

# **A WORD IN ITS SEASON**

**SECOND SERIES**

**No. 155**

**February 2020**

## **CONTENTS**

**Brethren of Christ**

*Page 1*

**Fellowship**

Michael J Klassen

*Page 18*

**Renewing the Mind**

John C Gray

*Page 24*

**Light**

Martin McLaren

*Page 27*

## **BRETHREN OF CHRIST**

**John 20: 11-18**

**Romans 8: 29-30**

**Hebrews 2: 11-12**

**1 John 3: 13-14**

**JL** Our subject of enquiry relates to spiritual relationships. In the first reading we considered the place we have through wondrous grace as amongst the children of God. The thought for this reading is to consider the precious relationship involving ourselves as the brethren of Christ. In the hymn that was just given out we were reminded that was something which was in the heart of the Lord Jesus:

Thy brethren, Lord ...

Were in thy heart

(Hymn 226)

What a place His brethren had, and still have, in the affections of the Lord Jesus. I trust we may get some fresh impressions and real joy from the consideration of the Lord's own words in this first section, "go to my brethren".

In Romans 8 we have somewhat the dignity of the company presented to us, those who have been predestinated in view of enjoying such a place of favour, and predestinated in such a way that we should be brought into conformity to the image of God's own Son. While our place of privilege is very great and very dignified, I trust we might get help in seeing the supreme place that Christ necessarily must have in distinction amongst His own. He is the Firstborn among many brethren. In the section in Hebrews which we read we might get some impression of the joy of the Lord Jesus in the circle of affection amongst His own. We ourselves also rejoice in the blessedness of the relationship and place of intimacy with the heavenly Man, but He is joying in the company of His own and "is not ashamed to call them brethren", in the midst of the assembly singing praises to the Father. Finally, in 1 John 3 my thought was that we might consider the wonderful sphere where love is enjoyed and is characteristic amongst the brethren. Hatred is perhaps experienced in the world around, but there is a circle of affection amongst the brethren of Christ, and love is experienced there which is the atmosphere where life is enjoyed. Hence, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren". I trust we will get help in enquiring together.

John 20 is really the introduction of the heavenly character of

the relationship. It was mentioned in the earlier reading that the Lord had referred to His brethren previously, as indicated in the gospels, but that was rather to bring out suited moral characteristics to be found amongst His brethren. Now we have the introduction of the heavenly relationship which necessarily awaited this glorious Person coming forth triumphantly out of death.

**APD** It seems to be unofficial. The disciples are not there, and this Mary of Magdala, having such a personal relationship with Jesus, is selected for this wonderful message. What do you say about that?

**JL** I am glad you refer to that. Is that to emphasise that it is particularly a matter involving affection? That was in the heart of the Lord Jesus; as we sang, they 'were in thy heart' and they remain so. But then, Mary represents responsively that affection and is therefore a suited vessel to convey this most marvellous message, rather than the thought of anything official.

**APD** John generally does not make much of what is official. It is what is real in a spiritual sense, is it not?

**JL** **It is** what is real and specially identified with love, is it not? He was the apostle who was given to particularly open up that character of the ministry. I think it is fine to take note of the triumphant exit of the Lord Jesus from the tomb. Two angels were sitting there as witnesses that Christ was no longer there. But the affections of Mary were not satisfied by taking account of the absence of the Lord from the tomb but wanted to know where *He* was.

**DMW** Was there formation with Mary, bringing out her longings not to be without the Lord?

**JL** Yes; it did seem as if nothing else could satisfy those affections in her heart - nothing else, not even a word from two angels; that is a very remarkable thing. She seemed to be intensely desirous of finding satisfaction through making contact again with this blessed Man now out of death. Was that what you were thinking?

**DMW** She had certainly known Him in such a way that she wanted to be with Him and not without Him. She did not know Him in *this* way yet. But it would be the same Person in her affections, would it not?

**JL** She is a very interesting personality in that respect. She was already the beneficiary of the Lord's particular blessing, on account of the relief that she had come into, and in a sense we all are, are we not?

Have we got affection like there was in Mary's heart, which was satisfied when finding again the Object of her love? Therefore she was perhaps a particularly suited vessel to convey the message.

**SWD** Is it intensely personal? "They have taken away **my** Lord".

**JL** Yes, "**my** Lord". I am interested in your reference to that - the intensely personal viewpoint that Mary had - but, correspondingly, I am very interested in the personal touches that the Lord brings in, "**my** brethren". I would love if there had been opportunity to explore many more of these peculiarly precious personal touches that the Lord brings in - "my brethren", "my assembly", "my Father", "my glory", "my kingdom". Scripture is full of them, subjects of special interest that were in the affections of the Lord Jesus and directly identified with Himself. But here was Mary's particular thought, "my Lord". Can you tell us a little more about what that might convey?

**SWD** It is a test to every one of us if we can say that, "**my** Lord".

**APG** She also says, 'my Teacher', does she not? "Rabboni" - there was a personal link there too; she was ready to be taught, was she?

**JL** Very good.

**APG** She was ready to be taught about these spiritual relationships you are speaking about here.

**JL** Those would be two important features for us then - affection for the Lord Jesus, and a readiness to hear His voice and be taught by Him. Perhaps you can enlarge a little on that? It seems a profitable thought for us.

**APG** The Lord is always ready to teach those who are interested, is He not? Those who have affection for Him and are subject too. Mary was subject to Christ as Lord and ready to take in these great thoughts, do you think?

**JL** Yes, there is rather an appeal conveyed that should affect us right to the end of the dispensation in that respect. "He that has an ear, let him hear", Rev 2-3. I know that that is particularly connected for the moment there with what the Spirit says, but it would be the Spirit speaking to us of Christ. And the question arises whether we have hearts that would lead to attentive ears ready to listen.

**DTH** Do you think this brings out the importance of knowing in the morning meeting the Lord being risen? In that occasion God provides

something fresh in relation to the glory of the Lord. When Thomas gets adjusted he brings out a glory that they really had not known of; he says, "My Lord and my God", John 20: 28.

**JL** Yes, I have often pondered over that. He was absent from the first appearing, and was quite adamant that unless he had the opportunity to put his hand in the marks and so on, he would not believe. And yet, the grace of the Lord Jesus secured his heart and he became a witness at that point to the deity of the Lord Jesus. That is a very interesting thing, "My Lord and my God".

**DTH** What he brought out might show the importance of recognising the Lord's deity at the time of the Supper.

**JL** Yes, we do well to remember that and give Him due honour.

**DTH** There would be something fresh - it is not something that is being repeated. There should be some fresh sense of the glory of the Lord.

