

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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CHRIST AS THE SERVANT

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PAG My exercise for this season together is to enquire into various titles and glories of Christ, if the Lord will. In this reading we would speak about Christ as the Servant. As to the scriptures that are before us this morning: in Exodus I thought that this was the Lord's service of love; in Mark He acts in a service of regulation in view of another serving; and in John it is a service that liberates in view of "part with me"; so it is a service of love, a service of regulation and a service of liberty. I hope we can just speak together about these matters and get some help as to them.

GBG In Exodus, while we could not exclude the liabilities we faced, the emphasis does not seem to be on that. The bondman was not thinking about the liabilities of his wife and children. He loved them; that is why he served. The Lord's love underlies His work for us. It seems to emphasise, "I love my **master**, my wife, and my children". The master did not have liabilities. Is that a right thought?

PAG It is. It says of the Lord, "in view of the joy lying before him, endured the cross, having despised the shame", Heb. 12: 2. The joy was what was uppermost in His heart, what He would come into. I believe "the joy lying before him" is very wide in its scope and definitely involves the answer to His own affections.

GBG I think that "the joy lying before him" is a very wide thought. He had in His heart everything that was in God's will to secure and, of course, that includes the assembly; it includes ourselves.

PAG That would enter into what is "for ever". God has eternal purposes, and the Lord has acted to secure them eternally for God's pleasure.

KJW Does the thought of the servant have in mind someone who has nothing for himself but is considering for others? You have read in Mark's gospel, the Servant's gospel, but I was just thinking there it says, "the Son of man did not come to be ministered to, but to minister", chap 10:45. He did not come for any benefit to Himself; He came for others. Does that link with the Servant's service of love?

PAG The psalm is well known:

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

He tells His own while He is here, "My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me", John 4: 34. That is what was before Him, we might say. In Matthew 13 we have "a merchant seeking beautiful pearls", v 45. The pearl is also before Him.

KJW I had an impression as you were speaking about the servant's concern for others, that the concern of the Lord Jesus was for the will of His God and Father all the time, and here it is "my master, my wife, and my children", His concern for them, the committal of the love lying behind it. His heart was committed to it.

PAG His love extended in every direction: "my master" would be the ascending love; "my wife", you might say, is horizontal; and "my children" is descending love. The bondman's love is typical of the love of the Lord Jesus: it extends in every direction and it underlies all that he does.

JL Does it all stand in contrast to going out alone? Love would not wish to be alone. The servant would have these relationships in mind to be continued in the enjoyment of love, would he?

PAG The hymn-writer says that:

Love will not be alone (Hymn 180).

The heart of God is a wonderful thing, and contemplation of the divine heart leads us to understand that it is not satisfied without an object for its affections. Divine Persons are so great that they are entitled to act to satisfy Themselves. We are not entitled to act to satisfy ourselves and, as man, it says of Christ, "For the Christ also did not please himself" (Rom 15: 3), but this suggests an answer to the outgoing of divine affection.

NJH Did the service have in mind that the assembly would be His body? It says, "he shall go out alone": 'with his body' (note 'b'). Christ was serving in view of having the assembly as His body. Is that right?

PAG I have been thinking of that recently. The scripture is very clear, "which is his body" (Eph 1: 23); not 'which will be' but "which is". Part of my exercise in suggesting these scriptures is that there might be a present answer to that outshining of love, that there might be something responsive formed in our souls, but "his body" would involve what is

organic, what lives. It is by no means a mechanical response; it is a living response.

APG A bondman does not have a will of his own; he is simply doing the will of another. That is how his love is expressed: “thy law is within my heart”, Ps 40: 8.

PAG That is a wonderful contemplation. Psalm 119 is very long but it is worth reading and quite close to the end, in verse 165, it says,

Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing doth stumble them.

The Lord was never turned aside from His path because He was motivated by His absolutely steady, unbreakable commitment to the will of God.

APG It was His love. He had great joy in doing the Father's will. That was how His love was expressed in such a definite way.

PAG It is good for us to see that that the fulfilment of His Father's will answered to Christ's own desires. It was not something imposed on Him. I know it says that “he learned obedience from the things which he suffered” (Heb 5: 8); He came into a condition to which obedience attached; but it was not an onerous obedience; it was an obedience that He took delight in.

JTB “Taking a bondman's form” (Phil 2: 7) would imply love underlying all His actions. The word 'taking' suggests that it was His own act. It was an action of love, do you think?

PAG And yet it involved emptying Himself and humbling Himself, but all of that was done in love.

JTB All His actions were motivated by love, even “man acquired me as bondman from my youth”, Zech 13: 5. That characterised His whole life, moved and motivated and driven by love, do you think?

PAG Even when He was rejected, He wept over Jerusalem, Luke 19: 41. He did not turn His back on it. I know that what happened subsequently to Jerusalem was governmental. He felt it deeply; His love for those whom He had come to call ran deep.

GBG The “bondman's form” was not simply outward, was it? It involved His spirit also, do you think?

PAG He says, “I am in the midst of you as the one that serves”, Luke

22: 27. As has been remarked in Psalm 119, it was a question of what was in His heart.

DCB Exodus brings in two periods of service. There is the six years and it is after that that there is a distinctiveness, this distinct speaking. Would you say something about that?

PAG I would be glad to get your help on it.

DCB Simply that it would affect us that there was a time when really it meant that He had to go the way of the cross. He was going to go with His Master to the door-post, which I think would suggest the cross.

PAG So there comes a point when “*he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem*”, Luke 9: 51. There is that aspect of not going free. It may relate to what He says at the end of John 14, “but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father has commanded me, thus I do. Rise up, let us go hence”, v 31. That was a distinct speaking, a speaking involving movement, but it was “that the world may know that I love the Father”. That was the motivation that lay behind it.

DCB The bondman's movement is with his master; the Lord was moving with the Father in all that time of bondmanship.

PAG Yes, He was, and that is very important to take account of. Even in Gethsemane He was still moving with the Father. There was no point, apart from the forsaking, at which He was not conscious intimately of the Father's presence and delight.

JD-i You referred to the pearl that the Lord had in His mind. You also referred to the joy that was before Him in view of which He suffered. A pearl is formed in life. Do you think that is the true character of the assembly, and it would have filled the Lord's heart to see the correspondence in the vessel for whom He gave all that He had, and it would be formed for His pleasure eternally?

PAG Yes, the assembly is the product of His suffering. Having his ear bored “through with an awl” would involve suffering on His part, but what He has secured is an answer in a vessel that can appreciate the suffering. Now, the forsaking is distinctive, and His alone, but His suffering for righteousness is something that is appreciated in the assembly, and we can worship Him on account of what He went through in the forsaking even though we cannot compass it, and even the suffering of death was His, but He is out of all that now, and “the joy lying before him” includes an answer that is like Him. That is a very

blessed thing.

