

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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PEACE

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DCW We have been speaking about some of the great things of God, and we cannot enjoy any of these things except in an atmosphere of peace and of love. So, we know well that wars disturb everything. When you have peace, prosperity usually goes along with it; but when you have war, sorrow and suffering, death, distress and destruction come as a consequence. Then in the end people try to patch up a peace, and of course they are left with a country and an economy that are impoverished, and conditions are less favourable than when they started off. In men's affairs, there are many examples of that. At the end of the First World War, there was what was called a peace treaty, the Treaty of Versailles, but it simply laid the foundations for greater conflicts to follow, and those conflicts are still continuing as a consequence of that.

But this peace that the Lord has made, and has purchased at such cost, is something that cannot be changed or broken in upon. So, He comes in on this resurrection evening among His own, this little fearful company; and how reassuring it must have been to them, not only to see the Lord, but also to have this gracious word from the Lord Himself, "Peace be to you". And then He repeats it, and He shows them His hands and His side. I thought, then, that we might consider what it has cost Him to make that peace, "having made peace by the blood of his cross". It is something for us to contemplate and enjoy, I believe.

DMW You would say we would find this peace by experience, over against the world, as we are in it but not of it? Would it be because it is from another world?

DCW Yes; there is no peace in this world. Jeremiah quotes those who say, "Peace, peace! when there is no peace", Jer 6: 14. So there never can be a lasting peace among men generally in a scene which has cast out and rejected the Lord.

DMW And there are various attempts, of course, in the alliances, the bundles referred to in Matthew 13: 30. They shall be burnt up, taken for judgment; but this is peace, a lasting peace, is it not? Was it seen first in Himself, as He experienced what was so against what was in His spirit?

We have had, "Jesus wept", John 11: 35? He was the only One who could do anything about the whole weight of things, and bring in something that man has never known.

DCW So, "*he is our peace*", Eph 2: 14. And one of His titles in Isaiah is, "Prince of Peace", chap 9: 6.

DMW So the world, literally, needs its Prince, its true Prince, and He will bring that in His righteous reign; there will be peace, there will be balance even in the lower orders of creation. How wonderful it is that we can have everything from Him in having His Spirit, which He imparted to the disciples. This can be known now in the circle where eternal life is.

DCW Yes; I was just thinking as we sang the hymn that our brother gave out, about those ideal conditions to which we look forward, such as rest. We sang about the paradise of God, Hymn 206. The great longing and yearning of each one of us, I am sure, is that we should know something of those conditions even now.

TRV So is that why, in the portion you have read, it is on the resurrection day? It is after death: we can have part with Him beyond death. So we have the environment in which it can be enjoyed; it is behind the closed doors. The doors were shut through fear of the Jews: is that the area in which we enjoy it?

DCW I think so. So, tomorrow morning, as we come together to remember Him, I trust that we will experience something of that. It raises practical issues with us: if we are not at peace amongst ourselves, how can we rightly enter into these things? There may be brethren in this company, or other companies, who are at odds with one another, and yet if we come together tomorrow morning, we are all *professing* to come together on the same ground. So the exercise is to come as those who have proved - or examined - themselves. There is always that possibility, is there not, that we can get right, and get right quickly because of what the Lord has done? So, in Paul's writing about the Lord's supper, conveying the truth that he received from the Lord Himself, there is no indication that people are to stop breaking bread: "let a man prove himself, and thus eat of the bread, and drink of the cup", 1 Cor 11: 28. There is therefore no excuse for persons to stay away from the Lord's supper; there is the ability, and facility, and the help of the Holy Spirit, to get things right.

APD Is there a connection, therefore, between righteousness and

peace?

DCW Yes. There certainly is. These things are really cumulative, are they not - “righteousness, faith, love, peace, 2 Tim 2: 22? We have “the righteousness of faith” (Rom 10: 6), and we have been justified. All these things are for our help and for our enjoyment; for our establishment. The enemy constantly seeks to break in and disrupt that peace. That is one of the things that Paul warned against in Acts 20, and obviously the enemy had succeeded to an extent. Not only would there be the grievous wolves, but he says also, “from among your own selves shall rise up men speaking perverted things”, Acts 20: 30. We have got to be careful about what we listen to, and how we react.