**JL** There is plenty to call forth a note of worship to Him. It was as Man He came forth triumphantly out of death, and here He is viewed as the victorious One, and the ascending One. He says, "I have not yet ascended to my Father", but that was immediately in view. The greatness of His Person would surely be before us at the Lord's supper as He is pleased to come in among us. But all the love of His heart is expressed too in this marvellous link, "go to **my** brethren".

**PWH** Did the Lord perhaps have in mind the thought of "my brethren" when He spoke to the Father about His own in John 17? I fully appreciate that the Lord's death and resurrection were required for that relationship to come into being. I wondered if part of what He had in His heart and had in mind was the disciples being His brethren.

**JL** Undoubtedly so. We are given to understand from the passage we may look at later in Romans 8 that it was a thought that went back ere time began. So it was clearly in the affections and mind of the Lord Jesus - it was not that the thought was introduced here; it was the heavenly character of the relationship that was introduced, but the thought was in His heart, was it not?

**PWH** I think it was. And I think it is good to see in relation to the thought of "my brethren" that the thoughts that the Lord had in His heart in John 17 in relation to His own, should mark them, "that they may be one, as we are one", John 17: 22.

**JL** Yes, we have read scriptures from the New Testament but we might certainly feel free to draw from some of the types in the Old Testament. We have a type in relation to Joseph and his brethren that would enter into that - the dream conveying the place typically that Christ was to secure amongst His own, a circle of affection and honour there.

**MJK** Does this thought of “my brethren” give character to these persons?

**JL** Yes, it does. It is a very dignified expression in that regard. It was something that the Lord said, I have no doubt, with deep joy in His heart, and asked Mary to convey that message, and she identified those to whom it was suitable to convey it. It did not appear as if there was anything more specific said in relation to the names or particular identification of the persons other than “my brethren”. Mary seemed to discern those who were worthy to be connected with that wonderful word of the Lord Jesus. There would be particular dignity connected with them, would there not?

**AML** She spoke in Hebrew; would that bring out her discernment and feelings and affections for Christ?

**JL** I had not thought about that. I do not know what more I can say about that. You better open that up a little for us.

**AML** I think it has been said that speaking in the Hebrew tongue was to bring out divine feelings. I was just struck with the depth of love and affection seen in this sister, able to apprehend and take on this wonderful message that the Lord gives her. You wonder really why such a detail is mentioned in Scripture.

**JL** Yes, I think all that is very helpful. It is just another indication that the matter was particularly connected with affection and love that was flowing now from the heart of the Lord Jesus rather than anything official. It would bear on the point that was mentioned earlier, would it not? And what a message! “Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father”.

**SWD** When she says, “Rabboni” that is really ‘my Teacher’.

**JL** Yes, you kindly drew our attention to her also speaking about “my Lord” and now this would be another personal touch of Mary’s love for the Lord and willingness to learn from Him.

What a wonderful relationship of love was now being disclosed. The brethren of Christ were to learn that He was ascending to His Father and their Father, “my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God”.

**APD** Would you explain for us the references to the brethren in the other three gospels and the brethren here?

**JL** Are you suggesting now that it is more than just the moral characteristics of the brethren, and is the introduction now of the heavenly relationship between themselves and the Father? We should note in that respect that the Lord does not use the expression 'our Father' but “my Father and your Father”. Can you help us about that?

**APD** He always has that distinction, does He not? In every relationship He always has that peculiar personal distinction.

**JL** I think it is very important that we keep that in our minds and, while our relationship as Christ's brethren is a very blessed one to be brought into the enjoyment of, it does not mean we are altogether on common ground with Him, does it? And that particularly bears on the passage we read in Romans 8, “so that he should be the firstborn among many brethren”. The place of supreme honour must always be given to Christ.

**APD** What is the meaning of the firstborn? Why is it alluded to, Christ being the Firstborn?

**JL** Amongst other things it was the place of particular honour in the family.

**DTH** “The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father”, John 1: 18. It is in that glory He is presented to us.

**JL** Altogether so. Part of the joy of our hearts in that respect is to think that we have been taken “into favour in the Beloved” (Eph 1: 6), the particular object of the Father's affections. This link “my Father and your Father” is an indescribably precious link.

**DTH** The title “Rabboni” involves the affections between those taught and the teacher. It is a relationship of affection. When Paul writes to disciples, we see the peculiar affection of these men coming out.

**JL** Yes, very good. Paul particularly served in that way too, not only as a teacher and expositor of the truth that had been given to him to

convey to the saints, but he spoke and served as a father amongst them too; a good feature for us all to emulate.

I was enjoying thinking over this passage which is linked with predestination. Think of what was in the mind and heart of divine persons before time began. "Whom he has foreknown", that is an allusion to the saints, is it not, "he has also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son"? It is an immensely blessed place of favour for us according to the thoughts of God ere time began, but it is associated with Christ having the chief place - the Firstborn among many brethren.

**SWD** Is it not wonderful that there are *many* brethren? In Hebrews 2: 10 the expression comes in in another place too, "bringing many sons to glory". It is *many*; but it is not a poor weak few - many.

**JL** "Many", that is a fine thought to keep in our hearts and to have respect for those to whom it refers. I do think we need to be preserved in humility in our thoughts so that we do not think we are the exclusive objects of the interest of divine Persons. We must be careful in relation to the steps of the paths in which we move in fellowship, and we seek to guard and protect that, but it is good to get an impression of the vastness of divine interests in relation to the heavenly family and those who compose it. But amongst all, Christ has the first place.

**TRC** Would the reference in John that the Lord makes, "Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit" (chap 12: 24), bear on our enquiry?

**JL** Yes, just exactly. The "much fruit" would link with the thought of the brethren of Christ as taking character from Him, and 'the much' would be a clear link with the reference a moment ago to the many brethren. You were perhaps thinking of both, were you?

**TRC** I wondered that, and the necessity of the work of Christ. We had no part with Him in His manhood in flesh and blood, but as He has gone into death, the grain of wheat died but has brought much fruit. How blessed that is that we are part of that, the much fruit that has come out of the death of Christ.

**JL** He is out of death, but the saints as associated with Him are viewed as beyond death as well. We have a link and a place of association with the One who is out of death.

**DMW** And therefore does the thought of brethren bring to mind God's

prime thought of likeness?

**JL** Very good. These words that we have been considering, “much fruit” all springing from the one grain clearly involve that. In Genesis 1: 12 it is, “seed after its kind” - it is bearing the same likeness and that seems to be a very important thought. It would be confirmed here in to Romans 8: 30 in that those predestinated have been called and justified and glorified. They are in every way made suitable to be associated with Him.

**DMW** That is very helpful and I think here the “called” are the chosen as well. Would you go with that? In other words, it goes beyond simply the call of the gospel - it is the call of God, chosen. Therefore the likeness is recovered through the death of Christ and the seed bears fruit of itself.

