

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

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SPIRITUAL ORDER

Acts 20: 7 (to “on the morrow”)

Hebrews 2: 11, 12

Ephesians 2: 18

John 4: 24

PAG My exercise is that we might consider the subject of spiritual order. I have in mind that we should take up the scriptures we have read as they relate to the time of the breaking of bread and the service of praise which flows from that. But in order to set out that what we enjoy is not simply formulaic or automatic, I thought that it would be helpful to remind ourselves of the scriptural grounds on which we proceed. So, on the first day of the week, the Lord's day, we assemble to break bread: the scripture says so. Then, having done so, it is a question of what proceeds and in Hebrews we see that the thought of brethren comes into prominence, and then the thought of the assembly. Then in Ephesians, having ministered to Christ, and being conscious of His presence, the scripture applies, “through him we have both access by one Spirit to the Father”. (The “both” is both Jew and Gentile.) The Spirit is not an incidental part of the service of praise. Response to the Spirit is an integral part of the service of praise, “through” Christ and “by one Spirit”, and the order is set out there: Christ and the Spirit and the Father. But then the thought is also that there should be response to God. That requires care in how we may speak of it, for there are three Persons of the Godhead, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, but there is the specific reference in John that “God is a spirit; and they who worship him ...”; so there is a direct reference to the worship of God Himself. This may appear familiar to many, but I felt that there would be benefit for our souls in going over the truth. I was encouraged in taking this up by the hymn that we sang at the start of the meeting:

What raised the wondrous thought,
Or who did it suggest ... ? (Hymn 92).

We did not suggest these thoughts; these are God's thoughts.

AMB I think it is very helpful to go over that ground. In one sense it is well-known and well-experienced, but it is important to see the scriptural basis of the order of the service of God and get help as to it. I was struck by the words that Luke uses in Acts 20: 7, “we being assembled to break bread”. There is something dignified about that, and that is according to God's ordering, the assembling of those that

love the Lord Jesus and desire to remember Him.

PAG Yes, you could say more for our help. As we come together, we are still in the wilderness, but in assembling to break bread we are, as it were, turning our backs on the wilderness setting, and our first thought would be that we would see one another. That is what assembling would involve, but then we would have one focus of our minds.

AMB What you are saying is right. The thought of assembling conveys to my mind the parts coming together to form a whole. When we come together on a Lord's day morning, there is something special about it. We form a circle of affection and loyalty to the Lord Jesus and we desire that He would come in and fill our hearts with the sense of His presence. It is a very dignified and blessed matter. It lifts us above all that is around, including the moral chaos that exists, so that we are not occupied with that; we are occupied with Him.

PAG And "being assembled to break bread": it is not that the act of breaking bread brings us together. We come together in view of breaking bread. I feel that it is important to have that in our minds, that the assembling takes place and then the breaking of bread takes place: one follows the other. We might think of the great uniting effect of the Supper, and that is true, but the intention is that we are united before we take it, not as taking it; we are united beforehand.

ADM Would you see any significance that it says here "the first day of the week" as distinct from the Lord's day, bearing in mind what we have recently gone over here as to order?

PAG I think it is the Holy Spirit's emphasis on what should come first in our weeks. Weeks relate to the assembly calendar; days relate to testimony. So the first day of the assembly calendar is to be characterised initially by the breaking of bread.

ADM I just thought there was probably some significance in it, so that what we had recently as to order externally lies behind that. These things relating to moral order have been attended to so that there is liberty to gather and proceed in divine service.

PAG I do feel that the breaking of bread and what flows from it should really cast its influence over the whole of the week. Another has said that you are either going to the Supper or you are coming from it: that is really the walk of the believer.

ASP Why do we not formally announce the Supper?

PAG I suppose, in one sense, it was announced from the glory. Paul says, "For I received from the Lord, that which I also delivered to you ...", 1 Cor 11: 23. It was announced from the glory. I think the announcements are covered by the anointing but they relate to the gatherings of the saints; but we might see that there is something distinct about assembling for the Supper. (As remarked this is something which we are specifically asked to do - thus we assemble in view of it; whereas the other meetings in the assembly calendar are more characterised by the thought of gathering, which is what the Lord would do - He would gather us together: hence the thought of the anointing and of His authority attaching to the announcements). I know there may be in exceptional cases other 'meetings of assembly character' that are announced as a matter of dignity and order, but I think this is love's call. I think it is a helpful matter to bring up. My exercise in bringing these scriptures up is that we should not just accept all that we do as automatic but rather that we should understand it.

ASP I think that is helpful and I do accept it. I am just interested to learn more as to your thought of order in view of it not being announced. 1 Corinthians 11 has often been said to be the highest presentation of the Supper: it is from the glory.

PAG Well, it was the Lord Himself who set it on. He said, "this do" (1 Cor 11: 24); so the Lord has, in that sense, given us the instruction as to it, and it is really the only occasion that is so fully and formally described in Scripture. The rest is left to spiritual judgment, although there is a certain amount of guidance given in Scripture.

EWB It says here, "we being assembled to break bread". It does not say 'we being assembled to remember the Lord', which is what we do. Would assembling to remember the Lord be a more individual thing on the basis of the Lord's appeal to our affections?

PAG The Lord says, as we have in 1 Corinthians 11, "This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me"; so we assemble to *do* something and what do we assemble to do? We assemble to break bread. I think the individual side of it takes place before that, "But let a man prove himself" (v 28), but I think assembling immediately draws us onto collective ground. You cannot break bread on your own.

EWB It concerns me somewhat when brethren say they are going to stop breaking bread. You understand what I mean. In actual fact they are stopping remembering the Lord.

PAG That is the thing. The Lord says as to the breaking of bread, “this do in remembrance of me”. He says, “this do”, and it is intended to be preserved to us and intended to be a preservative. If I felt there was a reason I could not break bread, really I should be putting that right before the Supper if at all possible: that would be normal. There are of course circumstances - rare and exceptional - in which it is necessary to stop breaking bread. Those who do so would feel it exceedingly, and it is never a matter of expediency.

DAB The breaking of bread makes way for the Lord to come in amongst us. I am thinking of what has just been said: it is an opportunity for the Lord to manifest Himself in the breaking of bread. That is when the Lord comes in and, through the eyes of faith, we see Him and we love Him and behold Him and respond to Him in this way. That is why we break bread at the beginning, is it not?

PAG I think that is another important point as to order. The first day of the week we assemble to break bread, and the immediate focus is to do the thing we assembled to do. We assemble to break bread.

DAB When we come together, as you say, we are set together in our spirits, and the hymn helps us also in setting the spirits of the saints together, and then we are looking for the Lord to come in amongst us and manifest Himself in all His glories.

JTB Does the word 'assemble' imply perfect unity?

PAG I would say that. I think the word 'perfect' that you use is important. That would involve what is complete. The Lord would help us, and the Spirit would help us. Although we may be small and reduced in number, the Lord would help us to regard what is there as complete in His eyes.

MG You quoted 1 Corinthians 11 already. It also says there, “ye announce the death of the Lord, until he come”, v 26. Could you say something about how the death of Christ applies to us at that time?