JD-i I was thinking of John 16 too, the woman in travail. She is suffering greatly, but she forgets all the suffering “on account of the joy that a man has been born into the world”, v 21.

PAG Well, it is interesting that it is a man child. How can it be a man and a child? It is very important for us to see the potential that is in the saints. I am glad to see so many young people here because we see potential for God in each one of them. We see something in each one of them that has the praise of divine Persons in view.

AMB I was thinking of the pleasure the master would have in the actions of the bondman in the passage that you read. The master had given the bondman a wife, and they had had children, and then as a result of the bondman's willingness to commit himself and to serve all of this was secured for the master forever.

PAG The hymn comes to mind, Hymn 121, where the writer says,

Thou dost know the Father's feelings
Of affection for His Son,
And His joy in the assembly
As united to that One.

God has joy in seeing Christ's heart satisfied, but then what satisfies Christ's heart is what Christ has, a vessel of praise, responsive to the Father, and that is available eternally.

AMB We rightly speak about the Lord's joy in relation to this passage, but the one the master speaks of, God Himself, is delighted in the love and commitment of the Son, and also in what that service of His has secured. There is a suggestion, do you think, of eternal purpose in the master giving him a wife?

PAG I think that, and it is striking, is it not, that it is “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory” who gives Christ to be “head over all things to the assembly”, Eph 1: 17, 22? It is as though there is a perfect consonance between what Christ has done and what the Father would wish.

GJR Where would nourishing and cherishing the assembly (Eph 5: 29) and “the washing of water by the word” (Eph 5: 26) fit in?

PAG That would be a present service, but say something of it.

GJR It is service towards the assembly. It is service towards the wife rather than towards the master, but the master would fully approve of this.

PAG We spoke of the love on an ascending line, which would be towards the master, horizontal towards the assembly, but the descending love is towards the children as well, so that love is everywhere, and it is the same in character everywhere. I know it is a different setting, but the Lord in John 17 says, “the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them”, v 26. The same love that He has for the Father and the Father has for Him is extended to the assembly and to those who make it up, the personnel of it. I trust that we experience something of “the washing of water by the word”, and we experience the Lord's action in nourishing and cherishing His assembly. That is what meetings such as these are for.

TWL In the Lord's service there He says, “I sanctify myself for them” (John 17: 19), would that fit in?

PAG That is helpful, because sanctifying means setting apart for holy purposes, and these are holy relationships that we are speaking about.

TWL I was thinking that in the light of what our brother said. Christ is moving according to the feelings of God, and “I sanctify myself for them” is what He is doing to hold them for God. It is what is precious to God that is the motivation of His service.

PAG So we require to be sanctified; *He sanctifies Himself*. There is nothing to be removed by sanctification on His part, but He sets Himself apart in view of us: not 'us' in any exclusive way. What a joy for our hearts that such a One as He should set Himself apart for us in view of God having a response and in view of an answer to His own heart.

JL There seems to be something very precious about the irreversible character of things in this section, firstly, I suppose, in the bondman's irreversible committal which would be witnessed to in his ear being bored through with an awl, but the irreversible blessedness of what is secured: “I will not go free”. The answer remains unchanged in its blessedness for ever for the master.

PAG I do think that. I have been thinking recently of the scripture as to Christ “having found an eternal redemption”, Heb 9: 12. It is irreversible and it is eternal. Nothing can change it. Do you think it would be good for us to lay hold in our souls of the fact that when divine

Persons set their hearts on something they will certainly achieve it, and when they do something, it cannot be changed?

JL Necessarily so.

JD I was wondering if this matter of “the bondman shall say distinctly” is not only His death but the fact He now lives for us.

PAG Yes, go on. That is very helpful.

JD I was thinking of John 20, too, how distinct the Lord was in not only going free in the sense that He waited to comfort Mary's heart, and then leave that message regarding His Father and His God, bringing out how committed He was in love towards all that belonged to Him and belonged to the Father, do you think?

PAG Would we extend the distinct speaking to what the Lord gave to Paul once He had ascended?

JD Colossians tells us it was given to Paul “to complete the word of God” (chap 1: 25), and what the Lord gave Paul in the way of the Supper was very distinct, and other matters, do you think?

PAG I think so. Your reference to the Supper is helpful. The Lord Jesus said this Himself to the apostle Paul once He had gone on high, “in the night in which he was delivered up, took bread, and having given thanks broke it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also the cup, after having supped, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me”, 1 Cor 11: 23-25. That is the distinct speaking of the Lord Jesus and, as given directly from heaven, is something for us to pay attention to now.

GBG Does John 16 come in here: “on account of this I have said that he receives of mine and shall announce it to you”, v 15. That is current, is it not? Paul's ministry was future then. Would that link with what you are saying? Would the Spirit's service come into this?

PAG The Spirit is continuously bringing before us what is of Christ. There are two things said which are of importance when issues come up, one in Galatians and one in Romans. Firstly, “what says the scripture?” (Gal 4: 30), but then in Romans, “what says the divine answer to him?”, Rom 11: 4. Now “the divine answer”, I think, is the present speaking. Everything relates back to Scripture; nothing that is said now contradicts or adds to what has been said in Scripture, but “the

divine answer” is the present divine speaking, I would understand.

BWL Going back to John 20, the handkerchief was “folded up in a distinct place by itself”, v 7. There were “the linen cloths lying” (v 5) and the “two angels ... one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain”, v 12. That would bring out His love and where He had gone, but the handkerchief - which might refer especially to His headship; Paul really opens that up.

PAG Yes, “in a distinct place”. The ministry that has been given from the glory is distinctive, were you thinking, and it was yet to be unfolded? It was all there but it was yet to be unfolded so the revelation of the mystery, for example, showed there were certain aspects of that that were brought out under Paul's hand as committed to him from the glory.

BWL I wondered if it linked with what was said about the Lord's present service. There is the answer for His own heart and then, too, there is what answers to God. We do not have to wait for the day of eternity for that. There is what answers to the heart of God now.

PAG Yes, there is, and one thing I would say in passing about the handkerchief is that it is complete in itself. It was there to be unfolded. It is a complete fabric in its own right and it has a distinctive place. The Spirit's present service is to bring us into all of that, but also to secure the response to God which is the same in character as it will be eternally. It is not different in character; it is the same.

WMP Is the “me” then of 1 Corinthians 11 the One who “loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it”, Eph 5: 25? Is it really that character that is before us as we assemble?

PAG Yes, and it is a glorified Man who says “me”: “this do in remembrance of me”. It is the One who is glorified; we remember Him. We do not forget the love nor the way that He went, involving His death. The emblems separate on the table tell us that He died so that these things would be made available to us. The Person we are remembering is the same as the One that died; it is the same love.