**JL** I suppose the likeness is fully expressed in that there is not only likeness as to character because of our place as associated with Him, but even as to our bodies that will be so as well. The scripture that says there in v 29, “he has also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son”, would include likeness even as to our bodies, would it not, in its full extent?

**DMW** It says, “into conformity to his body of glory” (Phil 3: 21), so that the idea is glory. We have the Spirit very much prominent in this chapter; “these also he has glorified”: that would bring in the present availability of the Spirit in the saints.

**JL** Yes, the availability of the Spirit, and in large measure the way in which the saints have been glorified through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Would all this then contribute to the peculiar joy of the Lord Jesus amongst His own?

**APD** In the reference to the oil of gladness, the Lord is anointed with the oil of gladness above his companions (Heb 1: 9) - is that a reference to the Holy Spirit?

**JL** I do not know. I suppose in some way it is connected with the place that the Holy Spirit would cause us to be brought into in the appreciation of the distinctive honour associated with the place that Christ has. Would the reference to “gladness above thy companions” be the place of particular honour He has? No doubt it is by the Holy Spirit that we are brought to understand and appreciate that, but can you help us as to your understanding of it?

**APD** I wondered if the oil of gladness would be the joy of the Holy Spirit in bringing out the beauty of Jesus as the anointing would suggest.

**JL** I think that is helpful. I can well understand that. The Holy Spirit has peculiar joy in seeing Christ honoured amongst His own, has He not?

**AJL** Can you help us as to the responsibility involved in this privilege? It speaks about a 'calling' and so on.

**JL** I think in that respect we have to remember that responsibilities flow from relationships, but it is not on the ground of responsibility that we have entered into the relationship here. It is according to all the foreknowledge and desire of God to bring us into this in the way of favour and association with the Lord Jesus. It is a good point to remember in relation to our considerations that responsibilities flow out of relationships and you cannot reverse that. So far as the prime thoughts of God are concerned it is not on the ground of responsibility we enter into them.

**DMW** We are brought into what has already been determined, and the Spirit helps us in support of faith as to what we really are. Do we not understand by that that God's thought is our being conformed to the image of His Son, and that likeness has been recovered in view of divine purpose, so that we are chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, Eph 1: 4? From that, do you think that the life of responsibility or faith takes its form, not by legal mandates, but by our being what we are?

**JL** It is good to remember that the basis of our entrance into these things is not on the ground of responsibility but according to the purpose of God. But I do think, and often ponder over the fact, that two things normally flow out from relationships - one is responsibilities and the other is affection. We have been taught that in both respects these things cannot be reversed in their order.

**PWH** Did the Lord ask Mary to convey this message to His brethren in order that responsible persons would be given it? It would not do just to have Mary keep it to herself.

**JL** Yes, very good, responsible persons. At the same time, that would not conflict with what we have just said that responsibility is not the ground on which we enter into it. I think our brother's point a

moment ago is helpful in that respect for it serves to magnify the wonderful privilege granted to us according to the purpose of God, but creates a responsibility to move worthily in accordance with it.

**TRC** Some of the young people might wonder what we are speaking about in relation to responsibility flowing from the relationship first. Simply, if I am a father I have to take up that responsibility as a father, but if I am not a father I do not have that responsibility. So as we are brethren of Christ we enter into that relationship; so I have a responsibility to fulfil that relationship in responsibility.

**JL** That is exactly right. It applies to all the relationships that are taken up, even in relation to practical things, for example, a master and a servant: if I am a master I have a responsibility then to treat my employees correctly, but if I am an employee I have a responsibility to respect my master. Nobody is responsible to be a child but if a child is born, the child then has responsibilities to honour father and mother. Responsibilities flow out of relationships, and in normal circumstances, so do affections. And that is very important as well. We have been thinking of affection in Mary lying at the background of it, but the very consideration of the privilege and the enjoyment of it promotes affection on our part, and contributes to, the answer returning to the satisfaction of the Lord, and to the honour of God as Father, who has been revealed to such persons, do you not think?

**TRC** Reference was made to John 17. In verse 24 it says, "I desire that where I am they also may be with me"; that is an area of affection, is it not?

**JL** Very much so.

**KDD** A brother has taught us here locally that in these relationships it is love answering to love.

**JL** That is very true, especially these very dignified and extremely precious relationships that we refer to as prime ones according to God's mind. I did make mention a moment or two ago about an employer and a servant - that is not a prime relationship at all. It is one that just belongs to the sphere of responsibility down here, but what we are speaking about in relation to the brethren of Christ is a prime thought of God's that has gone back to His purpose and foreknowledge ere time began.

**PWH** So, in that way, it is good to see that being conformed to the

image of His Son takes nothing away from Christ, but rather distinguishes Him, because it goes on to say, “to be conformed to the image of his Son, **so** that he should be the firstborn among many brethren”.

**JL** That is a very important point. We have touched a little of that already, in saying that we do not take common ground with Christ. We are associated with Christ but He is supreme in the midst, and the Spirit of God, whom we have rightly been referring to, would always ensure that that is promoted in our own affections and interests. It has its reflection too in our response because we would normally give honour to the Lord Jesus as the Firstborn following the Supper in the early part of the service of praise.

Perhaps we should look at the passage in Hebrews 2, concerning the Sanctifier and the sanctified. Christ is “not ashamed to call them brethren”. It seems a very delightful presentation of this thought as to brethren here - Christ not ashamed of His own, but taking His place amongst them in liberty with His heart rising in joy and we brought into the responses.

**AML** Would it be right to link this with Psalm 133 - brethren dwelling in unity?

**JL** I am sure all that bears on it, the circle of united affections into which the Lord is pleased to come. We should remember that we cannot direct the movements of the Lord Jesus nor call Him into presence. We would seek to provide conditions whereby He would be free to come and find a place in the united affections of His own, where He would be free and have joy in His own heart as we would have in ours as in His company.

**APD** Why is sanctification linked, and brought in, in this verse?

**JL** In a little the verse explains the reason, does it not? Because it goes on to say, “for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren”. That gives an answer to the reason, does it not? It is to show how perfectly suited they are to be identified and called Christ's brethren, and He free amongst them, a sanctified company, wholly suited to His place of joy among them.

**APD** And set apart, would you say?

**JL** Set apart in sanctification, not as a process but through the completeness of the work of the Sanctifier.

**NJP** I liked this thought of partakers. It gives the thought of being sustained in an area which is heavenly; “holy brethren” the writer says at the start of the next chapter, “partakers of the heavenly calling”, chap 3:1.