PAG I think that is the public aspect of it. As we remarked and have been taught, we break bread in the wilderness, that is, in testimony to a world from which the Lord is absent and rejected. The presentation of the breaking of bread given in Corinthians is to the assembly in the wilderness, and therefore we assemble to break bread - that is one side of it - but the other side of it is we are saying to the world that we are identifying ourselves *with* the One who died here. The world has no

knowledge of Christ where He is, but we can say that the Man that was put to death in the world and by the world is the Man that we are here to remember. Of course, we call Him to mind where He is, but the world does not know that; so we show forth His death until He comes, and then the world will see Him, and we will be with Him.

MG That is helpful. There is that side, as you said, that the world is not aware of what we are doing. I wondered too whether in doing that, the individual side that you mentioned in preparation would that have a bearing on us as well. If that is what we are going to do, then the death of Christ has a bearing on me individually.

PAG The hymn puts it very clearly:

By love constrained, Thy death we deem
Our point of severance from this scene
Where man thy rights did spurn (Hymn 192).

That is how we are regarding the matter. And the other thing about showing forth His death is this: the emblems are on the table and even an unspiritual person could see that, and the only way that you could have a loaf and a cup separate would be if the Person had died. So to that extent His death is publicly attested to in the way that the emblems are presented to us. Is that suitable?

GAB The eating of the bread is for our stimulation, and enables us to enter into the spiritual side of things.

PAG So in that sense there is what the Lord made available to us in His death. It is quite a thought that we can actually lay hands on that. I just feel the importance of that entering into our souls, that the Lord made Himself available in a way that we could actually lay hands on.

MB If the participation in the breaking of bread is the shewing forth of His death, are the persons gathered the showing forth of His life?

PAG Well, they are the persons, you might say, who have been “saved in the power of his life”, Rom 5: 10. That is His present life; not only saved from sins or sin, but “saved in the power of his life”. Are you thinking in a sense that there is a testimony not only to the fact that He died, but in those who are assembled there is a testimony to the fact that He now lives?

MB I was thinking that “this do in remembrance of me” does not just cover the Lord when He was on the earth but our present relationship

with Him too. That would be before us at the Supper, would it not?

PAG It would. I think what has been said about His death having its bearing on us before we come together is important because, while we should never overlook His death, what is before us is what we are brought into. I think that is really what is in mind in the second scripture. The thought of His brethren and His assembly would quickly come before us, and that is a living response.

AMB Identification with Him, identifying ourselves with Christ's death and showing forth His death, should be consistent with how we are morally during the week. It is not something we put on on a Lord's day morning. But that prepares the way for enjoying the power of His life that our brother refers to. In divine things life comes out of death, as far as we are concerned, I mean.

PAG Yes, His relations with His brethren and with His assembly are taken up out of death. It is striking in John 20 that He speaks of His brethren (v 17) and then He shows them His hands and His side, v 20. His side reminds us of Adam and was where the rib was taken out, Gen 2: 21. Although the assembly is not officially mentioned in John, the thought is there and it is out of death.

JSS Would you say some more about this matter of announcing the death of the Lord? We sometimes say, 'showing forth', but the word here is, "ye announce the death of the Lord", 1 Cor 11: 26. What does that mean? Who is it announced to?

PAG As I understand it, it is announced to the world. The breaking of bread is not a private meeting. If anyone wished to come to it, they would be free to do so. We are taught that believers participate in the breaking of bread with those with whom they enjoy fellowship but anyone would be free to come and they could look on. It is possibly a matter that is less emphasised in the thanksgiving on the grounds that generally speaking, although not always, those who are there are there to break bread and maybe the children of the saints. Say more as to what is in your mind.

JSS Others may not actually see what we do, generally, at the breaking of bread, which is why I am just wondering about it.

PAG Well, the other side of this is it is "as often". They do see what we do often. When my family were children, one of their friends asked why we went out every Lord's day morning. They asked why we did it,

and whether we had to go. That was an interesting question. But there was an element at least, I believe, of announcement in that, something that the world could see.

JAB I understand that there was an instance when a newspaper reporter became interested in what was done. He and a colleague came and sat behind during the morning meeting and then he wrote a report and published it. He said he could understand how these people participated in the breaking of bread and drinking of the cup because it *is* understandable, but he said, 'After that point we could not follow where they went'. The breaking of bread is a public matter. There was no opposition from these men - but it was a matter of public notice that the brethren did that.

GAB There is also the side that the principalities and authorities in heaven take account of that too.

PAG They certainly do, so that "the all-various wisdom of God" (Eph 3: 10) is seen in the assembly and, if I may say, although it would not be a prominent thought in our minds, the "spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies" (Eph 6: 12) see it too, and they see that, despite their efforts, the Lord has maintained what He set on and will do inviolate until He comes.

AM Would the assembling really involve intelligence? In 1 Corinthians 10 it says, "I speak as to intelligent persons" (v 15), so really the teaching of 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 would underlie the assembling?

PAG That is helpful. I think it does. Assembling suggests a deliberate action on the part of a person who understands what he or she is doing. Now, we bring our children, and it is right that we should, but it is not a haphazard matter; it is an orderly and dignified matter.

JSS I was thinking about the queen of Sheba and what she saw when she came to Solomon. She saw "the deportment of his servants, and the order of service of his attendants", 1 Kings 10: 5. Those would be those that listened to Solomon and would be influenced by him. There is "their apparel", perhaps their associations, and then there is "his ascent", orderly progress, you might say, from that atmosphere.

PAG Yes, and one of her impressions was, "Happy are thy men! happy are these thy servants, who stand continually before thee, who hear thy wisdom!", v 8. There was restfulness, but there was joy in it too. I believe that part of the value of spiritual order is that the brethren's

spirits are set free to rejoice. We are not hesitant or wondering what might happen, or unsure. We do not know exactly what will happen but we know that there will be an order in it, and that the Lord is "minister of the holy place", Heb 8: 1. We can be confident in that.

AMB Those who assemble form a sanctified company. The individuals must know about sanctification. I am just thinking about your scripture in Hebrews 2, "For both he that sanctifies and those sanctified". That in itself is a very dignified matter and would indicate that the company takes character from Christ Himself and therefore "he is not ashamed to call them brethren".

PAG It takes character from Christ and also, would you say, from God, for they are "all of one"? It does not say they are all one although that would be true, but it says they are "all of one". Really all that we are speaking about has its root, its source, in God Himself. Is that suitable?

AMB It has often been remarked that the writer does not say "all of one" what; "all of one" is really source, is it not? What you are drawing attention to is that "those sanctified" have their origin, their source, in God. It is His work. Christ is perfect, but we are brought into His order.

PAG We speak about kindred. I used to wonder what kindred meant, because it is not a word we see much used elsewhere, but "all of one" would involve what is kindred. It is the same in order and character.

AMB And so we get the word "brethren" used, which expresses kindred, does it not?

ASP Can you say something about the singing and the order of response in Hebrews 2: "in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises"? That would refer to the Lord, would it? In Matthew 26 it says, "And having sung a hymn, they went out to the mount of Olives" (v 30); so Jesus would have been singing that hymn with them, would He? Can you help us as to His place in the service and also what it means as to Minister of the holy places?