WMP The One who is before us is the One who has such a love. The whole matter of our sins has been met in His death, but the primary thought as we assemble to break bread is Himself, is it not, and His love?

PAG Yes. So, “we being assembled to break bread” (Acts 20: 7) immediately brings Christ before us; it brings the Person before us. It is

a wonderful thing that for nearly two thousand years that same, simple opportunity has been preserved, to remember the Lord, to remember *that* Person, and the Person that the apostle Paul remembered, and the Person John called to mind, and the Person that Peter called to mind, and the Person that you and I call to mind, is exactly the same Person and it is exactly the same love.

RWMcC I was just wondering if the beginning of John 13 is appropriate, “Jesus ... having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end” (v 1), loved them through everything (see note 'a'). It embraces not only the distinct speaking before His death but through the whole dispensation.

PAG And regarding what you say as to “to the end”, God is going through with everything. If we think of everything the Lord went through, He did not dismiss it; He did not turn His back on it; He went through, going through with everything, “loved them to the end”. There was nothing that could hinder His love reaching its object and that same love is now.

RWMcC I wondered if it enters into the service of the Spirit and the distinct speaking given to Paul that we have been speaking of, and the presence of the emblems on the table.

PAG What He demonstrated here in loving them to the end is not something that just stopped at that point. That same love is being exercised towards us now. We may get further impressions of it as we consider other services and offices that He fills out, but the love is exactly the same. The condition is different, but the love is the same and it never changes.

AEM I was going to link with your thought about the opportunity we have at the Supper, but it is also the same reward. He takes that opportunity to come in: “I will not go free”. We maybe have negative connotations in our hearts, but He has none, does He? He delights to come in and make Himself known.

PAG He does. Could I say He is looking for a place to come to? He *desires* to come to us. I have often been struck by these simple words to His own, before He died, of course, when He said, “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you”, Luke 22: 15. The Lord's personal desires enter into our assembling to break bread, and we can afford to leave behind the present condition of things and be set free in order to answer to His desires.

KJW You mentioned about Him coming in and making Himself known, that service of love; so the One that comes to us is a well-known Person, who has served in love in our circumstances too. He is One who knows every issue and pressure. In His priestly service He carries us with it. The Servant knows what we need, does He not?

PAG Yes, He does, and He knows how to bring in the necessary adjustment. Even as we prove ourselves, examine ourselves, He brings in the necessary adjustment. He does it in love. Think of the time, after He had risen, it says, “The Lord is indeed risen and has appeared to Simon”, Luke 24: 34. One might think that it was Simon Peter who let Him down so badly, but the Lord had appeared to Simon. Anything that needed to be adjusted was adjusted, and the Lord had already done it. That is the service of love. And why did He do it? Because He wanted Simon Peter’s company.

JAB Would this service of love operate towards us in His “always living to intercede” for us, Heb 7: 25? The thought of being saved completely is linked with that. I wondered how aware we are that the Lord Jesus is serving us even at this minute. It says “always living to intercede for them”. Is that linked with being “his bondman for ever”? He never stops, does He?

PAG That is helpful because it is a constant service; it is a living service; it is not a historical service. We can look back and be thankful for what He did, but it is present, it is right now. When it says, “he shall be his bondman for ever”, it will always be in His heart to serve His own. The character of His service differs according to the circumstances and when we are in bodies of glory, what will be required will be different. He is not just a bondman: He is a Prophet; He is a Priest; He is a King; He is Lord; He is Christ; He fills out all of these offices perfectly, but the love remains constant through them all.

GBG I know it is not your subject, but His love must be formative, it is so great.

PAG Oh yes. That is the kernel of my exercise, that something in us, and I have to start with myself, might be changed as a result of thinking about these things. Maybe after we have all been together, something will come into our minds and change us.

GBG You can see that in your third scripture. They had to do what He did. That must be in love; so it is formative: we learn from Him.

PAG And the thing is to learn not only *what* He did but *how* He did it. That is how love operates. It is not just what is done; it is how it is done.

AGM In Deuteronomy 15, which is our side, the bondman answers because he is happy in that realm. I wondered if what we are speaking about really has to have a bearing on us in our committal. It is nothing like what the Lord showed in having His ear bored, but the ear is “thrust ... through” (v 17), which is a different matter altogether.

PAG It is as well that we refer to Deuteronomy 15. This is the same bondman but a different presentation of it: “And it shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee, - because he loveth thee and thy house, because he is well with thee”, v 16. As you say, that is our side: “because he loveth thee and thy house, because he is well with thee”.

AGM In Deuteronomy, the children of Israel are just about to go into the land, and there is something being formed in them, and there is that committal. Do you think this is to work out with us, our committal? It is nothing like the Lord's committal, but, as we view the Lord's committal, it would help us to commit ourselves wholly.

PAG The way I would put it is simply that the Lord is looking for an answer. He is looking for an answer in each one of us.

JW We get touches in scripture from time to time of times suggesting when the Lord was alone; for instance, in Adam, who “found no helpmate, his like” (Gen 2: 20), and Isaiah 53 has come up quite a lot with us recently, “despised and left alone of men” (v 3), and I was thinking too of the verse at the end of John 16 where He says to His own, “ye shall be scattered, each to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me”, v 32. I just wondered if these references help us to appreciate how much the Lord values the company of His own.

PAG Yes, mostly when you see sparrows they are in a little flock, yet it says in a scripture, “I watch, and am like a sparrow alone upon the housetop”, Psalm 102: 7. The sparrow did not want to be alone, yet it was. That simple example is used of the Lord. The Lord desired that persons should answer to His feelings. He desired that He could share what was in His heart, what God had given Him, in order that it might be appreciated by those whom He had come to call. His heart was full of what God had given Him and how He felt the fact that others did not care for it! That is why He wept over Jerusalem because He had so much to give them and yet they did not want it. How He felt it!

JW So some touch as to the Lord's feelings is a greater leverage than anything else can be to affect us, to be in His company, would you say?

PAG Yes, I think that. There is nothing like a direct, personal touch from the Lord. I can remember it coming into my mind very, very distinctly when I truly needed it, "To him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father", Rev 1: 5, 6. That verse shines like a beacon in my heart because I had the direct experience of it myself and it cleared a whole dark scene for me.

JD-i I was thinking of what you remarked a little earlier, according to Luke's presentation, the Lord says, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer", and I was also thinking of the Lord's promise, "I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you", John 14: 18. All the brethren have some sense of the richness of the Lord's supper and participation in the service of God, and all that is available to us. I would like to hear you expand on that so that we may get increasing gain of participating in the Lord's supper and remembering Him, and then having part in the service of God.