**JL** Very good, “holy brethren” - that would be a clear link with those sanctified, and set apart in holiness, suitable to be in the company of the Lord Jesus, would you think? There is something very delightful about this whole section. Christ is in the midst - that is the place He is worthy to have. We have been thinking of Christ as supreme and rising above all, but equally He has a place of affection in the midst, singing these praises.

**DMW** It is interesting that He that sanctifies says, “I will declare thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises. And again, I will trust in him”, v 13. It is very personalised, is it not? It is like His possession - all of one kind. You had that reference to Genesis.

**JL** These matters very much bear on what the Lord Himself has done. Our brother enquired earlier about the question of responsibility, but these things which flow out now, the sanctification and the name by which we have been called and so on, are all according to what the Lord has done Himself.

**APD** It is a very wonderful thing that He has the means in the assembly to express His feelings Godward.

**JL** How precious to His heart! There is an atmosphere of affection there where those forming it are identified as being His brethren but merged as one to form the assembly, which is a vessel capable of answering to the affections of the Lord Jesus, and under His influence too, participating in the response that is going up, would you say?

**APD** I understand that is the meaning of His singing in the assembly. The assembly becomes His means of expressing His feelings to God. Would that be right?

**JL** Yes, He as Head leading, but then the assembly becoming the vessel of response through which that is expressed.

**PWH** It goes beyond the thought of congregation in Psalm 22. It is an intelligent vessel.

**JL** I like that reference in the hymn which I referred to,  
All merge in perfect oneness

That is not a large congregation in some way meeting together, but persons formed as one to constitute the assembly, in the midst of which Christ sings and we are drawn into love's answering response. It is fine to think of the Lord taking His place then in a circle of affection in which He is in no way ashamed, but where His heart is rejoicing and finds opportunity to express this through assembly response.

**RNH** Do you think the note to “sanctified” helps? It says, 'Simply the character of the persons, without reference to done or doing'. I was affected by what was said as to the Lord's work. We should come unencumbered to the Supper, should we? We do not have to work up to it; the Lord Jesus has done what is required to bring us into a sanctified company, and we can be responsive without any encumbrances upon us, do you think?

**JL** That is the ground we are privileged to take. Just at that point, I think, it is equally true that we would learn from other scriptures that in other respects, sanctification is very definitely a process and is something that is to be worked out in us, but not so in the context of what is mentioned here. It is a complete thought fulfilled by the Sanctifier Himself.

**DMW** Is the name of the Father understood in v 12? Is it “I will declare thy name”?

**JL** I am sure it includes the thought of the Lord saying on that wonderful morning to Mary, “I ascend to **my** Father and your Father”. It is intelligent response then to an enjoyed relationship; is that what was in your mind?

**DMW** I think the link with John 20 is very helpful. “I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God”. It is “my brethren”, is it not? “I will declare thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly ...” - that is the vessel where He can sing the praises of God.

**JL** I think we are given to understand that from John 17: 26 where the Lord in speaking there to His Father, He says, “I have made known to them thy name, and will make it known”. The “will make it known” was fulfilled on the resurrection morning, was it not?

Perhaps we should go on to 1 John 3. These two verses represent two completely different spheres. “Do not wonder, brethren,

if the world hate you". The world is not our home; it is the present place where the saints move in the testimony here, but the world is not our home: it is not intended to be. Christ indicated to His lovers that He was coming to take them to Himself and spoke to His own Father about that. His desire is that "where I am they also may be with me". We are brought into a sphere where love is in circulation and where life is to be enjoyed.

**TRC** These relationships dignify us, do they not? To look at the brethren as the brethren of Christ - they belong to Him - we need to be very careful what we say about the brethren, and how we speak about the brethren.

**JL** Very much so. This is love working out horizontally because I have come to appreciate the significance of the brethren of Christ. "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren": "we love the brethren". John's epistle greatly helps in showing that it is not possible to love God and hate my brother. There would be such an inconsistency there that it would expose something as being definitely wrong. If I truly love God I will love those that belong to the family. That is what we began with in the earlier reading. And now it would show how we would come to appreciate the brethren. And I think the point you mentioned is a very important one. I often reflect upon a word that a valuable old sister gave to one of our daughters following her marriage and setting up a home. She said, 'Keep criticism of the brethren out of your home'. That is a very important thing. Do I spend time at home criticising the saints? That is not profitable, and it is displeasing in the eyes of the Lord Jesus; they are the objects of His affection; they were in His heart and they remain so. We must be careful how we speak of the brethren.

**TRC** So parents, father and mothers, particularly have a responsibility in that.

**JL** To protect what is in the home, do you mean?

**TRC** I wondered that, and if children are brought up in an environment of criticism of the brethren they will take that character on themselves. It has often been said that 'we tell the Lord about the brethren and tell the brethren about the Lord'.

**JL** That is exactly it and is very helpful. If there is criticism it brings about a stifling of the enjoyment of life. But if the circulation of love is maintained then it is a fulfilment of what is said here, "We know that we

have passed from death **to life**, because we love the brethren". We have been taught, and Mr Raven's ministry is helpful in this regard, that there is an atmosphere in which life is enjoyed and that atmosphere is love, see *FER vol 7 p375*.

**MTH** I would like your thoughts on v 16. It says, "we ought for the brethren to lay down our lives": just how would that particularly work out in the light of our brother's comment? I think, this would have a very practical bearing on that.

**JL** That would spring from loving God, and so loving the brethren that I am prepared to go as far as to lay down my life in service to them. If you were to ask me for a practical example of a servant doing that I would point you to Paul, one who was prepared to do that and even if he was the less loved while carrying it out. That would not hinder him from the fulfilment of the exercise because of the love that was in his heart for the brethren. Would that help or have you more to say about it?

**MTH** I was thinking of it in a slightly different way - the Lord sat opposite the treasury and saw that woman cast in "the whole of her living", Mark 12: 44. The scripture refers to her substance; I am interested in that connection how that comes in. I certainly appreciate how the apostle ministered in that way as well; we see him really giving the whole of his living - it is not just monetary, it is well beyond that - the whole of his living.

**JL** That is very interesting. It is a word to be taken up by us all. We did not read that verse, but it is a very important verse. We have a lot of young people here today; I might ask for the interest of the young people: perhaps all would know what John 3: 16 is, but do we all know what 1 John 3: 16 is? That is just what we are referring to now. John 3: 16 brings out the marvellous love of God towards us in mercy that we should not perish but have life through believing in His Son. 1 John 3: 16 rather indicates I should be so affected by that love that I ought to be prepared to devote my life in love and service to the brethren. It is good to remember that - 1 John 3: 16.