PAG What I had in mind in this scripture is just simply that it would establish us that the thought of brethren precedes - I do not mean in terms of greatness but in terms of place and time - the thought of the assembly, so the Lord has the response of His brethren, and then these brethren form His assembly and He has their response. "Having sung a hymn they went out to the mount of Olives", suggests leaving behind the wilderness scene and going onto what is spiritual. The mount of

Olives would suggest that movement after we break bread in the wilderness, and I would not make a rule at all, but I do think it would be normal to have a hymn immediately after the Supper has been taken because a hymn sets us together in spiritual movement. But the Lord having had His portion, what is then to happen? He has His assembly as a vessel of praise and He declares His Father's name to them, and then sings His praises "in the midst of the assembly". He sings in the midst as leading. Now you asked about the "minister of the holy places", but that is the Lord's place as prime or leading in what proceeds in the sanctuary as the high priest did in the tabernacle system of old.

ASP That is helpful; so He has that office in the service of God as minister of the holy places. Without being prescriptive, but would that be from the response onwards after the assembly's response?

PAG It is when He comes in. The order of the response, which we may touch on in Ephesians, is set out for us, but the whole of the service of praise takes place before the face of the Father, and the Spirit is there throughout. Each has their portion as it proceeds, but when I was young I used to think the service was in stages almost like going from one room to another, but that is not how I understand it now. It is the assembly that is responding to the Holy Spirit under the Lord's direction. We do not - speaking reverently - become detached from the Lord in responding to the Spirit. Is that helpful?

ASP That is very helpful, and so while we would be responding to the Lord, for example, straight after the Supper, although we are then primarily for Him, the Father would have a distinctive enjoyment as hearing that.

AMB What is coming in is helpful. In a sense the service is cumulative and we carry forward impressions we had in worshipping the Lord, and expressing our affection for Him, into the service to the Spirit, and into the Father's presence too, do we not? It is in order to speak to the Lord about what He means to the Father and what He has done for the Father. These are aspects of the glories of the Lord that we can praise Him for.

PAG And sometimes - again these are not rules - something that the brother has said in thanksgiving for the loaf or the cup may come up again in response to the Father, when some feature of Christ that has been of particular preciousness to us is brought into the response.

Thus the Father's heart is delighted with the saints' appreciation of Christ.

AMB Would you say too that we experience the liberty and power and help of the Holy Spirit in the service, so that leads to a freshness and spontaneity of response, and we need to be ready for that from our side?

PAG We do. I commend a good knowledge of the hymn book, which also helps in filling out the service. I trust what I say is right and that we might be all in liberty, but, if one or two verses from a hymn meet the need of the moment, it is not necessary always to sing the whole hymn. You can pick out what would suit. The Lord selected verses from Scripture.

GAB The Lord's first communication as coming out of death to Mary was, "go to my brethren" - that was the first thing - "and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God", John 20:17. Really it is all one thing, is it not?

PAG I do think that, and it bears on what was said earlier about the ascent by which king Solomon went up. He did not go from one house to another. He was in his house and there was an ascent in it.

JWP I was thinking of what you were speaking of as to singing. Job 38: 7 speaks of "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy". That is Jehovah speaking to Job. Would that refer to the singing? I do not understand quite what the morning stars might be.

PAG That was at the time of the creation, was it not? I think the morning stars refer to the saints. It says on the fourth day of creation that "God made the two great lights, the great light to rule the day, and the small light to rule the night", and then it says, "- and the stars", Gen 1: 16. I think that looks on to the saints. Paul himself says "for star differs from star in glory", 1 Cor 15: 41. He is referring to saints; so the stars in that sense - and they are all morning stars - have taken character from Christ in resurrection. "The sons of God shouted for joy" I think would be the angelic hosts; so while they do not participate in what we are speaking of here, they nevertheless participate in praise Godward. They "shouted for joy". They acknowledged His creatorial greatness and found joy in it and the saints of the assembly can do so too.

DAB So while you are stressing order, there is also liberty brought in. Would you allow that divine Persons also have liberty with One Another? I am thinking of the expression, “in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises”. That is the Father's praises, sung by Christ, in the assembly. Help us as to that expression.

PAG Well, I thought as you have been speaking that singing would involve what we can do together; so we can be united with Christ, not only as His assembly in response to Him, but we can be united with Him in response to the Father. I do not want to confuse anyone. We are responding as *sons* in the Father's presence, but we are one with Christ in doing so.

DAB Exactly, so the same personnel who are brethren are merged together in the assembly and these same persons are then brought through in the power of the Holy Spirit to respond as sons. They are not different persons. It is very blessed, is it not, “in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises”, as if the Lord has the liberty in that area to sing the Father's praises? Our brother has referred to John 20. Do you think this very matter was really in the Lord's mind as He came out of death?

PAG I think it was, and the matter of liberty is important. I know the setting is a little different but the scripture says, “And at the moment the burnt-offering began, the song of Jehovah began”, 2 Chron 29: 27. That is almost like the Supper. Whenever it is set on, the song of praise begins. It does not say anything about it ending.

RB I would like some more help about this verse that our brother has referred to, “declare thy name” and then, “sing thy praises”. It has been suggested, I think, that Christ does that through the assembly, but we also speak about Him leading the praise, which I can see, in some of our hymns, for example,

The voice of Christ is heard o'er all
In accents sweet and clear (Hymn 237).

Can you say more about the way in which He leads and sings the Father's praises?

PAG Well, He is the Head of the assembly and therefore she is not going to move or act without His impulse, and all the more so in a spiritual sphere such as we are speaking of. Now, as we have already guarded, the thought of sons would be what is prominent, but it is the

personnel of the assembly, and I do feel that it has been emphasised in my spirit as we have been speaking of it, that the more we are *attached* to divine Persons, the more real this becomes to us, to the impulses coming from Christ.

RB What you have said is helpful; so in reality this works through what we participate in together, what one or another gives voice to, or gives out a hymn, for example. That is the way in which this operates in reality, but you can detect the Lord's leading in the matter and you can also experience His joy in doing so, would you say?

PAG I think you can. It may happen when we are young and another brother gives out a hymn that we had been going to give out, we might be disappointed because it had probably taken a while to think about it, and we might not very sure anyway; but now if that happens to me, I am very pleased. It does not matter who gives out the hymn; what matters is that it is sung. To me it is a sign of the working of the Spirit. Sometimes a sister will say after the meeting about a hymn that has been given out, 'I was thinking of that too'. Well, that is a very blessed thing. It shows that this matter of "in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises" is not just a formula; it is a real thing that works.

JAB Thinking of the part that the Holy Spirit plays in all of this, I have been looking at what the apostle writes in Romans 8, "but ye have received a spirit of adoption", v 15. It is a small 's' there, but the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of adoption too. The previous verse says, "for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *these* are sons of God", v 14. I completely and gladly accept the way in which it has been said of the Lord Jesus, according to Scripture, that He is the "minister of the holy places", but the Spirit has an important part in what proceeds too, has He not, and in how it proceeds?