PAG I think it is important for us to understand how much the answer means to the Lord Jesus. He was in death; He was in the stillness of death. It says in Job, "By the breath of God ice is given; and the breadth of the waters is straitened", chap 37: 10. He lay in death in an unresponsive scene and He came out of it in victory in order that He might have a response, and in order that God might have a response. He had to go through death in order for that response to be made available on the other side of death. That is what it means to Him. He became "obedient even unto death," - the Father's will was such that He should go into death - "and that the death of the cross" (Phil 2: 8), so that there might be a response. If we could grasp what it means to His heart, I think that would be a lever in our souls.

I would like to go on to Mark's gospel, and it may bear on what our brother has just asked because here was someone, the mother-in-law of Simon, who "lay in a fever". She was prostrated by this fever; she could not get up. A fever involves that the body temperature is not properly regulated. The Lord brings in regulation here in view of service. He had been "preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom of God", v 14. The kingdom of God, amongst other things, is a sphere of regulation, and He wanted to bring this sister into it, and the Lord can

act for us in that way. We can become feverish, and it lays us low, but the Lord would regulate every circumstance, every matter, every house, in order that persons might be free to serve Him.

JL Does it stand a little in contrast to the word when He came in amongst His own in John 20, “Peace” (v 19), and would the service that He renders in a regulatory way help us to come to a settled peace in view of enjoying what is proper to the heavenly sphere?

PAG Yes. There were certain circumstances that the Lord came to where it was said that there was a “tumult”. Now the Lord dealt with that. He was not going to minister in a tumult; He was not going to act in a tumult. The Lord would bring peace. Sometimes there can be a tumult amongst us, but sometimes it can be in my heart, and the Lord would regulate every aspect of that.

JAB Would it be right to think that we do not leave behind what we have been speaking about as to this service in love? It was in love for this woman that He did this. It is service in view of liberation. Everything that He does is in love; so what we have been speaking about really suffuses everything else that we will speak about during our time together, does it not?

PAG I trust so; because even if the Lord has to act correctively, it is still done in love.

JAB That is what makes it easy to accept.

PAG That is helpful. Another aspect of this is that “... straightway they speak to him about her”. We can bring one another before the Lord. If I have a direct, distinct experience of the Lord's love, how much more so would I want someone else to experience it!

GBG At the end of 2 Timothy Paul says, “The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you”, chap 4: 22. “Your” is singular there; “you” is plural (note a). Often if there is agitation, it is our spirits; so he says, “The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you”.

PAG Well, so there is “the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit”; there is “the Father of spirits” (Heb 12: 9), and then there is the Holy Spirit. If we learn to subject our spirits to divine Persons, then these things that cause agitation can be set aside.

GBG I have often been impressed that there is grace for every

situation from the Lord.

PAG Well, “of his fulness we all have received, and grace upon grace”, John 1: 16. One might ask whether “grace and truth” (v 14) would not be enough? Would that not be sufficient? But, no, there is “grace upon grace” in order that the truth might be worked out in a spirit of grace.

EJM Matthew gives us more the quantity, the volume, but in Mark it is more a question of the quality of things: “He does all things well”, chap 7: 37.

PAG That is helpful. Do you think even these 'straightways' in Mark, “straightway going out of the synagogue”, “straightway they speak to him about her”, show the quality that underlies all this is the immediacy of the Lord's presence in action? There is not some long period of qualification for this woman to be set free; it can be done “straightway”. I am impressed by that, that there is an immediacy to the Lord's action here.

HTF Did Peter learn something from this in the way the Lord did this? I was thinking of the circumstance in Acts 3 which includes taking the man by the hand and raising him up (v 7); Peter knew how to do that because he had learned it when the Lord acted in relation to his own mother-in-law.

PAG That is helpful. Peter's epistles are an encouraging example of how much Peter learned in the presence of the Lord. Instead of talking about himself he talks about the Lord. He says of the Lord, “who, when reviled, reviled not again”, 1 Pet 2: 23. He does not say, 'I was found out in that regard'; he just says, that is what the Lord was like. And then when he was about to die, his exercise is that the brethren to whom he was writing should have the power at any time to call to mind the things relating to the Lord's transfiguration where he heard “a voice being uttered to him by the excellent glory ... being with him on the holy mountain”, 2 Pet 1: 17, 18. We spoke earlier about being formed; Peter's epistles are evidence that he was formed by his contact with the Lord, and that is a wonderful thing.

AJMcK Can you say something, please, as to the touch of the hand of Jesus: He took her “by the hand”?

PAG Well, I suppose this sister's hand would be what was used for service. That is what she would do. She would present Him,

doubtless, with a meal or whatever would be suitable, and that is a great thing for us, do you think, if we are to be useable in service? A personal, distinct touch from the Master's hand on our hand as we seek to serve is greatly to be valued. What do you think?

AJMcK I do think that. I feel deeply tested by it. The Lord took the initiative here. Is that wonderful to see? This was one of His children: "I love". This was an object of His love. I was thinking of what our brother was saying as to the service of love lying behind this. He comes up to her and takes her by the hand. It is His initiative; she just has to yield to it. Is that a test for us?

PAG If you are asked to serve the brethren, that is the Lord putting His hand on you. One might say, "how shall they preach unless they have been sent?", Rom 10: 15. I believe others have said that an important part of being sent is being asked. You still have to have an impression. We cannot be lackadaisical about it, but the saints really are used of the Lord to place their hand on one and another, and it is His hand that guides them. Each of us - I say this to everyone here, old and young alike - if there is something to be done for the brethren, that is the Lord putting His hand on you, and you should be subject to it.

JB I was thinking of the hand and how the Father, lovingly, has put all into His hands (John 3: 35), and it is the same hand that He uses in affection to raise this woman up.

PAG Yes, and what a hand it is! In Luke 7 when the young man was being brought out of the city, dead, on a bier, being taken out to be buried, it says the Lord "touched the bier, and the bearers stopped", v 14. That is the hand that has the power over death itself. It is not a mere man here; He is Man, of course; but this hand has the power over death itself, would you say?

JB Yes, that is very wonderful, is it not? The power that is in His hand, and how He draws near to regulate us, and to set us free powerfully if we go to Him, when we are in tumult and in fever.

PAG Yes, we should understand that we can go to Him; in grace He will come to us; or if we see another in tumult or in fever, we can bring them to the Lord; we can speak to the Lord about them. He is always available and His hand is always ready.

JL Often I suppose it would be true that things we touch might bring in defilement. That was never so with the Lord Jesus. All His touches

brought about a remedy, and it gives us confidence in looking to Him that He brings in that regulatory touch concerning which there is a special glory because it is His touch.