**MTH** I remember being taught that when I was young, and being asked that quite often; so I appreciate that. I was thinking too earlier of Matthew 25, and we have referred to the gospels and the difference between that and John, but in Matthew 25 the king says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to me", v 40. If we see the brethren in that comparison, "ye have done it

to me”, would that would help us as to laying down our lives for the brethren?

**JL** Yes, very good. We have been speaking of some things that flow out from relationships but now we are entitled to think of what flows out from love. Love underlies service, does it not? If service is just taken up in some legal or formal way we may well get into difficulties, but love underlies service. I am sure a lot of love has come into evidence in the way that persons have laboured in relation to the provision for the saints here. It is a good thing for the younger brethren to seek opportunities to take up the privilege of serving the saints. Love in our hearts would promote that feature and help to develop it.

**DMW** That is an expression of the nature of God, is it not? In our relationships, the very nature of God is in expression. There is no real living without God's nature being involved in what we do. Here it is sacrificial love for the brethren, is it not?

**JL** As we have said earlier it is an inconsistency for me to profess to love God if I do not love the brethren, and if I do love the brethren then I will be prepared to serve them: love underlying service.

**AML** Would you say that Paul sets it out in Acts 20? Paul descending, falling upon and enfolding the young man, laying down his life for him, v 10?

**JL** Acts 20 is a wonderful example too, is it not? The manifest affection that Paul had for those at Ephesus, and the way that was appreciated by them, was expressed by the tears that were shed, v 37.

**KDD** In John 11 it says, “Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus”, v 5. John 12 starts off, “There therefore they made him a supper”, v 2.

**JL** Jesus moved out of the coldness of Jerusalem to the warmth and affection in the house of Bethany, where He was loved. He took His place at table where He had the first place in that circle of affection.

**DNM** We were speaking about likeness a little earlier. What we are speaking about now, is that not a demonstration of likeness coming out?

**JL** The likeness would thereby contribute to a proper representation of what God is in His own blessed nature. Our brother made mention in the previous reading to the thought of derivation and

representation, and that likeness finds its expression then among the saints in the way that we love and serve in such a way as to represent God and answer to what delights His heart.

## **Reading at a three-day meeting in Calgary**

**5<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

### **List of initials:-**

T R Campbell, Glasgow; A P Devenish, Edmonton; K D Drever, Calgary; S W Drever, Calgary; A P Grant, Dundee; R N Hesterman, Beachville; M T Holland, Calgary; D T Howie, Edmonton; P W Howie, Edmonton; M J Klassen, Aberdeen; A J Laurie, Brechin; J Laurie, Brechin; A M Lidbeck, Aberdeen; D N Morrow, Toronto; N J Plant, Toronto; D M Welch, Denton

## **FELLOWSHIP**

**Michael J Klassen**

**Philippians 3: 10**

**Acts 2: 42 (to “apostles”)**

**Philippians 2: 1, 2**

**1 Corinthians 1: 9, 10**

I would like to start with a question: there is a man in Scripture who is spoken of as having a withered hand: without looking, how many know which hand was withered? I will tell you later.

We have read four references to fellowship; I do not by any means intend to go into all four of these in depth. Where we began in Philippians we have, “the fellowship of his sufferings”. When it comes to these four views of fellowship, and there may be others - I am not limiting Scripture in relation to fellowship - and it says, “the fellowship of ...”, I take that to mean it is the character of the fellowship. The thought of “the fellowship of his sufferings” involves the flesh being completely removed. The more attached you are to the world the more suffering there will be in relation to taking up the fellowship of His sufferings. There is the thought of suffering for Him. I think we all know, every believer knows, something of the thought of suffering for Christ, and that is precious.

It is another matter to be in the fellowship; that is, suffering with Him. Every Christian suffers for the Lord in some sense; but suffering with Him is the greater thing “the fellowship of His sufferings”, JT vol 17 p63. As to the fellowship of suffering with Him, that is the fellowship which we are brought into, the character of the sufferings of the Person of Christ Himself. Mr Raven said that 'Fellowship of his sufferings is the sense of being identified with what is being rejected by the world', FER vol 4 p85. We are not speaking of the atoning sufferings of Christ; we could not enter into that, but we ought to have some measure of apprehension of the sufferings of Christ in relation to what sin is to God, as we see suffering about us in every place; we see it in creation, and how creation itself groans. We see it in relation to the Person of Christ and what was set before Him in Gethsemane and what was brought before Him as to the awfulness of sin. We cannot enter into it in the measure that Christ can, but it would affect our affections that we think about these sufferings, so that “the fellowship of his sufferings” involves “being conformed to his death”. Our flesh must go. I was touched in

the reading we have just had that in Romans 8 Paul says, “but if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live”, v 13. That is what “the fellowship of his sufferings” involves. The flesh and all that this world is must go. The flesh will make a complete wreck of anything that is for God: it and all it is attached to must go. He has died to this world; we too should be marked by this. “Our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, so that he should deliver us out of the present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father”, Gal. 1: 3, 4

In Acts 2, we have the “fellowship of the apostles”. God has graciously opened up something that takes this character: this “fellowship of the apostles” takes character from the teachings of the apostles. I would not leave any apostle out, but I would touch just on three: one is Peter. In the first preaching of Peter “there were added in that day about three thousand souls” (Acts 2: 41), saved through the teaching of one apostle “with the eleven”, v 14. If I understand it correctly, there was not one person under the hearing of that preaching that did not accept Christ: “all that believed were together”, v 44. What power there is in the “fellowship of the apostles”. The Lord says, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets”, Luke 16: 31. I would not leave out the prophets in relation to what there is as leading up to what comes in in the apostles.

The apostle John gives us a teaching and a ministry that is in relation to love. The depth of love that John expresses is beyond what we can maybe take in. It says, and I think we can all say it, “That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved”, John 21: 7. That was John’s description of himself, and he brings in love very prominently throughout his epistles and throughout his gospel. This touches very squarely on what we are speaking of in 1 John 1: 3: “that which we have seen and heard we report to you, that ye also may have fellowship with us”; that is, with the apostles. That is what they are seeking to bring us into, the fellowship that the apostles enjoyed in Christ Jesus. He goes on to say, “But if we walk in the light as *he* is in the light, we have fellowship with one another”, 1 John 1: 7. The fellowship is not necessarily firstly for us: the fellowship is for God and for His Son. It took me a while to get a hold of that; I do not know that I have the full gain of such a wonderful statement, but you think of what there is for God even in this room. I look around this room and I think of what God said in relation to Israel: “He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen wrong in Israel”, Num 23: 21. I wonder how many of us could look at Jacob that way. That is what we are as saints by calling before

God because everything now stands in One who stands in perfection before a righteous and a holy God; we stand in Christ Jesus.