DTH Can you help us about what the Lord says, “I leave peace with you; I give my peace to you”, John 14: 27? He really gave them what was their inheritance before His death.

DCW That is helpful; He says, “I leave peace with you; I give *my* peace to you”. Peace is a general term, but then the question is whether each one of us knows what it is for *His* peace to be with us and in us; and being enjoyed by us.

DMW One of the scriptures read says, “The Lord is near”. And in the same epistle, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both the willing and the working according to his good pleasure”, Phil 2: 12, 13. So would that help as to being careful, and the exercise not to intrude into the peace that I think we have typically in Psalm 133, the area of eternal life?

DCW Yes; and then there is the exhortation to “seek peace, and pursue it”, Ps 34: 14. We read in our first reading about “those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart”, 2 Tim 2: 22. If we have bad motives in our heart, if we have wrong feelings in our heart towards others, we cannot have a pure heart.

DMW What you say is helpful; just to look at that phrase, “pure heart”, as having no mixed motives at all.

DTH Would that be a demonstration of “the meekness and gentleness of the Christ”, 2 Cor 10: 1? There is no mixed motive there. I noticed in the scriptures you read that the sufferings of Christ are alluded to, or are witnessed. I wonder how much the sufferings of Christ are considered in the care meeting?

DCW Well, that passage goes with my exercise, that we should be

affected by these things, and to think of what it cost the Lord that there might be peace. It is also said, “coming, **he** has preached the glad tidings of peace to you who were afar off, and the glad tidings of peace to those who were nigh”, Eph 2: 17. The whole thrust of the glad tidings is that there might be peace; in order that persons might have peace towards God, and that we might enjoy that peace, and we might have peace within ourselves, and that there might be peace with one another in the company to which we are privileged to belong.

AML Would it be right to say that “*my peace*” gives a touch of what is mutual?

DCW Well, His peace is distinct, but then we are to share it mutually.

AML I wondered if the Lord would have delight in a mutual way, if we are in the enjoyment of it; because it comes from Himself and He has joy in seeing this taking form in His own.

DCW That is right. So there must have been great joy in His heart at this time. If we read at the end of Mark's gospel, we might despair because “he reproached them with their unbelief and hardness of heart” (chap 16: 14); and there is very little said about the activities of the Lord after the resurrection in Mark's gospel. There is a great deal more, of course, in Luke and in John. So this must have delighted John's heart; he may have been writing up to seventy years after the Lord said these things, and yet the words, the enjoyment, were as fresh as on the day when the Lord spoke them. So it should be for us too.

DJW Does the way He goes on to show them His hands and His side have a particular bearing on the peace that He speaks of? In Luke, it is His hands and His feet (chap 24: 40); I suppose that relates more to what He has done, and where He has been. But are His hands and His side in John more connected with, “The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand”, John 3: 35? Do you think His side represents what has come to light that cannot be disturbed?

DCW I think so; and then we might see in it an allusion to the assembly, going back to the type of Adam and Eve - “this was taken out of a man”, Gen 2: 23. So I think there is a distinct allusion there to “the Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it”, Eph 5: 25.

DJW I think that FER taught us that peace was everything in complete order as under Christ (see vol 14 p284). It is not just the

absence of conflict; His hands bring everything into subjection to Himself.

DCW So one definition of peace is 'security without fear'. If you are in peaceful circumstances, you are secure, and there is no fear of an enemy coming and disturbing that peace.

KDD I am reminded of what Mr Warren Lock used to say, that men think of peace as being without war or conflict, whereas peace really comes from the atmosphere and conditions of another Man in another world.

DCW That is just it. There is an expression that 'we have made peace but created a desert'; but the Lord, by making peace, has created a whole area of things in which we can be restful, and in which we can enjoy His presence and enjoy the fellowship of those who call upon Him out of a pure heart.

MJK I am thinking of what Paul says in 2 Thessalonians, "But the Lord of peace himself give you peace continually in every way", chap 3: 16.

DCW That was a good aspiration on the part of Paul; I am sure each of us would echo that; it is what we would desire for one another.

DJK And that which is born out of His side is Himself - which would link with "the Lord ... himself".