PAG Yes, and because He was the sinless One, no evil could ever transmit to Him. He could even touch the leper. It says in this very chapter that we are reading, where we come on to the leper later, there is note which says, 'to touch freely, handle', v 41 note b. He was able to handle the leper freely because He was the sinless One, and why? Because He was going to take that man's sin away. The Lord has touched each one of us, has He not, and He has taken our sins away? What hands He has!

JTB Isaiah speaks about "the hollow of his hand", chap 40: 12. Does that suggest the infinite resource which is in the hand to help us?

PAG Yes, that is in relation to the waters.

JTB Yes. "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand ...?"

PAG You are thinking that the resource is not going to be exhausted, is it?

JTB I was just thinking there was a counterpart at the very end of this gospel to what you are saying. The Lord was "at the right hand of God. And they, going forth, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them", chap 16: 19. 20. Do you think they were proving the service of His hand in that respect? Also, linking with your earlier scripture about Him being a "bondman for ever", that service continues in love.

PAG It does. I am glad you bring that in because it assures us that there is power to sustain the testimony right to the end.

JD Do you think the exercise then becomes not to take our hand out of His hand? I was thinking too of Matthew 11 and your thought of regulatory love. It says there, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart", v 29. That would also be the answer to the fever, do you think?

PAG It would, and does that regulation you speak of involves walking in step with Him? We have been taught as to that section of scripture that it presents Christ as 'Turning Point and Model', JT vol 1 p73. It is impossible that you would ever see the Lord in a fever; He was never overcome by the circumstances that He faced. Even in the greatest of pressure, even when "his sweat became as great drops of blood, falling

down upon the earth" (Luke 22: 44), He was still in contact with His Father and in full control.

RWMcC It says, "and straightway the fever left her, and she served them"; I was just reflecting that the Lord's service does not just address the fever; it resolves all the problems that it caused; and she is at liberty to serve immediately. The leper is the same; the Lord cured the symptoms as well.

PAG That is a wonderful thing about the divine touch. It is restorative, certainly, but it has in mind something for God. It is somewhat like the trespass-offering where the fifth part is added thereto, Lev 5: 16. When the Lord touches us, we do not just go back to where we were; we have something that we never had before; we have another fresh experience of His love; and, as has been said, it is cumulative. It is not a series of episodes like chapters in a book; it is cumulative.

RWMcC He says, "I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten", Joel 2: 25. That is impossible by man's hand.

PAG Yes, but the Lord will come in even for Israel if we can look ahead to that. He is not just going to put them back where they were. All the nations are going to flow up to them; they are going to be the centre of glory on earth, not some isolated nation surrounded by its enemies and protected by a wall, but the centre of God's operations on earth. They will be more than they had ever been; they will flourish; they will blossom.

In John it is was in mind to consider these few words at the end of verse 8, "part with me". The Lord desires to liberate us to have part with Him.

GBG What were you thinking that embraces? He was to leave them here, was He not? They were to be left in the testimony and they were to be sent forth, and also the Lord would delight to have others with Him in what was so precious to His heart.

PAG Well, "God is faithful, by whom ye have been called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor 1: 9); so that is part with Him in fellowship, and then what flows out of that is part with Him in privilege - you get that particularly in John 17 - and then what flows out of part with Him in privilege is part with Him in testimony and you also get that in John 17, "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me",

v 21. That is the present testimony, but “that the world may know that thou hast sent me” (v 23) is more millennial, but the present testimony is “that the world may believe that thou hast sent me”. Mr Raven has an article on 'Fellowship, Privilege and Testimony', (vol 1 p58), and it is worth reading, but we have to have part with Him in each of these spheres. You cannot just have one and not the other. I am not going to speak about what others do, but what I am going to say is this: part with Him in testimony must flow from something, and I believe it flows from recognising His rights in relation to the fellowship and I believe it also flows from what we enjoy in privilege, and then our desire is to bring others in to have part with Him.

NJH In John 20 He refers to Himself as the ascending One and then He breathes into them. That would be for testimony, would it not?

PAG It would. And He gives great elevation to it: “as the Father sent me forth, I also send you”, John 20: 21. He clothes them, you might say, with that access to divine power itself in order that the testimony might be fulfilled. What glory He attaches to it!

JL Are the operative words rather “with me” instead of 'for me'? I might have a right enough exercise to do something for the Lord in testimony, but it is essential to be with Him. Is that the point you are making: to be set forward as being in His company and flowing out from Him into these other spheres.

PAG The concept of liberty needs to be held at the right spiritual level because the world's idea of liberty is that I can go away and do what I like. The younger son in Luke 15 thought he had liberty. He went into a far country; he had his share of the inheritance; he had plenty of money; and he ended up feeding the swine; and he was so hungry that he would have liked to eat what they were eating; and he came back to his father's house. It was the place of true liberty, because he had a ring and he had sandals on his feet and he had the best robe, and the fatted calf was killed so that he was set free on account of the death of another. Well, if we have been set free on account of the death of Another, should we not then be subject to Him in our testimony?

APG In John 12 He says, “where I am, there also shall be *my* servant”, v 26. The servant was enjoying the Lord's company.

PAG Yes, he was. That does suggest that there is a certain desire on the part of the servant to be there as well as a desire on the part of the Lord to have them there. I trust that may be so for each one of us.

DCB Would you say more about the character of the service here, washing the feet?

PAG It would wash away the dust of the pathway, and it was a down-stooping service. This perhaps relates to what we have in “my children”. He stooped down in order to serve them. He was at the feet of those disciples of His; He washed their feet. I suppose from the setting of it He must even have washed Judas's feet. He washed their feet. He stooped down; He girded Himself; He laid “aside his garments”; He had laid aside His glory in coming into manhood; He emptied Himself; and here He shows them, “lays aside his garments”; and He came to where they were. He did not make them all stand in a queue and come to Him; He went to where they were: that is the character of the service. It involves down-stooping love and it involves coming to where the need is. What would you say?

DCB Yes, and the thought of liberation: I was thinking of the fact that “the Son shall set you free”, John 8: 36. We can think of that in that high and elevated thought, but then you may ask how He does it. He does it in such a way of service as coming near so that we are free in the divine presence.

PAG Today sisters will be serving to provide for the comfort of the saints as they are together between and after the meetings, to provide meals in houses, brothers serving too, no doubt, in order to have arrangements in place that are suitable. The Lord will honour that.

GBG In this instance here, did the Lord want them refreshed and restful in view of what He was to say to them? When we go into these chapters, it is the Lord's words and it is the company of His own, and we prove that when we come out to an evening meeting. We are engaged with the Lord in a hymn, and it refreshes our spirits. We may be agitated all day but then we are restful and a word comes in, encouraging us. A large part of the feet washing is refreshment and making restful.

PAG That is helpful. There have been times when I have thought, 'Can I really go out tonight? I am tired; I have had a long day'. And then I went and it is like entering into a new world altogether. It is like the sunshine coming out.