We see in Paul, “apostle of Jesus Christ by God's will” (Eph. 1: 1), one who opens up the mystery, which has a secret side to it. It is only revealed to the believer as having the Holy Spirit. (The anti-type would be seen in Joseph as the revealer of secrets). Paul brings us into a land that flows with milk and honey, which is what is found substantially in the saints. The milk is a true result of chewing the cud or digesting the word of God for the edification of the saints. The honey speaks of fellowship, that which is produced by the working things out together. (This is all based on the testimony to the crucified and exalted Christ.) Paul gives us a testimony in relation to the One who was crucified but “is sitting at the right hand of God” (Col 3: 1), the testimony of all the apostles - John, Mark, Mathew, Peter and Luke. (Paul could say, “For I have received from the Lord” (1 Cor 11: 23), and again “round about him a light out of heaven” (Acts 9: 3): right from the very beginning of his Christian experience Paul was receiving light out of heaven, fitting him to express so much in relation to the mystery, and opening up the preciousness of the assembly to Christ.) Have we laid hold of such precious teaching and come in testimonially and experimentally to that which belongs to Jesus Christ our Lord? What a fellowship!

In Philippians 2, it says, “If then there be any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit”. The Spirit brings us to this “fellowship of the Spirit”, the Spirit characterises the fellowship in a way that brings in power, power to be able to operate in a fellowship that is for God; for His heart and for the heart of Christ. Paul says four things here: “if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and compassions, fulfil my joy”. Mr James Taylor suggested that what follows is a consequence to these four things: “that ye may think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking one thing”, JT vol 40 p221. He said that the Spirit of God operates in the house of God, vol 20 p331. What a matter that is, and He operates in our souls too. Each believer is indwelt by the power of the Spirit of God. He operates in the house of God or 'house-wise' because fellowship involves a collective setting. What an area that we can be attached to, in thinking of the Spirit of God operating in an area where there is power where we can answer to the affections of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 1, it says, “by whom ye have been called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord”. I think this is linked to

sonship and draws out our hearts in a very special way. It embraces every believer as having accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour and having the Spirit. This was a difficult area in Corinth where this is mentioned, but God was not looking at their state: He looked above their actual state to the source of their life and hope; as JND says: before he touches upon their evil, he can speak to them of their being "confirmed unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ"; Collected Writings vol 5 p326. He was looking at the One who held them in perfection. Paul says after that, "Now I exhort you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all say the same thing, and that there be not among you divisions; but that ye may be perfectly united in the same mind and in the same opinion".

If you look back over these four aspects, these four characters of fellowship, you will find something in common and it is oneness. In 1 Corinthians 1: 10 we get "say the same thing ... perfectly united. same mind..."; in Acts 2, they "had all things common" (v 44); in Philippians 2, it is "think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking one thing"; in Philippians 3, "let us be thus minded", v 15. God is one and God delights to bring us, every one, into the perfection of that which He has in His Son in which we are all one in Him. This must be present in order that true unity is found in evidence among the saints; so these four characters of fellowship are imperative in order for us to move forward in the fellowship of God's Son.

I turn to Galatians 2: 8: "(for he that wrought in Peter for the apostleship of the circumcision wrought also in me towards the Gentiles), and recognising the grace given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were conspicuous as being pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go to the nations, and *they* to the circumcision; only that we should remember the poor, which same thing also I was diligent to do". As I mentioned, when we get this thought "of": it gives the character. We have seen what the fellowship takes on in character, in these four aspects of the fellowship; now we see "the right hands", the collective sense: "the right hands" take on the character of "the fellowship".

I want to turn to Luke 6: 6-11: "And it came to pass on another sabbath also that he entered into the synagogue and taught; and there was a man there, and his right hand was withered. And the scribes and the Pharisees were watching if he would heal on the sabbath, that they might find something of which to accuse him. But *he* knew their

thoughts, and said to the man who had the withered hand, Get up, and stand in the midst. And having risen up he stood there. Jesus therefore said to them, I will ask you if it is lawful on the sabbath to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? And having looked around on them all, he said to him, Stretch out thy hand. And he did so and his hand was restored as the other. But *they* were filled with madness, and they spoke together among themselves what they should do to Jesus". I mention this as a solemn warning linked to what Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 1 as to divisions, as to disunity. It is interesting that it was this man's right hand that was withered. How many of us often have a withered right hand? It is a solemn thing to have a withered right hand that you cannot take and stretch out to those of "like precious faith", 2 Peter 1: 1. There is an answer to that withered hand and it is Christ. He says to the man, "Stretch out thy hand". James and Cephas and John saw something in Paul and Barnabas that was very precious and it was what was of Christ. The only way that the withered hand can be stretched out is if we come under the direction and the power of what there is in the "fellowship of his sufferings", in the "fellowship of the apostles", in the "fellowship of the Spirit", and in the "fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord". We come under authority and under the Lordship of what is represented in these four aspects of fellowship.

The highest expression that we will ever have in fellowship is to be at the Lord's supper with those of "like precious faith". We are in fellowship with those of "like precious faith" universally, and it behoves me to be one who has come before Christ that my hand might not be withered, that I might be able to stretch out my hand and be among those who are giving "the right hands of fellowship", extending it to those who have come under the direction in these four characters of fellowship. It searches my own soul to find whether I have come under the direction, the character of those four things. If, by the power of the Spirit of God, as we come together tomorrow, if the Lord leaves us here, we would come together in that spirit, not having a withered hand, so that there might be some special character that would mark every one of us after the service of God. If it does not, you will be marked by what it says at the end of that passage where the Lord had healed that man: you will be marked by "madness". What a horrible thing to be marked by. It comes to the people of God; it is a character of Balak; he sought to curse the people of God through Balaam, "now come, I pray thee, curse me this people." Num 22: 6. What a people we have to do with: Peter could speak of them as a people for a possession, those who are holy to

God. How it behoves me to be under the direction of that blessed One, who desires to make my hand whole, so that I might be able to be among the number of those who can stretch out the “right hands of fellowship”.

May it be so for His Name's sake.

**Calgary**

**6<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

## RENEWING THE MIND

John C Gray

**Romans 12: 1, 2**

**Ephesians 4: 20-24**

I am interested in what our brother has just said to us about the skull, which suggests the emptiness of the mind of man. I wish to highlight these references: “transformed by the renewing of your mind”; and then in Ephesians it is better still: “being renewed in the spirit of your mind”. Renewal, of course, is constantly needed. The Spirit of God helps us in that; indeed, divine Persons all help in relation to the way in which we are not allowed to deviate or wander off the main line. It is very sad that many have taken to use their minds for criticism and for things which are for knocking down rather than for building up. Our minds have to be renewed, therefore.