PAG That is why I was keen to touch on Ephesians. These words "by one Spirit", through Christ, so, you might say, Christ is there mediatorially in all His blessedness, but there needs to be power, "by one Spirit". Would that be in line with your impression?

JAB Yes, I take it "by one Spirit" is the word for 'in the power of', but the Holy Spirit is the power for our adoration of the Lord Jesus; He is the power for our worship of God. Without the Holy Spirit being at liberty, the whole thing would just be a formality. That is a testing thing because other brethren in the room might be enjoying the power of the Holy Spirit, and I might just be singing the hymns and listening to the

words and not be in that myself. There is an important subjective aspect to this that we are speaking about, is there not?

PAG There certainly is and again, even if we have not got off on a very good footing, we can ask the Spirit to help us. He can steady us in our minds. I do not want in any way to undermine the point about “let a man prove himself, and thus eat”. That is absolutely necessary. There may be times when someone has come into the meeting room, and seen the brethren and the emblems, and in doing so has realised there was something still to adjust before the Lord. The Spirit would help us even in the recognition of what would be suitable, and if our mind wanders in the course of the service of praise, we can ask the Spirit to bring us back again. I wonder if I sometimes overlook the fact we are actually speaking to and about a divine Person. His power is infinite.

EWH Do you think, among other things of course, that recognising the Spirit's service in relation to the Lord would draw us towards the worship of the Spirit? We had to be helped to see that there is liberty to worship the Spirit, but there is a very clear basis in Scripture for worshipping the Spirit, and it is important that we recognise that, do you think?

PAG There is. When the truth as to worshipping the Spirit was brought out, I heard directly from one brother that help came in when a brother simply asked as to the Spirit, 'Is He God or is He not?'. A brother agreed that of course the Holy Spirit is God, and the brethren who were enquiring at the time were helped to see that as God, He was worthy of response. Help came in through enquiry into the Scriptures, and through soul exercise in dependence on the Lord. I also think it involves subjection to the Lord at the present time. It is the Lord who directs us towards the Spirit.

I just want to mention the last scripture in John. It is a very blessed thing to be able to recognise the greatness of God. We can never compass it, but “God is a spirit; and they who worship him must worship him in spirit” so the Spirit's power is essential, but “and truth”. That involves something that can be known. It does not mean we know everything but to “be filled even to all the fulness of God” (Eph 3: 19) would involve that there is something that can be known and responded to.

AMB When we worship God, the three Persons are in our minds and they are often referred to by name, and it is one Name. There is what is

beyond us, but the Lord made this known, and it was with a view to God being worshipped. It has often been said that when we worship God, we are not going higher than when we worship the Father but we are going, as it were, wider because all three Persons are in our minds as we worship that blessed One.

PAG Yes, it is well for us to remember that the Father is supreme in the economy. We cannot go higher than that. There is no higher to go, but the scope of our thoughts can be enlarged. We often sing hymn number 3:

As Head, O God, exalted Thou

but then -

God - Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The Lord did say to this woman, “we worship what we know”, John 4: 22. This is not an abstract being that we are responding to because we feel we ought to. This is a God known in the way that He has revealed Himself.

Grangemouth

27th March 2019

Key to Initials (Grangemouth unless otherwise stated):

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Correction

There is a quotation from J N Darby on p2 of Issue No 150 (September 2019), which was made accurately in the reading published but has regrettably been reproduced incorrectly: it should read:-

'Christianity works by what it brings, not by what it finds.'

This will be found four times in JND's letters: vol 2 pages 64 and 263; and vol 3 pages 84 and 138, as well as elsewhere in his writings.

CONSIDERING JESUS AND CONSIDERING ONE ANOTHER

Alan D Munro

Hebrews 12: 3; 10: 24

Proverbs 31: 16, 18

I have been carrying a very simple impression, dear brethren, since the meetings at the weekend as to the matter of considering things. When a person made a remark, our brother did not answer immediately: he considered what he was going to say. There was a considered approach in his answers, which is a very wise thing. It came into my mind that if we are to make progress in Christianity we need to consider the Lord Jesus. We should probably have read verse 2 also, “looking stedfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith”. I think “looking stedfastly” is the same thing as considering well.

The Lord Jesus is the One with whom we would start in this matter of consideration, which means that you take time to think about Him. These Hebrew saints might have slipped a little, or might have grown a bit cold; things had almost got too much for them. The writer of the epistle encouraged them to “consider well him who endured so great contradiction from sinners against himself”. If we consider the path of the Lord Jesus in His life on earth, we are very privileged to have four accounts of His glory set before us by the four gospel writers. They all give us a slightly different view of the glory of the Person, but nothing of what they saw, or nothing of what they said, nothing of what they wrote, in any way conflicts with the others. It is a perfect blend from four persons who had considered the pathway of Jesus. His pathway included the way He went into death; there was nothing in Him that merited death.

But the writer here is speaking of what the Lord endured in His life: His rejection, the way He was ridiculed, the way He was betrayed, the way He was ignored, the way persons turned away from Him. But, thanks be to God, there were persons who were attracted to Him. I do like the word 'magnetism', but the woman in John 4 found that there was an irresistible charm about the Lord Jesus. Although her past was exposed to her, she did not go away; she was drawn with “bands of a man, with cords of love”, Hos 11: 4. She saw something in Him that she had never seen in any other man. No one else had been able to give her satisfaction. I remember a preaching here many years ago from John 4 referring to the well being deep, and the preacher likened that to

the woman's experience of the world of sin. It got deeper and deeper, and the deeper she went, the less satisfying it was, but then another Man came into her life. He "sat just as he was" (John 4: 6); I think that is exceedingly attractive. I trust we have all proved it and not only *proved* it, but I trust we are *proving* it. That is why these occasions are convened, so that our hearts should be freshly attached to the Lord Jesus in all His glory, in all His power and His majesty. We sang hymn 185 on Lord's day morning:

Majestic, Almighty and Glorious.

I love that hymn, for it is centred on the Person of the Lord Jesus.

When we are thinking of Jesus, we "consider well". You might say it is on a higher level; in fact it is on a supreme level because there is no greater Object to be occupied with. He will never disappoint us; He will never let us down.

When I was young, I was very fond of David; I loved reading scriptures about David. But then when you read them a bit more closely, there are times when you are very disappointed in what David did. That is because he was not perfect. David was sometimes a type of Christ but in other cases he was a type of ourselves and was marked by grievous failure. But God did not give him up; He bore with David, who came to a judgment of his sins. Psalm 51 shows us that. He came to the depth of repentance. God does not overlook or bypass sin, but there is a means, there is a remedy, in the work of Jesus for our sinful history to be dealt with. Sadly, as David shows, we sin after we have been converted, and sometimes very grievously, but the gospel is able to meet that as well: "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin", 1 John 1: 7. That is an absolute statement. Sometimes if you feel shaky it is good to get back to what is absolute and we do that as we "consider well him who endured so great contradiction from sinners against himself". Whatever view you get of Jesus, He is *perfect*, whether in His path amongst men, or in His devotion that took Him to the cross, or in His ability to exhaust the wrath of God against sin, which was poured out on Him, that which should have been poured out on us. He shone in all these ways. He exceeded in every circumstance; so you can understand the writer saying, "consider well".