DCW Yes, "the Lord ... himself". These references to "himself" are important, when He Himself comes into any situation everything changes. Maybe we see that particularly in Luke 24: there was speculation; there were doubts and fears. The two had returned from Emmaüs and were recounting their experience, but "as they were saying these things, he **himself** stood in their midst, and says to them, Peace", v 36.

CJB Does peace then require the Lord's presence? I was wondering about what we were saying. In a way, we have His Spirit, which brings in an atmosphere of peace. I would like to know more about what that atmosphere of peace means.

DCW It is something that is available to us; it is not something we have to aspire to, or wait for. The exercise is that we might be in the present enjoyment of peace and restful conditions. So it is important that relationships should be right; otherwise things will not be as mutual

as they are where there is confidence in one another, love amongst ourselves all being of one mind and thinking one thing.

TRV To connect with the last question, and the remark that peace is not just the absence of conflict, I was thinking of the garden of Eden. You could not think of a much more pleasant environment, and there was no conflict there, but we would connect peace rather with what you opened up with in this portion: when He showed to them His hands and His side, the disciples rejoiced. So peace is always connected with Christ, is it not?

DCW It is, yes. In the garden there was an intruder; we sang in that hymn about conditions where there is no intruder. So the Lord comes in and we have this area that is spoken of as the paradise of God. What a wonderful prospect that is -

Free, our peaceful feet may venture
In the paradise of God.

MTH You mentioned earlier about seeking peace, pursuing peace; and I was thinking in a practical sense that we may find peace for a while, and it gets away from us; we may be distracted. Would peace involve movement and exercise on our part?

DCW Well, I suppose that comes in that other scripture: "seek peace, and pursue it". That would require movement; but then, peace having been secured, there is rest, so it is,

Rest - where toil shall be no more.

GMC Peace is linked with sacrifice in Leviticus, the peace-offering; I wondered if that links with what we are speaking about, that it requires exercise on our part? It was slaughtered at the entrance of the tent of meeting; it would have been seen.

DCW Yes; so that was a reflection of something that that offerer was enjoying. It was not just a mere gesture or token that he was sacrificing for other people to see, but in so doing he was expressing his own feelings, and the security and peace that he enjoyed.

GMC The expression of that is really the outward enjoyment of Christ, is it not?

DCW So I suppose those who brought the offerings had to be selective, and look for what was the best. God has to rebuke the people in the time of Malachi's prophecy about the lame and defective

animals they were bringing (chap 1: 8); but He exhorts them to “Bring the whole tithe into the treasure-house, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith”, chap 3: 10. He promises to open the windows of the heavens. So God is not indebted to any of us, is He?

SWS I was thinking about the comment as to nearness; it has come to mind that there was one who was in the bosom of Jesus, John 13: 23. I can think of no more peaceful place than that, to be in the bosom of Jesus. It says of us in Ephesians, “having no hope, and without God” (chap 2: 12); we were “afar off” but we “are become nigh by the blood of the Christ”, v 13. It says, “*he* is our peace”; it is a very precious thing to lay hold of that.

DCW So, as well as being restful there, John was finding support; he was leaning on His breast, v 25. We find that we can rely upon the Lord, not only enjoying His company, which is very precious, but also enjoying the reliance and confidence and trust we can repose in Him.

DJW I think you had more in mind about how the peace was made? I think you were thinking about “the blood of his cross”.

DCW Yes, we think of the terrible agonies that the Lord suffered. We have those agonies in the Gethsemane; and there were sufferings at the hands of the chief priests, and the Roman soldiers, those who buffeted and spat upon him; but none of those sufferings could make atonement. Atonement could only be made by the offering of Himself. It says, “this he did once for all in having offered up himself”, Heb 7: 27. So through the sacrifice of Christ God is enabled - we speak reverently - to be restful in His own circumstances, but He would have us enjoy that peace and rest that have been secured at such a cost to the Lord Himself. I think we do well to ponder these things. One of the scriptures we read was “consider well him who endured so great contradiction from sinners against himself”, Heb 12: 3.

DJW I thought that the setting in Colossians suggested that what was made was for the Godhead itself. We may confine the thought of peace to what we enjoy, but there is something far transcending that; there is what has been done for God Himself.

