everything to Israel and that

there was going to be earthly blessing. They say that in Acts, “Lord, is it at this time that thou restorest the kingdom to Israel?”, chap 1: 6. In that connection, I thought about the Lord's service to these disciples here when He takes them up into this high mountain so that they might get a view of His glory. He is transfigured before them. I was particularly thinking of Peter because he is the one who speaks here, but it involved change and adjustment for all three disciples; they were not the same again. Jesus tells them to keep the vision, “Tell the vision to no one, until the Son of man be risen up from among the dead”. From that point of view, it was special and needed to wait until the Lord Jesus had suffered and been glorified before the truth of it could come out.

I wanted to refer to this passage in relation to its effect on these three disciples, and I read this account, rather than in Mark and Luke, because Matthew records the fact that, “his face shone as the sun”. Think of that! Where we read in Corinthians Paul says, “who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”; that is the present time. How assuring and stabilising for our hearts and our affections to think of the place that God has given Christ. He has completed everything for God's pleasure and that glory is shining. It says, “his face shone as the sun, and his garments became white as the light”. These disciples received a view of Jesus that they had never seen before. What a thing it is to get a view of the glory of the Lord Jesus.

Then they see Moses and Elias who “appeared to them talking with him”. That was remarkable, but Peter puts Moses and Elias alongside the Lord Jesus. He speaks about the three together and he has to be adjusted in relation to that. How important it is that the Lord Jesus is not to be compared with anybody else; He stands alone in His glory because He is the only One that can take up everything for God; He is the only One that can secure all God's thoughts of blessing. Peter has to be adjusted: and “they saw no one but Jesus alone”. I feel how important that is for us in these days that our view should be fixed on the Lord Jesus where He is in glory.

Then they hear this voice, a voice out of the cloud saying, “*This* is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight: hear him”. What an adjusting and expanding thing for these disciples to get an impression of what the Father thinks of Christ. We might have our own thoughts, but think of this voice coming, “*This* is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight”. He was not speaking now of Moses or

Elias, great men as they were, but pointing to His beloved Son. I thought of what John said, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand" (chap 3: 35); everything is secure there. As we consider the circumstances of the testimony and other exercises, we are to think of everything secure in the hands of the Lord Jesus. So it is a question whether that is true in our own experience; have we committed everything to Him? The Father would desire that. Mr Walkinshaw once said about that scripture in John 3 that we are sometimes rather doubtful about the competency of the Lord to handle everything for God, but the Father has implicit confidence in Him and that everything is in safe hands. The Lord Jesus in His greatness and His glory is not to be compared with any other. It was an important lesson for these disciples that the Lord Jesus is to be viewed alone. It was an adjustment for them because they were thinking of things in terms of earthly blessings for Israel but the glory coming on to view was a heavenly one and our blessing is heavenly because it relates to the Lord Jesus where He is in glory. Do I really believe that? The Lord Jesus is glorified, He is a living Man in heaven, and everything for God is centred in Him.

I also thought of this beautiful reference in verse 7, "Jesus coming to them touched them, and said, Rise up, and be not terrified" - how we need that, the personal touch of the Lord Jesus in relation to making progress in our souls, getting a greater view, a fresh view, of His glory. The touch of the Lord Jesus is necessary for us, and the Holy Spirit's service too; we spoke about that in the reading, how He would point to the greatness and the glory of Christ. The Lord Jesus then descends from the mountain and He tells them, "Thus also the Son of man is about to suffer from them". I thought what an expansion of thought and affection that was for these disciples, that they not only had a view of the glory of Christ and an impression of the Father's delight and confidence in Him, but that He was also going to descend, to suffer and to die so that everything that was in the heart of God for us might be brought about. It was a suffering way: the Lord Jesus descended; how affecting that is. It must have laid hold of these disciples.

Peter speaks about this in his second epistle, showing the way that the impression that he had received on this occasion had grown with him, it had expanded his affections for Christ, and expanded his thoughts in relation to what God was doing. In 2 Peter 1 he refers to three things particularly in relation to this experience: firstly, "eyewitnesses of *his* majesty" (v 16), what a tremendous impression

that is of the greatness of Christ, “*his* majesty”. The Lord Jesus is able to take up everything for God; the government is going to be upon His shoulder (Isa 9: 6), He is going to put everything right here in this scene, what glory belongs to Him personally. Then he refers to, “honour” (v 17): “For he received from God the Father honour and glory”. What moral worth was found in Christ that He could receive honour from God the Father, honour not due to anybody else but due to Christ. Then he says, “and glory” and I thought of that precious reference in the Lord’s prayer to the Father in John 17, “I have glorified *thee* on the earth, I have completed the work which thou gavest me that I should do it”, v 4. He glorified the Father, and God’s answer to that is that Christ is glorified: “Thou has crowned him with glory and honour”, Heb 2: 7.