Now when you come to chapter 10 it says, "consider one another". That is an interesting thing and it is "for provoking to love and good works". I think that involves that before you say anything, you

weigh over what you are about to say and you ask yourself whether this will promote the work of God in the person I am going to speak to or whether it will stumble them? Our brother spoke at the weekend about having to admit to a sister that he had spoken unkindly to her. Thanks be to God for the spirit of forgiveness that is found amongst us, but let us consider before we say things and then we will say them as empowered by the Spirit of God. If we are going to be like Jesus, He is “holy, harmless” (Heb 7: 26); the Lord Jesus in all His activities was “harmless”: I would covet to be like that. I know I am not, but this is an incentive to “consider one another”, so that we might promote and foster and encourage the work of God in each other.

Now, the “woman of worth” in Proverbs 31 is really a type of the assembly in the sense that she “considereth a field, and acquireth it”. She would evaluate it; this is consideration in the sense of judging what is valuable. We all know how much time we spend on things that are of little value, even things that are of no value; I might even go further and say we may spend time on things that are harmful. As you read through this chapter, the “woman of worth” was not in any way occupied with what was harmful but she was considering for her household. All she did would foster the work of God in them and would develop spirituality because that is really the great end in our assembly gatherings, that we should really become more spiritual, that we should grow in likeness to Christ and become formed after Christ. That is what this woman did: she considered a field. That would really be, in the application of it, like the local company. She made it her own and she did what would be beneficial in that field. Her activities were all for the promotion of the work of God in the locality in which she was set.

I say these things as a challenge to myself but may we all think about them and in all our activities may we promote the work of God in each other.

May the Lord bless the word!

Word in a Meeting for Ministry, Grangemouth

13th November 2018

GOD'S LOVE AND BLESSEDNESS FILLING EACH HEART

Andrew Martin

1 Kings 8: 39 (from “for thou”); 42 (to “arm”); 46 (“for ... sinneth not”); 51

Romans 5: 3-5

These verses which we have read in Kings come in the course of a prayer. The background is that King Solomon had built a temple. There had never been a temple to God built before; it was an amazing structure really. Solomon dedicated it to God's use. It is interesting to read these chapters. Solomon built everything, and then he assembled all the people of Israel, and he sacrificed hundreds of animals, so much so, that even the altar, which itself was huge, was not able to contain all the sacrifices. It was an extraordinary display of glory on earth. And it was all for the glory of God. I have often thought of this scene here. Just to think of it in its literality: the temple was built of great stones - it says “glistening stones” and “precious stones” (1 Chron 29: 2), “hewn stones”, 1 Kings 5: 17. It was a structure of divine design; there had not been a structure like it before. In front of it there was a porch which was huge - it went up over fifty metres in height; that was just the porch. Think of it with all these glistening stones. In front of the porch were two pillars of brass. I have often thought of Solomon standing there, with the Mediterranean sun reflecting off all this shining stonework and brass; the brass altar; everything would have been glowing. And he says to God, “Behold, the heavens, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee: how much less this house which I have built”, (1 Kings 8: 27), as much as to say that although this was of divine design, it was built by men, and he says, “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heavens, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee. How much less this house?”.

People would have stood and looked in wonder at that house. Solomon says that God does not dwell like this. Turn to the New Testament and find that Stephen says that “the Most High dwells not in places made with hands”, Acts 7: 48. Later on, you will find the apostle Paul in one of the great metropolises of Europe, Athens, which was dominated by a temple to a heathen goddess that required so many people to maintain it; and he says the same thing, “*he*, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands, nor is not served by men's hands”, Acts 17: 24.

The question is then: What is God interested in, and where does He dwell? And Solomon touches that here; he speaks about God as the One who knows the hearts of all the children of men. In a sense, although it was a type - God had established it, the place where He would set His Name - yet what was important to God was the hearts of the children of men. What are the hearts of the children of men like? What led me to this was a hymn we sang this morning, which refers to what will be in eternity. I suppose that is the kind of experience we were having in the service. What was in my mind was the line which said,

Thy love and blessedness

Filling each heart.

(Hymn 62)

Think of that - eternity, and God's love and blessedness filling each heart. Who will there be? Well, if you think back, Abel will be there, and I have no doubt that Seth will be there, and there is a whole line that runs down in Genesis 5: Enoch, Noah - these men, they will be there; that will be like one family. You go on and you find that God acted and called out men. He called out Abraham; that is like another family: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob - they will be there. And what will they be occupied with? God's love and blessedness filling each heart! You go on right through the Old Testament. I am sure Solomon will be there, though he failed so grievously. God looks upon the early committals of our hearts. And everyone who believes on the Lord Jesus will be there. And God's love and blessedness will fill every heart. Does it fill your heart? You see, He knows. Solomon says, "thou, thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men". I do not know your heart and you do not know mine. There have been times in my life when I have been very glad that nobody knows my heart, and the thought that God knows it did not give me any comfort at all. It does not worry me now, no, because I know that my heart is open before God, and all the things that were in my heart which would have condemned me have been taken away by the blood of Jesus. They have all been taken away. Somebody might say that most people live respectable lives, and a lot of people do, but this is about the heart.

When Noah came out of the ark the first thing he did was to offer to God a burnt-offering. God smelled that offering. On account of that offering, God said He would no more destroy the earth with water; He will not do that again, Gen 9: 11. But He had said, "for the thought of Man's heart is evil from his youth", chap 8: 21. "The thought of Man's heart" - it is not what he says - it is his heart. You see, there is something

in the heart of man naturally which is against God. That is why before we come to know the Lord Jesus we do not want to hear about God; we do not want to hear about the Lord: there is something in our hearts which is against God. And God says, "the thought of Man's heart is evil from his youth". As soon as a person is able to make responsible decisions he finds that sin is operating there: it is a root principle. And it operates in man's heart. And Solomon says, "thou, thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men": *all* the children of men. Think of God looking down upon all the children of men, seeing one after another, sin operating in the heart. That terrible principle has come in to defile and spoil God's beautiful creation and God sees it. Nothing is hidden from Him; He knows all that goes on in my heart; He certainly knows what I do. He knows where I go, what I hear, what I see - He knows it all. Sometimes we are aware of that, are we not? It is the conscience. The conscience is a voice from God. Sometimes you might have thought, 'Well, I hope nobody saw me then' or 'I hope nobody heard me then', but there is One who did; and He knows it all. Is He going to condemn you?

Even though thy sins condemn thee,
Graver still thy sinful state;
He who knows it died to save thee (Hymn 46).

He 'died to save thee'. It is a wonderful thing that the gospel does not come with condemnation. It is preached to sinners in order that souls should be delivered from the power of sin, and delivered from their own sins, and the effects of their own sins. That is why the gospel goes out, and the gospel goes out widely. Men will try to silence the gospel; it is the conscience that does that.