GBG It has been said often before that the first feet washing was Abraham, and that was refreshment. The woman in Luke 7 washed His feet, and the Lord enjoyed that. There is the side of the sand and the desert, defilement which we can so easily contract. All these things

come into it.

PAG Yes, they do. The Lord enjoyed it but He also appreciated it. If you look at the bases of the lavers in 1 Kings 7 they had “one casting, one measure, one form”, v 37. They were all the same. Typically they all took pattern from Christ, and really that is what the Lord is saying in verses 14 to 15. He says, “If I therefore, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet; for I have given you an example that, as I have done to you, ye should do also”. That is like “one casting, one measure, one form”.

DAB As well as the Lord bringing in refreshment, we can bring in refreshment to one another, do you think?

PAG I do think that. I can remember when I was young and had just preached, and an older sister spoke to me afterwards and said what she had appreciated, and specifically drew attention to one thing that I had said: that was feet washing. She spoke to a young brother, and had obviously listened to what had been said, and had taken something from it, and was gracious enough to say so. We can do that for one another. If a brother or a sister is feeling a bit of pressure, just a word to them can help - we do not need to pry into one another’s circumstances but just offer a word of encouragement here and there. It makes a great difference to know that we are in the affections of the saints. It makes a difference and we should not forget that.

GAB I was going to ask about the dust of the wilderness you referred to, because it is not necessarily anything evil. It is just what we inevitably come into contact with, but, as coming together under the Lord’s touch things change completely: it disappears. You are into a different environment altogether, part with Him. You are now on His side, as it were, instead of trudging through the wilderness.

PAG I am struck by the fact that the Songs of degrees, in the first Song of degrees, Psalm 120, begin,

In my trouble I called unto Jehovah, and he answered me,
but the second of the Songs of degrees says,

I lift up mine eyes unto the mountains: whence shall my help come?

My help cometh from Jehovah, who made the heavens and the earth.

The first of the Songs of degrees is somewhat to do with the conditions around in the wilderness setting, but as soon as he begins on the upward path, he says,

My help cometh from Jehovah.

He is lifting up His eyes, and that is something - I say this for the encouragement of the brethren - particularly valuable about the weeknight meetings: they help us to lift up our eyes.

DUNDEE

5th April 2019

Key to Initials:

A M Brown, Grangemouth; D A Brown, Grangemouth; D C Brown, Edinburgh; G A Brown, Grangemouth; J A Brown, Grangemouth; J T Brown, Edinburgh; J D-i, Los Angeles; J Drummond, Aberdeen; H T Franklin, Grimsby; A P Grant, Dundee; G B Grant, Dundee; P A Gray, Grangemouth; N J Henry, Glasgow; J B Ikin, Manchester; J Laurie, Brechin; T W Lock, Edinburgh; B W Lovie, Aberdeen; R W McClean, Grimsby; A J McKay, Witney; A G Mair, Cullen; E J Mair, Buckie; A E Mutton, Witney; W M Patterson, Glasgow; G J Richards, Malvern; K J Walker, Dundee; J Webster, Fraserburgh

THE REJECTED ONE

John A Brown

Psalm 118: 22; 69: 9 (from “the reproaches”), 20 (to “heart”)

1 Samuel 22: 1-2

Hebrews 13: 12-15

1 Chronicles 12: 1, 8, 16-18 (to “helps thee”)

We sang together, dear brethren -

We treasure, Lord, Thy blessed Name,

Rejected here ...

(Hymn 436)

I would seek the Holy Spirit's help to speak about the Lord as the One who was rejected when He was here. Although He has a place in heaven above every place, He is still rejected here - not in the hearts of those who love Him, but publicly the Lord Jesus is rejected. I want to speak about what it means to be associated with a Christ who is rejected and despised and reproached.

Things in the world have always been bad; we think they are getting worse, and perhaps they are, but in one sense the world was never as bad as when Christ was rejected in person. “He came to his own”, John writes in the first chapter of his gospel, “and his own received him not” (v 11); that is a way of saying that He was rejected. He was not only rejected but He was despised. Isaiah says that in chapter 53; “He is despised and left alone of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief”, v 3. That is what the Lord Jesus was. He came to the Jewish nation, for that is who “his own” were in the context in which John wrote that in the first chapter, and they did not receive Him, but more than that they despised Him, they rejected Him. Every aspect of society at that time rejected Him. The Jews, the religious element, would not have Him: they rejected Him, crying out, “Crucify, crucify him”, Luke 23: 21. The political system rejected Him: Herod and Pilate had no time for the Lord Jesus. Although He was actually not convinced that Jesus should be put to death, Pilate said in effect to the Jews, ‘You do it’; he did not care about the Lord Jesus. And the intellectuals had no time for Him either: one of His greatest servants, Paul, went to Athens, the seat of Greek philosophy, and as he preached there, the Athenians said, “What would this chatterer say”, Acts 17: 18. They had no time for the One who Paul was preaching there at Athens.

I would just pause at this point and ask, dear friend, have you

got time for Christ? Have you accepted Him? I do not suppose there is anyone here that would say that they have actually rejected Him, but John goes on to say in his gospel, "as many as received him". Reception is an active thing. You cannot drift into a living relationship with Jesus because you have been brought up in fellowship, or because you have parents and brothers and sisters who do believe in Him and have a living link with the Lord Jesus; these things do not save you. "He came to his own, and his own received him not; but as many as received him ...": "received" means that you take Him for yourself. If there is anyone here of responsible years who does not know the joy of communion that we were speaking about in the reading, that link with a personal Saviour who has done everything for me, then receive Him tonight, accept Him. I know you would not be here as actively rejecting Him, but the reception of the Lord Jesus into your life, into your affections, into your mind is a most important thing. It is the basis for fruit for God, and it is the basis for knowing the stability of being "rooted and founded in love", Eph 3: 17.

How much it meant for the Lord Jesus to be rejected here. We say often on a Lord's day morning as giving thanks for the emblems that we gather out of a world which has rejected Him, and that the emblems are the emblems of His death. That death was the extent to which the world rejected Christ. They did not just reject His teaching, they rejected Him in the beautiful lowliness and attractiveness of His Person: and they put Him to death because they had no time for Him. The world still has no time for Jesus. There was a brother in Edinburgh many years ago, Mr Murchie, who was on a boat to America, and there was a very prominent businessman on the boat who was Jewish. The brother was an evangelist, and he preached Christ to this businessman, but he rejected the appeal, saying, 'I do not want a God who can die!'. His tone was one of despising; he had no time for what he saw as the weakness of Jesus on the cross. That is what the Jews said, in effect, when Jesus was here. They would not have Him; they said when He was on the cross, "He trusted upon God; let him save him now if he will have him", Matt 27: 43. That was mockery. Oh, dear friend, if you have not already done so, accept this blessed One who was mocked as He died for you.