The first thing about the mind that the Lord draws attention to, I think, is the Philippian mind, “For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2: 5), the going-down mind. That is the start of the believer's experience. Then he moves on to Romans and, of course, in chapter 7, “*I myself with the mind serve God's law*”, v 25. We come to that. Everything in Romans, as we have been taught, is foundational. But then we are tested, practically, as to whether we can keep to that. That is the point really as to the renewal. Renewal means that I need constantly to revert, especially to the Spirit of God, to find that I can fill my mind with Christ, fill my mind with divine Persons, and fill my mind with love for the saints.

The mind is interesting. Of course, we have to keep our hearts. The heart speaks of the affections, our love for Christ, and our love for the saints, a very important thing, not just that we love divine Persons. We cannot love divine Persons and then hate the saints. But then the mind has been described by teachers of earlier times as the battleground between man and Satan. Satan desires to take our minds and divert them to all kinds of things. The world is full of things that our minds can be pitched into. Therefore it is very important in these last days, when Satan is desperately trying to divide and cause disillusion among true believers, that their minds are *renewed*.

And then, “transformed by the renewing of your mind”. We need to have a change. We need to see that “*I myself with the mind serve God's law*” is right, and then the Spirit of God can help us.

Sometimes “we do not know what we should pray for as is fitting, but the Spirit” (chap 8: 26) operates that that might be provided for us in our weaknesses. Wonderful thing that is! Remember the young boy in Kings where the woman had wanted a son, and he went out with his father to the reapers, and then it was, “My head, my head!”, 2 Kings 4: 19. There was something going wrong in relation to the way in which he was thinking, but the solution was, of course, that the prophet brought God to bear on him and brought in revival and new life. That is what our brother has been speaking about - life, according to God. “I am the bread of life” (John 6: 25); that is the key to John 6 really, and the greatness and glory of all that comes in from divine Persons is to affect our minds and control them.

But then I know myself, and I am sure many will agree, that, as Mr Darby says in his hymn,

No infant's changing pleasure  
Is like my wand'ring mind.

And, if I wander, teach me  
Soon back to Thee to flee; (Hymn 51)

Now that is the renewal: 'Soon back to Thee to flee'. It is very important that we therefore control, by the Spirit, what we think and what we do, because our minds really govern what our bodies go to do. People say, 'I am minded to do this' or 'I am minded to go to so and so', but are we minded to show affection for Christ? Are we minded to be here as loving the saints? Are our minds directed that there might be the maintenance of “the unity of the Spirit” (Eph 4: 3) amongst the saints? These things are very important because in our minds we might be influenced by all kinds of things, and Satan is *desperate* to defile them, to undermine them and bring in what is according to the world, as it says here: “And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God”. That is the thing to come to. It is a wonderful matter.

Then we progress, of course. I do not wish to labour the point, but our minds, even at the Supper, at the beginning anyway, can wander, thinking about what has happened, or thinking about anxieties, and thinking about what might happen to this and that. Our minds need to concentrate on what is renewed, that is, according to the Spirit of God's delight to bring in Christ. We are going to see that Man in all His

glory shortly, and that is a wonderful thing, but in the growing time at the present we need to see that our minds are concentrated and then there will be the signs of spiritual growth and development and enrichment for the service of God. That is what it would lead to, I am sure.

There is progress, of course, in these epistles; Paul's prison epistles bring in what is progressive, the foundational side in Romans - "Be not conformed to this world"; but in Colossians - "seek the things which are above", chap 3: 1. Well, it is testing because there is so much to distract. I know what it was at work or business or college or school. There are many things that can divert or distract, but "seek the things which are above". How wonderful that is, and that is progress.

But then when you come to Ephesians, you get "the new man". That is the character of Christ in the saints in testimony. There is only one "new man", of course, but it is the character of the saints, the work of God in you and me in testimony here, and we put that on. We "put off ... the old man" and his thinking; that is the skull. God has condemned that man on the cross; he was condemned and taken into the grave, but the Lord came out of death in new life, a new condition, and now in glory. "Seek the things which are above, where the Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God".

Well, it is a wonderful thing to be "renewed in the spirit of your mind". The spirit is our link with God. "The spirit" returns "unto God who gave it", Eccles 12: 7. "Being renewed in the spirit of your mind" involves that there is a character, by the Spirit of God's service to us, that would help us to keep this renewal moving. You wonder why he should say this to Ephesian saints, but there you are. No matter how much we may think we have progressed in the truth, we need renewal, and we need renewal in the spirit of our minds; that is, the bent or thinking Godward has to be renewed.

Well, I leave these few thoughts with our beloved brethren that we might consider that things that might occupy our minds, things of this world, are negative. They lead to death, no matter whether it is - things you pass by and see in advertising or in the newspapers or on our I-pads or whatever it may be. The Scriptures and communion with divine Persons is the secret to keep our minds stayed on Christ. May we be helped in it for His Name's sake!

**Word in meeting for ministry in Grangemouth**

**11<sup>th</sup> June 2019LIGHT**

## **Martin McLaren**

### **Genesis 1: 3, 4 (to “good”)**

We have already spoken in the reading about some of the beauty of creation, and I am sure everyone in this room will have an appreciation of the greatness and the beauty of God's creation. We do not have to go far to see the plants and the trees, birds and other creatures, all of the things that we can read of here in Genesis that God, the eternal God, the only true God, created. He created everything that we can see and hear, every single thing that we see on this earth.

We read here that “God said, Let there be light. And there was light. And God saw the light that it was good”. Every living thing in this world, everything from the grass to the trees and the insects, the fish, every creature, including you and me, depends on light. We all depend on the light and the warmth of the sun, and so when God created the light here, it says He “saw the light that it was good”. But God has a plan and a purpose for another realm, another sphere, something entirely new where God will shine in love on every saved sinner, every person who has ever put their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what is offered in the glad tidings tonight, dear friend, that you can know God for ever; you can be in His presence for ever; you can enjoy a relationship with God; you can enjoy eternal life, to know God and to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

At the end of the Bible John says, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away” (Rev 21: 1), and then further down in verse 5, “And he that sat on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new”. Everything in this earth will pass away - from the atoms and the elements right up, everything will pass away, and God will make new heavens and earth; it is very difficult to find words to describe this, but we know that it will be completely new. In Revelation 22: 5 it says, “And night shall not be any more, and no need of a lamp, and light of the sun; for the Lord God shall shine upon them”. A Man will be in the centre there. A Man will be the source of light and life. The Lord Jesus Christ will be there and, if you put your faith in Him tonight, you can be there. That One, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the One whom David spoke of in his prophecy at the end of his life, in 2 Samuel 23. He said about the Lord Jesus,

And he shall be as the light of the morning, like the rising of the sun,

A morning without clouds;  
When from the sunshine, after rain,  
The green grass springeth from the earth, v 4.