We have a notice board outside our meeting room, and a man came to us and asked, 'Would it be possible to put a dimmer light on that board?'. Brothers spoke about it, and one brother said, 'That is the conscience'. The word of God is going to be announced and somebody is saying, 'I do not want to see it'. That is the way the conscience works, is it not? You tell a man away from God that the word of God is going to be announced and he will say, 'Just do not give me that; I do not want to hear that'. But it does get announced, and it goes out across the whole face of the earth. Men have tried to silence it, oh how they have tried to silence it. Through the centuries they have tried every means possible. Satan has tried every means at his disposal to silence the gospel. Five hundred years ago he was using violence in the Western world to

silence the gospel. Ten miles away from where I live there is a monument in the road; it was put up there to commemorate the spot where a young man of nineteen years of age was caught reading the Bible, and because he insisted that it was God's word and he must read it, that young man was burnt to death. That is what the enemy did; that is what Satan did to people. What happened was that as the testimony of those martyrs went out, the work went on. Solomon says, "they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy mighty hand, and of thy stretched-out arm". The testimony could not be silenced. The gospel went on. On and on, the gospel message has gone out for nearly two thousand years. Men have done what they would, and Satan has done what he could. I think we are living today, in the Western world, in the scene of Satan's greatest success in trying to silence the gospel but he will not do it.

Satan today is using materialism, trying to assure men that they can be here independent of God. Does any person think they can live here independent of God? Scripture speaks about Egypt; Egypt is the world as independent of God: that is what Egypt signifies. One of the prophets refers to Pharaoh, King of Egypt. Egypt depended on the River Nile and in one of the prophets, Pharaoh is quoted as saying, "My river is mine own, and I made it for myself", Ezek 29: 3. What a ridiculous thing for a man to say, "My river is mine own, and I made it for myself"! That is the world as independent of God. And they say, 'Everything is ours', do they not? 'The country is ours, it is our country, we can do what we like,' and so on - it is not! They say, 'It is my life, I can do what I like with it' - it is not! Or 'My body, I can decorate it how I like' - it is not your body. No, you have been given these things but you must answer to God for them. We are custodians; we are stewards. God has provided things, but all belongs to Him: it does not belong to man. And the gospel will still go out. Men will not silence the gospel. Although Satan has been so successful in assuring men that they can be independent of God, they will never silence the gospel. But the problem is that if we listen to the gospel, listen to the word of God, it has to bring home one thing to us, which is very unpalatable, and Solomon goes on to say, "there is no man that sinneth not". What a day it is, beloved, when any of us come to it, that I personally am a sinner, and I know that the day will come - and I cannot say how soon that day will come - but the day *will* come when I will have to face God. I am a sinner and I cannot face God in my sins, and yet, I will have to face Him somehow; "there is no man that sinneth not", Solomon said.

How can a man be just before God? Job asked that, did he not? Job was full of all the good things he had done, and he was an extraordinary man - very kind, very generous, he was very upright - he was an amazing man really. And yet he said, "but how can man be just with God?", Job 9: 2. Job was perfectly just before men, but how can a man be just before God? God is holy and we are unholy. Solomon says, "there is no man that sinneth not". You know, that is no longer true. There is one blessed Man in whom is no sin. He did no sin; that very principle was not found in Him. He was perfect in every respect, living here, a life amongst men, surrounded by all the temptations and snares of men, submitting to none of them; going through in perfect grace and goodness. I just realise I have not mentioned His Name. There is not a soul here that does not know who I am speaking about - our Lord Jesus Christ, in all His spotless humanity, bringing the love of God into the lives of men, women, and children. Life, power and healing coming into souls' lives where there was nothing but death and darkness and weakness, the effects of sin ravaging humanity. He came into that scene. The "kindness and love to man of our Saviour God appeared" (Titus 3: 4); it appeared in a glorious and blessed Man; men did not see the glory. What was shining out in Him was moral glory! Moral glory! The excellence that was seen in Jesus, was unaffected in any respect by sin, untainted by it; yet He passed through a world of sin, passed through a world of enmity, a world that was against God: He passed through it all. He was affected in His spirit; yes, He felt it all deeply. You think of all that weighed upon Him. He felt the effects of sin. When He came to the grave of Lazarus it says He wept, John 11: 35. That was not mourning for Lazarus; He knew He was going to raise him; He wept as He saw the final effects of sin upon man. "For the wages of sin is death", Rom 6: 23. He wept as He saw man - God's masterpiece in creation - and what he should have been before God, in the mind of God, and yet how low, how degraded man had become. Because of sin death has passed upon all. He wept as He saw it. That was the end of the line of things that men have pursued.

He was totally without sin here, always in contact with the Father, always in communion with Him. He says at one point, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; but I knew that thou always hearest me", John 11: 41, 42. He appealed to the Father, and He says that, "I knew that thou always hearest me", as much as to say, 'I did not have to say this for my comfort' but He says, "on account of the crowd who stand around I have said it". And, when the Lord speaks to the Father in

the next chapter, there was a voice out of heaven, John 12: 28. The crowd heard the voice but they did not recognise it. Some said it had thundered. Others said that an angel had spoken to Him. This was the Father, expressing His approval of that blessed One who was here, glorifying God upon the earth. How precious to think of that, that He was here. There was one Man who did not sin, He sinned not, one blessed and glorious Man. He justified God in taking up man. You think of man as a sinful being and God as the God who created man. You may think that God had set His heart upon a being that had failed; that is what Satan would say. God had created man and man had failed, and comes short of the glory of God. Jesus justified God in creating man; He set out everything God had sought in man, and He glorified God here on the earth. What a life that was! Think of the lifetime of the Lord Jesus - day after day, every day filled out with service to His God and Father. It speaks of one of the days - "it came to pass on one of the days", Luke 5: 17. He speaks Himself of "the days of the Son of man", Luke 17: 22. You think of those days, one day after another - I suppose twelve thousand days the Lord Jesus was here upon the earth, twelve thousand days when the Father's pleasure could rest complacently upon one Object on the earth in whom there was no sin at all. What days they were. But we know they had to come to an end: "the things concerning me have an end", He says in Luke 22: 37. Those days were going to finish.

"There is no man that sinneth not"; He had come to save men from their sins: "thou shalt call his name Jesus, for *he* shall save his people from their sins", Matt 1: 21. Jesus - Jehovah, the Saviour. The One who was sinless, who was spotless, went to the cross at Golgotha - there He offered Himself to God as a sin-offering. For whose sake? For your sake, for mine. Yes, "He died for all" (2 Cor 5: 14) - every man, woman and child; the Lord Jesus was there on the cross for them. You can tell anyone that Jesus died for them. He was there upon the cross and in those three hours of darkness God expressed His terrible hatred and anger against sin, that dreadful principle that is afflicting mankind. God poured out His fierce anger against sin upon the head of the sinless One, and He bore it all. That judgment was exhausted. No one else could bear the judgment of God against sin, that root principle that had come in to spoil God's creation. He felt God's feelings about it. He knew what it meant to God - He had His own holy feelings; He knew what sin was. He bore the awful wrath of God against sin. That wrath has been exhausted so that no one else would ever have to bear what

that was.