Jesus felt these reproaches which were heaped on Him as no one else could, but we have to accept that our place as faithful to Him is in that position of reproach. We cannot expect anything else. Quoting

from the psalm from which we read, the Lord Jesus used the word 'rejected'; He said, "The stone which they that builded rejected, this has become the head of the corner", Mark 12: 10. He Himself was "The stone which the builders rejected ..."; but when Peter quotes that in his epistle, he adds that Jesus was "cast away as worthless", 1 Pet 2: 7. But He is not worthless: He is worthy! I trust that everyone here has a right valuation of the Lord Jesus, and that you put that valuation into effect in the way you live, in the way you interact with your fellow men, and in the way that you praise Him, for He is indeed worthy. And I feel, dear brethren, that as we understand more what it meant for the Lord Jesus to be rejected, then He becomes even more attractive to us.

The verse in Psalm 69 speaks prophetically about what the reproach meant to the Lord Jesus. He said, "he that rejects me rejects him that sent me", Luke 10: 16. So not only were they rejecting Jesus but they were rejecting God. Here in the psalm, and speaking prophetically, the Lord says to His Father, "the reproaches of them that reproach thee have fallen upon me". Men had no time for the Lord Jesus, but they had no time for God either and their reproach, and their rejection of all that God was, fell upon Christ. Think of the spirit of the Lord Jesus being moved as He could say prophetically, "the reproaches of them that reproach thee have fallen upon me"; those who rejected Him rejected the Father also. This had an effect on the Lord Jesus: "Reproach hath broken my heart". He was a Man of sorrows, and it broke His heart to be rejected by those to whom He had come because He loved them. He really did. He said to the disciples when He first gave them their commission, "Go not off into the way of the nations ... but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel", Matt 10: 5. He wanted the house of Israel to be blessed; He did not want them cast out as they have been ever since they crucified Him. He wanted them to enjoy God's promise, but they rejected it. O how much the Lord Jesus felt it when He was rejected; "Reproach hath broken my heart".

That verse is an example of how careful we have to be in how we apply what is said in the psalms to the Lord Jesus personally. We can surely say that the Lord Jesus did indeed feel the reproach: so we can see that the first phrase, "Reproach hath broken my heart", speaks prophetically of the feelings of Jesus; He "looked for sympathy but there was none". But I would hesitate to use the words "I am overwhelmed" about Jesus, because He was not in any sense overpowered by what

was against Him. And, above and beyond the reproach of men, He bore in His spirit, He felt as no one else could, all that lay upon Him as the whole judgment of God against sin and sins. He bore all this too in His suffering, and He took it all away in His power. He was not overpowered by it: He was not defeated but, blessed be His name, He could and did bear what God laid on Him to bear.

I thought that David's experience would show from the type that Christ in rejection becomes an attractive gathering point for those who love Him. I know that He is not in rejection where He is in heaven. He has been raised, He has been accepted and exalted there and God has given Him that place of glory, but here in this world He is still rejected. We need to see the blessed attractiveness of Christ even in rejection, how He went through it all, how He bore it, how He did not react. He had some strong things to say to the Jews certainly, but He could have destroyed them with one word of His power, and He did not. He went on in patient grace right to the cross. How attractive He is to those of us who love Him, even in His public rejection.

Where we read in 1 Samuel 22, David is a type of the Lord Jesus in rejection. David had been rejected by Saul; how strong was Saul's rejection. We have been reading Samuel in our local readings and David had done great things for Saul; he had killed Goliath, and through doing that the Israelites had defeated the power of the Philistine. Yet Saul rejected David. Twice David was in Saul's presence playing his harp, and Saul took his spear and threw it at him, tried to pin him to the wall, and David slid away; how David must have felt that. He escaped from Saul's anger, and Saul's pursuit to the cave of Adullam. This was David in rejection. He was to be king, and it was not too long after this that he was made king in Judah. But here it says that "his brethren and all his father's house heard it, and they went down thither to him. And every one in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one of embittered spirit collected round him". He became a point of attraction even in rejection. That is what the Lord Jesus is publicly; He is in rejection, but for those of us who know Him, He is "a captain over them". Then as to David, it says that "there were with him about four hundred men". I think that they would have had some good times in the cave of Adullam. David was there, soon to be king, Gad the prophet was there, and Abiathar the priest was there. In principle, the prophet, the priest and the king were there. It says, "they went down thither to him", while Abiathar "escaped, and fled to David", 1 Sam 22: 20. David was in a

place of rejection, a low place, and those who wanted to go to him had to go down. That publicly is the place of the Christian, not a position of glory, not a bishop's throne, or a position of prominence in this world, or anything like that, but absolutely the opposite, a pathway of reproach.

We read in Hebrews 13 about going “forth to him”, which might link with David in the cave. The writer of Hebrews says, “Jesus, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood”; there is something blessedly attractive even in that, “his own blood”. The writer did not need to write that; he could have said, 'Jesus, that he might sanctify the people by blood', or even 'by his blood', but it was “his own blood”. What it cost the Lord Jesus to go outside the gate! He suffered “without the gate”. He was crucified there, outside the gate of Jerusalem; “therefore let us go forth to him without the camp”. These persons who came to David were attracted to him in rejection, and we are to be attracted to Jesus. He is in glory now, of course, and we come to Him as One who has been exalted by God, but publicly in the testimony we are linked with a blessed Man who was rejected and despised and reproached by this world, and He still is. There are scientists and philosophers who write books which reject Christ. Satan would seek to shake persons' faith in God and in His beloved Son; but faith it is, not a delusion. If you are “rooted and founded in love”, you are proof against these fiery darts of the wicked one. But although we have that link with the Lord Jesus where He is in glory, we have to move through a world that has rejected Him and still reproaches Him.

So the writer says, “therefore let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach”. The only way to bear His reproach is to be attracted to Him. He has gone outside the camp to suffer and to die, and we are to be attracted to the Lord Jesus there as his brethren were to David when they went to Adullam. We “go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach”. And so we link ourselves on with a rejected Jesus. In the street preaching at home, only a few passers-by are interested; most are either opposed or indifferent. The mention of the name of Jesus publicly invites reproach. We should never forget that we have to bear that reproach, and as bearing it we have another link with Him because we have some sense of being associated with Him publicly in a scene which cast Him out. But I do not want to imply that Christianity is gloomy. It is not gloomy at all. I am sure these men who came to David, four hundred at first and then shortly after that six hundred, were not sitting in that cave continuing to be embittered and

sorrowful in spirit. As they got to know David, as they were influenced by him as their captain, they would enjoy that experience. The prophet was there, the priest was there, and indeed in 1 Chronicles 11 it talks about three of the mighty men who came down - again they had to come down - and they brought David the water from the well of Bethlehem that he had longed for.