Because in this creation, darkness has come into this scene. We are all sinners and we must all acknowledge that we are sinners, and so God sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to this earth, and David could say that -

he shall be as the light of the morning, like the rising of the sun,  
A morning without clouds.

We know at the beginning of John's gospel it says, "In him" - that is the Lord Jesus - "In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (v 4), and in verse 9 it also says, "The true light was that which, coming into the world, lightens every man". The Lord Jesus Christ was "the true light" and that true light would shine into your heart tonight. He "lightens every man". The gospel is not just for one particular group of persons, dear friend; it is for everyone, for men and women and children, for every race, no matter what their age. God shone out in the Lord Jesus Christ and, if you let the Lord Jesus Christ shine the light of the love of God into your heart tonight, you can know what David was speaking of, this "morning without clouds". The Lord Jesus Himself when He was here, when He walked on the earth, said, "I am the light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life", John 8: 12. If you follow Him, if you put your faith and trust in Him, He can become the centre of your heart. If you allow His light to shine into your heart, if you follow Him today, you will receive the "light of life", eternal life, and you can have a place secured in that wonderful realm, that eternal realm, where the Lord God will shine on you for ever, and you can know the God who created you as a God of love.

We first need to see what else it says here in the verse we referred to in John. It says, "And the light appears in darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not", John 1: 5. Then further on it says, "men have loved darkness rather than light" (John 3: 19), and each one of us needs to see that there is darkness in us and that there is nothing in us that would deserve this wonderful blessing. There is nothing in me that I can bring before God and say, 'Look at what I have done. I deserve to have an eternity in your presence'. There is nothing I can bring before God that I can say that I have done, or I can offer, for my sins. I think that is why we read "the darkness apprehended it not".

There is a verse in Ephesians which says, "But all things having their true character exposed by the light are made manifest; for that which makes everything manifest is light" (chap 5: 13); and so when the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world, the light exposed the darkness that was in the hearts and the souls of men, and each one of us must accept that the only way we can come into blessing, the only way we can have our eternity secured, is by accepting the light of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus knew that there was nothing in us that God could accept, and so He gave His own life, dear friend. He died for you and for me so that we would not need to bear the judgment of God for what we have done. Wicked men nailed Him to a cross; we spoke of the cross in the reading, and we can see the greatness of all that was accomplished on the cross. They nailed Him to the cross and in the three hours of darkness on the cross, the Lord Jesus bore God's righteous judgment for everything that I have ever done. Believers can say that all the sins that they have ever committed He bore in love for them, so that God could look down on them and only see the good of what the Lord Jesus has done. He would no longer see their sins; He would simply see the wonderful work of the Lord Jesus.

But even after the Lord had died there were still those who tried to work against the light that had shone out. There were those who said when the Lord Jesus was still on the earth, "When will he die, and his name perish?", Ps 41: 5. We know there was one, Saul, who even after the Lord Jesus had died was trying to extinguish the light that was shining in the hearts of those who knew the Lord as their Saviour, and Saul says, speaking to king Agrippa in Acts 26, "I saw, O king, a light above the brightness of the sun, shining from heaven round about me and those who were journeying with me. And, when we were all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against goads. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom *thou* persecutest", v 13-15. There was "a light above the brightness of the sun" shining out of heaven. The Lord Jesus Christ is in heaven; after He died, He remained in the tomb for three days, and then He was raised, and He is now in heaven, enthroned on high, and He is still shining out from heaven. The light of the Lord Jesus Christ is still shining out today, dear friend. The love of God is shining out from heaven and would shine into your heart. If you open your heart, it will become the light of your life. We can read in Isaiah chapter 60 verses 19, 20: "The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness

shall the moon give light unto thee; but Jehovah shall be thine everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for Jehovah shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended". I would just draw to your attention that in verse 19 it says, "The sun" and "the moon", but in verse 20, "**Thy** sun shall no more go down, neither shall **thy** moon withdraw itself". If you put your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ tonight, He can be your Sun; He can be the Light of your life. It was said in the reading that all those who come to the Lord with a need, He will meet their every need, and He will be the light of the entire sphere that God has planned for eternity.

There is another scripture I would like to refer to in Corinthians which sums it up very well: "Because it is the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God", 2 Cor 4: 6. "The God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine", the same God who created the heavens and the earth, and the God we read of at the beginning who said, "Let there be light. And there was light" is shining into your heart tonight; the reason given is: "for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". The Lord Jesus Christ Himself says, "And this is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent", John 17: 3. You, dear friend, can come to know the God of love, the One who sent His Son to die for you, the One who has done everything so that He can have you in His presence and you can know Him now, experience something of that "morning without clouds". You can experience it now.

Now, when the Lord Jesus was here, He also said to those that followed Him, "Ye are the light of the world". This is something I find very testing, but in Matthew chapter 5 the Lord says in verses 14-16, "Ye are the light of the world: a city situated on the top of a mountain cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under the bushel, but upon the lamp-stand, and it shines for all who are in the house. Let your light thus shine before men, so that they may see your upright works, and glorify your Father who is in the heavens". Your heart has been filled with the light of the love of God. Does it shine out, dear friend? When I am at work, do my colleagues, or my friends, see the light that is in my heart? Is it shining out, or does it only shine out when I am here in the meeting? It is something that is very testing but I was greatly encouraged in a reading we had recently in Dundee. We read the first

epistle of John chapter 2. It covers a lot of what I have mentioned already, that our sins have been forgiven and that we have a Man in the glory; there is a Man in heaven. It speaks of “a patron with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (v 1) and it says that the young men have “overcome the wicked one”, v 14. It also says that we have “the unction”, v 20. The Holy Spirit has been given who will teach us and help us. Dear friend, if you are uncertain about whether or not you have the gift of the Holy Spirit, you can ask God to receive Him tonight; He will give you the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit will help you. He will help each one of us in our pathway down here. He can help us to appreciate what God has done for us and to spread abroad the light that is in our hearts.

There is one other verse in that chapter which affected me. It says in verse 8, “because the darkness is passing and the true light already shines”. I would just like to draw attention to this verse in closing to add a note of urgency to the word because “the darkness is passing”. Everything in this world is passing. It says, “the first heaven and the first earth” will pass away, Rev 21: 1. We know that everything in this world will come to an end but “the true light” is shining already. The light that will lighten that eternal sphere, the light of the Lord Jesus Christ, the One whom we can all spend eternity worshipping and praising, the light of the love of God is already shining now, dear friend. I pray that each one here will let the light shine into their hearts and pray that we would all be helped to let the light shine out.

May the Lord bless the word.

**Edinburgh**

**18<sup>th</sup> August 2019**