But still, we sin - "there is no man that sinneth not", Solomon said. I read a remark about a week or so ago which rather drew me up. Mr Coates was the most gracious man you could imagine, and even he said, 'The man who says he has not sinned for a week is just a self-deceived hypocrite' (The Paths of Life, vol 19 p24): there is no man that sinneth not. What is sin? Every time I exercise my own will that is sin. The Lord Jesus did not exercise His own will. As a Man He had a will but He did not exercise His own will. He was always subject to the will of His God and Father. It comes so naturally to us to exercise our own will, does it not? 'Oh, I think I will just do this'. Did the Father tell you to do it? Every time I exercise my will I find myself in that situation. As Solomon says, "there is no man that sinneth not". We should not sin. And the apostle John tells us that: "I write to you in order that ye may not sin", 1 John 2: 1. How can we not sin? How can we be free of sin? First of all, how can we be free of sins? First, let us face the fact that we are sinners. We turn to the Lord Jesus in our need, because we know that if we are sinners God will not overlook the fact that we have sinned. For the one who acknowledges before God that he is a sinner, and puts his faith in the work of the Lord Jesus, in that shed blood of His, God accepts that. See, the Lord Jesus having borne the judgment against sin - went into death, He laid down His life and then His precious blood was shed; His blood was shed there upon the cross. That blood is a great testimony to the life laid down - God accepted it. God accepted that life, that offering, and the sinner who puts his faith in God, in the Lord Jesus and in His shed blood, will know what it is to go without the judgment of sin and go without that judgment forever.

It is a blessed thing to be free of your sins. Maybe yours have troubled you. I am sure we have all known what it is to be troubled by our sins. I trust that we have all known what it is to come to the Lord Jesus. That upright life, the good life, will not save you from your sins. No, we come to the Lord Jesus; we find that in Him He is the only answer. Somewhere in the Midlands there is a gravestone in a cemetery on which are the following words:

Here lay the earthly remains of John Berridge
Late Vicar of Everton and an itinerant servant

then after a few more details it says:

I was born in sin February 1716

Remained ignorant of my fallen state till 1730
Lived proudly on works for faith and salvation till 1754
Admitted to Everton vicarage 1753
Fled to Jesus alone for refuge 1756
Fell asleep in Christ January 22nd 1793

You see, there was a man who lived an upright life, who assumed to teach others about the gospel, but what he had to come to was that he had to flee to Jesus for refuge. There is no salvation without coming to the Lord Jesus; there is no forgiveness without coming to Him in repentance; there is nothing for the soul outside of Him: nothing outside of Him.

And then you find that the whole world's system is set against you. Men do not want to hear the gospel; they do not want the testimony of a believer. They will accept a believer if he comes down to their level. They may ask why you do not come with them to such-and-such a place, why do you not join in with this, why do you not do that. The believer has been redeemed from all that. Solomon goes on, "they are thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt": we belong to God. It is difficult when your friends and colleagues put pressure on you, because believers are actually attractive people, and they would like them to fit into their system. How do you meet it? You know the best way of meeting it is to say, 'I belong to the Lord Jesus and I cannot do that'. Just as simple as that: 'I belong to the Lord Jesus and I cannot go there'. No one can deny that you belong to the Lord Jesus. The effect of it is that you have been redeemed, typically, out of the land of Egypt. You do not have your part there and the world becomes a wilderness to you. The attractions of the world may pull at you - the children of Israel felt the constant pull of Egypt all through the wilderness - but once you realise that the Lord Jesus has died, He has been cast out of this world - they would not have Him - then you realise if the world would not have Him then there is no place for you in it. "Broughtest forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron"; you see that characterises the world - it is set against its God. Solomon bring out these things.

You might ask how you are going to get through. Let us turn to Romans, shall we? There was Paul whose life was more difficult than any of ours. He says, "we also boast in tribulations". What does that mean? It does not mean that he went around telling people about them; Paul did not do that. It means he rejoiced through them; he

rejoiced in tribulations. The apostle Paul did not spare himself - his travels, his journeys - he made light of them. And they are not enlarged on in the scriptures. You think of when he came to Europe - he went to Philippi. There was a riot there and he was cast into prison. He was beaten and afterwards they dismissed him; they told him to go away. The next day he went to Thessalonica, preached there for three weeks and again, the whole city was in turmoil. They turned him out. He went next to Berea, and then down to Athens, over three hundred miles. He preached to them in Athens, that wonderful dissertation on man's place before God and the place that God has given to the Lord Jesus. And it says having left Athens he went to Corinth, fifty miles over the mountains - he does not mention these journeys; that is not the point. Paul's life was devoted to the work of God, and he suffered. He suffered those beatings; he was stoned. He was in Lystra and they stoned him, threw him out of the city and left him for dead, Acts 14: 19. You think of the sufferings that that man endured. He said that he counted it all for nothing. And finally, he was put into prison and spent two years there without a proper trial. Two years in prison, chained up, and what did he say? He was brought out into a court eventually, a court of great pomp and splendour, and there was this poor prisoner standing in chains. And what does he say? To the king he says, "I would to God, both in little and in much, that not only thou, but all who have heard me this day should become such as I also am", Acts 26: 29. Then he added, "except these bonds", as if that was just an afterthought. He was saying, 'I just wish you had what I have'. Agrippa had all the pomp and ceremony there; he had men making way for him - even the governor would have recognised that Agrippa had a higher place in the hierarchy than he had. And this poor prisoner says, 'I just wish you had what I have!'. That man came into that court in great pomp and splendour and I think he went out in great embarrassment because he recognised that there was one there who was morally superior to him, and he was rejoicing in tribulations.

We boast in tribulations - that is what it meant. He was rejoicing in them, because "tribulation works endurance; and endurance, experience". He proved God in them, proved what God could be sustaining him. That is the endurance - proving what God is. Then "experience, hope". What a hope he had before him. "And hope does not make ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit". There you are - "in our hearts". God is "the knower of all the hearts of all" the children of men, Acts 1: 24. And our

hearts, which were once evil continually from our youth, now have the love of God shed abroad in them by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. "For of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks", Matt 12: 34. Is that not the evidence? You speak about the love of God, you speak about God and His love.

Think of the wonder of the gift of the Holy Spirit. I spoke earlier about how we are to be maintained, and how can we go through life without sinning: here we have the power. It is not in Romans 5 that it is presented in this way - it is in chapter 8. You read through chapter 7 and see how you want to do what is right all the time but you find you keep doing what is wrong. How can you get out of this? How can you get delivered from this? At the end of chapter 7 the apostle's eyes are lifted up and he says in verse 25, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord". His eyes were lifted up to another Man. It is a Man in the glory, a Man in heaven. And you get that object before you. The Holy Spirit would connect you to the Man who is above. And He would seek to keep your gaze upon Him. He then goes on to say it is, "in order that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh", (chap 8: 4); there is another principle upon which we can walk - we have God's Holy Spirit given to us. He is a divine Person - He is more than just a power - He is a Person. And He is given, attaching our hearts to Christ above, and giving us the power to walk here apart from all that is around us, apart from the principles that govern men; walk down here with the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. That is what God is looking for. It is a foretaste of what will happen: God's love and blessedness will fill every heart. The Holy Spirit now has been given to us; He sheds abroad in our hearts the love of God. May we experience this in a greater way, for His Name's sake.