What a thing that was when these three mighty men came down. You might say the service of God, in principle anyway, was going on there as David poured out the water to Jehovah. What a wonderful thing that is. The apostle goes on to say, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually to God". The position publicly is one of reproach, but we are glad when we do come across believers, and I know that the dear brethren here are encouraged at the moment by one who is showing such interest in the Lord Jesus and in the truth; there is encouragement in that. Christianity is not a matter of doom and gloom, it is the opposite. But still, we walk through a world which has rejected Jesus, and that is why we can have no part in it; that is why we walk separately from it. This scripture, to "go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach", has often been rightly applied to the need of separation from the public religious systems, but I am using it in a more general sense. Separating ourselves from what is against Christ and what is against God is a matter of affection for the Lord Jesus; we go out to Him because we love Him, and we can therefore offer this "sacrifice of praise continually to God". There will never be anything other than reproach. It was Mr James Taylor who said that the assembly began in reproach, and it will end in reproach, vol 27 p478. Some people think that eventually the church will prevail publicly and everything in this world will be put right, but no, the assembly and the testimony to the Lord Jesus will always be in reproach until we are taken out of this scene to be with Him for ever..

We should understand how much the Lord Jesus values those who identify themselves with Him in reproach. Moses did that; in chapter 11; it says of Moses that he chose "rather to suffer affliction along with the people of God than to have the temporary pleasure of sin; esteeming the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt", v 25. It was not just that Moses decided that he would put up with the reproach in order to get through, but he esteemed "the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt". That is a remarkable statement - the reproach of the Christ. I have

often wondered about it, because Moses himself would not have known the reproach he was under as the reproach of the Christ, but the Spirit of God puts that phrase in. Think of what that means; all that Egypt could offer Moses as a prince of that empire, Moses valued it in principle less than the reproach of the Christ. That is a wonderful typical example of someone who was prepared to embrace the reproach because he knew the One who was in reproach, and he identified himself with Him in type. What a wonderful thing it is to be identified with this blessed One who sanctified us “by his own blood”. How many reasons we have to give God the “fruit of the lips confessing his name”.

Where we read in 1 Chronicles 12, David is still in rejection. He has moved on from the cave of Adullam, and now he is in Ziklag. It is still a place of reproach; it is in Philistine territory. He was not yet acknowledged as king, but there were those who were coming to him. He was still being pursued by Saul, but there were mighty men who came there. These men in verse 8 separated themselves to David. That is what we often say about separation, dear brethren, that we are separated to the Lord Jesus. We are first of all separated *to* this blessed One whose attractiveness brings us into the position of reproach, and the effect of that being so is that we are separate from all the evil in the world. It is not an easy pathway. I know what it is to feel nervous and afraid about confessing the Lord to someone at work or someone in the street, or a neighbour. You say to yourself, 'What will they think about me?'. That is the reproach of the Christ, but God would strengthen us to give testimony to this blessed One.

Those mighty men of valour came to David, strong in their faith, strong in their love for David. Then in verse 16 there were those who came to David in the stronghold. He is still in rejection; he is not in Hebron yet. David challenges them; he says, Do you come peaceably, and the Spirit came upon Amasai, who uttered these wonderful words, “Thine are we, David”. Can we say that today? This blessed One who is publicly in rejection is reigning in glory and reigning in our hearts; we can say, 'I am thine, Lord'. What a wonderful thing it is:

Thine are we, David,
And with thee, thou son of Jesse

- they would not have been anywhere else

Peace, peace be to thee!
And peace be to thy helpers!

For thy God helps thee.

Then in verse 22, we see the result of these movements. David is still in rejection, but he is about to move to Hebron; there is a rising line, starting with the cave of Adullam, then to Ziklag, then Hebron, then Jerusalem. You can trace that path which David took, but here it says that “day by day there came men to David to help him, until it was a great camp, like the camp of God”.

Now if you look at chapter 11: 15-19, there were three men who broke through the camp of the Philistines. This was still while David was in the cave of Adullam, and they brought the water to him. He poured it out to Jehovah; he would not drink it. There was something for God even in these conditions of rejection, and even publicly, that is happening. Think of the work of God going on all over the huge nation of China, the gospel being preached, persons coming to Christ. We had a letter from a missionary there who expressed appreciation of the current ministry, and he spoke about the work there going on, the work of bringing souls to Christ as part of the body of Christ. He knew what the body meant and he knew what reproach meant; one false step there and he would be in prison. He, and many more like him, know what the reproach of the Christ is, but they esteem it, and we are to esteem it, “greater riches” than anything that this world can give us. In conditions of reproach, we gather in smallness in rooms like this, with no outward recognition at all, and yet there is, as there was in that cave of Adullam, something poured out to God for His pleasure.

May we be encouraged, dear brethren, to see that the position of reproach is one of great blessing. We identify ourselves with our Lord Jesus Christ who has been rejected publicly, but as we sang:

Rejected here, yet still the Same;
We know that Thou art near.
The firm foundation still remains,
The Spirit all the truth sustains
Within th'assembly here'

Publicly it is dark around, and we go through valuing the reproach of the Christ, but we know too the blessedness of having Christ in our hearts and sharing with Him in His rejection, knowing what it is to offer that sacrifice of praise.

May we all be freshly attracted to our blessed Lord Jesus. He walked through this world gathering those around Him. All that I desire

from this time together is that our hearts might be freshly attracted to Him, to understand a little more what He felt about the reproach, how much it broke His heart as He was here in this scene on behalf of His God. These sufferings of course were not atoning sufferings, but the reproach that He felt we can in measure feel, and that is a great privilege, and a help to us in walking apart from this world and committing our lives and our hearts to this blessed One.

May it be so for His Name's sake.

CULLEN

30th March 2019

MY SHEPHERD - PSALM 23

Miss A. Ross

I shall not want, for Jesus is my Shepherd;
In pastures green He maketh me to lie;
He leadeth me beside the silent waters,
And there He doth my every need supply.

My soul He doth restore, and when I'm straying
He follows me o'er plain and rocky steep,
Again in paths of righteousness to lead me
For His name's sake His poor and wand'ring sheep.

And though I walk within the vale and shadow
Of death, I will not fear for Thou art near;
Thy rod and staff my ever-present comfort,
Thy hand my strength, Thy whispered word my cheer.

Before my foes Thou hast prepared a table,
Abundant fatness yielding by the way;
My head with oil Thou constantly anointest,
So that my cup runs over day by day.

Thy goodness and Thy mercy, like two angels
Have followed me through life - I know them well.
And when my journey's ended, then my Shepherd
Shall bear me to His house, with Him to dwell.

From *Words of Truth* - 1944