I wanted to refer to these other scriptures to emphasise the adjusting and expanding effect for us of having a view of the glory of Christ. In 2 Corinthians 3 it is to have a transforming effect. The apostle says, “But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit”. That is, there is to be a permanent result in us from seeing the glory of Christ. What a wonderful thing it is that we can look upon Him, we can see the glory of Christ, no longer with the veil as in the old system, but “with unveiled face”. There is to be a permanent change and how important in our soul history to get such a view of the glory of Christ, to fix our gaze on the Lord, and to take our bearings from Him. Everything else becomes clear: things become clear in relation to our own pathway, in relation to the fellowship and our links together, in relation to the purpose of God and the fact that our portion is not earthly but heavenly. So that someone looking on the glory of the Lord would not be seeking to build up things here, but as Paul says, “seek the things which are above, where the Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God: have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth”, Col 3: 1-2.

The passage in 2 Corinthians 4 shows that as we are occupied with His glory it is to come out in testimony, “Because it is the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”. It is to shine forth; this transforming effect is to come out in testimony. We see that in relation to the saints, how impressions of Christ are taken on and there is some spiritual gain, some expansion in relation to the Lord Jesus and in relation to His things. I feel how important that is. The apostle speaks of the glad

tidings, “the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ, who is the image of God”. That is the present time; the glad tidings are going forth because of the place that God has given Christ; they speak of Him. Sometimes we think we are the focus of the glad tidings; the gospel does involve our blessing, but in the preaching what should also come out is some impression of the glory of Christ. I just commit that thought to the brethren, that we might be in some way expanded in our affections and in our thoughts in relation to the glory of Christ. Mr Stoney has a reference (vol 6 pp1 & 4) as to looking on the glory of the Lord; he says we are to try it, and so prove the truth of it. What gain there is as we make time to contemplate His glory, to see what is so precious to the Father in Him, so that there might be more for Him in testimony and that there might be a shining out increasingly from our hearts.

I read about Paul in Acts: in a way you could not get a bigger change than the one that Paul experienced as he saw this light out of heaven. He was on this course to Damascus and “suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven, and falling on the earth he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?”. Immediately Paul is changed. He says, “Who art thou, Lord?”. He had never said that before, but in this transaction with the Lord Jesus from the glory he receives an immediate impression of His greatness, and that the One he was seeking to persecute was actually in heaven. What a change that was to Paul; how it must have taken away everything that he trusted in and changed everything for him: “Who art thou, Lord?”. The other tremendous adjustment is that he is led by the hand and brought into Damascus. He is brought into touch with the local assembly in Damascus; he has to do with Ananias, and he receives the Holy Spirit. I thought simply that receiving a view in this way of Christ in glory would adjust us in relation to the testimony, and perhaps in relation to our brethren as to how we are in our local places. Paul had not been accustomed to being led by the hand, but he receives help from Ananias. It says, “And he was with the disciples who were in Damascus certain days”, v 19. The local brethren in the place protect him: later in the chapter there is the plot when the Jews sought to kill him, and the disciples in the place “took him ... and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket”, v 25. I thought that a practical effect on the apostle Paul of having to do with Christ in glory was that he also received a view of the local assembly, a view of the saints, and he was adjusted in relation to them.

In 1 John it says, “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”. What a hope that is to think of the glory of Christ, and that when we see Him we shall be like Him. What a hope! We spoke about hope in the reading. John says, “every one that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as *he* is pure”. That is, if we have this hope of being in glory with Christ, and being like Him, it will have a present adjusting and purifying effect, so that perhaps things here that hold us and keep us would have a lesser hold upon us. The apostle is very honest and plain in what he says, “what we shall be has not yet been manifested”: the greatness of the heavenly bodies of the saints and our heavenly portion “has not yet been manifested”, but he says, “we know that if it is manifested we shall be like him”. What a comfort to have this hope, that we will be with Christ and we will be like Him. It is to have its effect now: “every one that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as *he* is pure”. I thought how wide ranging that is: that everything in relation to our pathways, our thoughts and our outlook is to be related to this hope of seeing Christ and being like Him.

May we be encouraged, dear brethren, with this hope and may it increasingly have a practical effect upon us. I feel the edge of that myself, but John says, “every one that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as *he* is pure”. May it increasingly be our experience and our exercise and may we be encouraged in keeping our eye on Christ where He is in glory.

May the Lord bless the word.

Maidstone

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