Strood

10th February 2019

RESULTS FOR GOD

Kenny J Walker

1 Timothy 4: 12-15

1 Samuel 3:19

2 Samuel 23:11-17

I have been thinking - and these are just three scriptures that have come to mind - in relation to the matter of results. God is looking for results. We mentioned it recently, and too on Lord's day, that in every dispensation God will have those who are faithful to Him. You could say that He will have a result out of every generation and dispensation; no matter what the opposition and the difficulties may be, God will have results.

But I was thinking about what the result will be in the present time. What will be the result in your life and my life? What will be the result in our gatherings? What will be the result in our families and households? Will it be a result for God? We have mentioned so many times recently about being here for the testimony and the service of God. It was mentioned at the meetings last weekend, that we are here for the testimony and the service of God. There are to be results for God out of our lives and out of the lives of every believer. There *will be* a result. I had thought of the scripture at the beginning of Philippians to clarify what I have in mind. It says, "he who has begun in you a good work will complete it unto Jesus Christ's day", v6. There is a good work which is the work of God which has begun in every believer, and it will be completed at some time. A believer may be taken to be with Christ; the work of God is complete in that believer and there has been a result for God out of that life.

But what is going to be the result in our lives for the Lord Jesus and for God? It does not just happen. We speak about the circumstances of men; men get results out of their circumstances. Most here are probably beyond school age, but you have your studies, and exams, and then the results. How do these results come about? It is usually due to effort and study and time. It is the same at work in that you do things in view of a result. In divine things this applies to an extent, but I do not think it is just by effort and time. There are a few points which we have to bear in mind and two of these scriptures suggest that prayer is required. One thing that brings results is prayerful exercise, and too the Spirit's work. Making way for the Spirit in your life - in our lives - is essential. A number of these scriptures we

read also mentioned 'the word', and listening to the word and allowing it to have an effect is another way that results come about. For example, we have had a season of three-day meetings in this place, and someone might ask what the results have been? There are also three-day meetings in other places, and fellowship meetings and other gatherings together. I just ask a simple question, What is going to be the result in my life and in your life as a result of these meetings?

We often refer to the time when the people of Israel gathered together for what may have been like a three-day meeting. Nehemiah 8 says, "he read in it before the open place", v 3. They gathered together before the open place and they had an interpretation of what was read. However, at the end of the chapter there is a wonderful result of the gathering together. It says in verse 12, "And all the people went their way, to eat and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great rejoicing". There were results in that chapter of listening to the word, coming under the sound of the divine word.

I thought of Timothy, and the word that came to me is that it says at the end of verse 15, "that thy progress may be manifest to all". There was a result in Timothy's life and Paul could commit things to him. You read of him back in Acts 16, that he was a young man and it says he "had a good testimony of the brethren", v 2. A result had come about. He had a believing mother, who I would suggest was like Hannah. That work came as a result of a believing mother, of a prayerful mother. Then he comes into service, and he is taken up, and he works with Paul who could entrust things to him. We read a number of points and I would suggest that these are things which would bring about a result for God; there is progress. We may ask what is going to be the progress in my life and in your life? What is going to be the progress in our locality? What is going to be the progress in our households? What is going to be the result for God? It has been said that we are either going forward or going back. Are we progressing? What has been the progress? It speaks of various things that have come about here, but I think we should all try and be like Timothy, and that there may be progress in our lives. Progress is different with everyone, and has to be worked out in the divine presence, by listening to the word and making way for the Spirit. I would challenge myself and challenge us all as to the word here to Timothy, "let thy progress be manifest to all". What progress has there been?

We read in 1 Samuel 3, "And Samuel grew". We know that he was given a coat each year, and that he grew, which I suppose was

natural growth. We read that “Samuel grew, and Jehovah was with him, and let none of his words fall to the ground”. One of the ways that Samuel grew was because of the prayerful exercise of his mother. She had prayed for a man-child and was granted this man-child. It says a few times that the boy ministered to Jehovah; and the boy grew. There was a result brought about. Why? Because of the prayerful exercise of his mother, and no doubt we could all take account of that, that there are those who have prayed for us. When we were younger there were those who prayed for us. We may not know who it was, whether it was our grandparents or our parents, but there was prayer for us.

There is also the matter of the word. Jehovah was speaking to Samuel and you get the sense as it says, “Jehovah ... let none of his words fell to the ground”. Samuel seemed to be attentive to hear the word and to gather up the words. I would just suggest that he was ready to hear, ready to receive what Jehovah would say to him; he would not just let them pass by him. I feel the exercise of that for myself. God speaks to us in a number of ways. He might speak to us in our circumstances, speak to us in a gathering like this, or speak to us individually, and He could speak to us in other ways. Have I learned something through the circumstance and has there been some result? Has there been a gathering up of the words that there may be growth?

I also read at the end of 2 Samuel and had in mind these mighty men. There are no doubt many examples, but what results come about in these mighty men because of exercise! We may ask how they became mighty men. 1 Samuel 22 speaks about those who came to David at the cave of Adullam, v 1, 2. “Every one in distress ... and every one of embittered spirit”: they were down and did not know where to turn and could do nothing for themselves. They gathered around David and he became a captain over them, which is a lesson for us all. Christ is to be our Captain and to be our Lord and our Guide and our Strength. It was mentioned at the meetings about Him being King. He is King and as He is our King: we are to take our direction and rule from Him. It is interesting that the men gathered to David at the cave of Adullam in the earlier chapter and again here in chapter 22 by which time they had become mighty men. I would like to suggest that there has been progress in these mighty men from spending time with David. For ourselves spending time with the Lord Jesus, or spending time with divine Persons will bring about a result. There is strength, power, resource and help. These mighty men have learned in the company of David. One mighty man that we read about had the resource to go and

defend the plot of lentils, somewhere there was food. He was exercised about providing food, and the food supply being preserved. Spiritual food is important: it needs to be provided and defended and not given up. We need to spend time in the company of Christ in view of a positive result.

It says later in the chapter where we read of the mighty men going down and coming to David in the cave of Adullam. Think of the result of spending time with David, typically with Christ. They had come a long way from being in embittered spirit and in distress. They had come to Christ typically and come to find Him not only as their Saviour, but as their resource, and also to know His heart. It says, "David longed", and they knew his longings and his heart. And then there is this wonderful pouring out; they go at the risk of their lives to bring water for David's heart, but he pours it out to Jehovah. There is a response for God as a result of the exercise of the whole matter. I think that is one suggestion from this scripture, and I would just like to commend it to us all. What is going to be the result? Are we going to be mighty men or women who have spent time in the company of Christ so that there may be something for His heart? Typically, there is something for the heart of Christ, and ultimately something for God. As a result of this drink offering there is a response for God.

May we be encouraged. I feel the edge of the word, that we have these times together, we have three-day meetings, we have local gatherings, we have times when we talk together about the scriptures and about what we have had. What is going to be the result? What progress have I made? Let us challenge ourselves first. You may well ask where you were a year ago. Have we each made progress in the testimony? Have we made progress in the service of God? Has there been a richer response for God as a result of ministry and spending time in the company of Christ? May we be more like Timothy, Samuel and the mighty men.

May we be encouraged and challenged. For His Name's sake.

Word in Meeting for Ministry in Dundee
16th April 2019