DCW Yes; I am glad you bring that out because the greatness of this Person is emphasised. This chapter is akin to what we have at the beginning of Ephesians; it is difficult to know where to stop as we go down it. I was thinking of this verse, “in him all the fulness of Godhead was pleased to dwell”. And yet, “Him who knew not sin he has made sin

for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him", 2 Cor 5: 21. Think of the enormity of what man did to the Lord; no greater crime was ever committed, but then there are two sides to this whole great matter: "him, given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye, by the hand of lawless men, have crucified and slain", Acts 2: 23. So this was all in mind, was it not? Peter speaks of our being "redeemed, not by corruptible things ... but by precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot ... foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world", 1 Pet 1: 18-20. So all God's counsels and purposes were looking forward to this, and God had the remedy in view before sin came in.

GMC Several of the scriptures you read speak of "the God of peace". In what the Lord gives us in John, He is acting as "the Prince of peace". I wonder if it helps us to see that that is where the source of peace is. It is not *our* idea of peace, but it is all in Him, is it not?

DCW So as we said at the outset, all these four things we have spoken about - "righteousness, faith, love, peace" - *of necessity* have their origin in God Himself.

HWJ I was thinking about the matter of the Lord saying, "I leave **peace** with you; I give *my* peace to you". The remarkable thing is that He was at peace, knowing all the time the suffering that was ahead of Him. And I was wondering if it does not help to think of that in view of the saints and the suffering they have had all through the dispensation - He was leaving that kind of peace for the saints to have in spite of the suffering that would come in. There are many that are suffering at the present time, and it is wonderful to get the sense of the Lord's peace when there is suffering going on.

DCW Yes; He is the great Exemplar in all these things; He has suffered as none other has suffered, so He can sympathise with us in all our infirmity. The Lord showed true affections when He was here; we read often of His having compassion on persons. We speak reverently about His Manhood, of course, but He was a Person with sincere and deep and true feelings, was He not?

WSC Do you think that Stephen got a sense of this peace when the heavens were opened for Stephen, Acts 7: 56? He saw the Son of man standing at the right hand of God, and then suffered awful martyrdom. He exhibited a non-belligerent attitude.

DCW Yes, that was even visible: they saw his face as the face of an

angel. I do not think this was taken away by the pain and suffering that followed. It was a face that was pacific in its appearance, and an expression of the inward peace he was enjoying.

KRO In connection with that, in the scripture referred to in John, the Comforter is brought in just before that; the Holy Spirit is referred to as the Comforter, and that would not be coincidental. He would bring the sense of that peace, the realisation of the peace that has been made.

DCW So the Lord uses language that I suppose we would not have used: "It is profitable for you that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you", John 16: 7. The service of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, is therefore vital to the enjoyment of these things. He has many activities and functions; we were speaking earlier of what we owe to the Spirit by way of restraint, but think too of His guidance: "he shall guide you into all the truth (John 16: 13); "and will bring to your remembrance all the things which I have said to you", John 14: 26.

HTF A feature that is especially linked with peace is prosperity. I wondered if that was particularly illustrated in the establishment of Solomon's reign; and the result of that. You spoke about a desert after a war, but what the queen of Sheba saw is described in detail. It took her spirit away; it was substantial: it was what had God's service in mind and the enrichment of it, 1 Kings 10: 4-9.

DCW So it was when she saw "his ascent by which he went up to the house of God", it was then that "there was no more spirit in her".

MTH I think what our brother has brought forward is helpful. I was thinking as well that there is wonderful blessing in the Lord's own words, "Blessed the peace-makers, for *they* shall be called sons of God", Matt 5: 9. I was thinking that that is particularly associated with the pursuit of peace, and are peace-makers particularly connected with the thought our brother has brought up?

DCW We read of somebody being "a son of peace", Luke 10: 6. You could go along with that person, could you not, one who was "a son of peace"?

We might move to 1 Peter. He says first, "be of one mind"; so that is vital if we are to enjoy peace. We have made reference to that already; we have that exhortation in Philippians, where two sisters who were not of one mind. They were exhorted individually: "I exhort

Euodia, and exhort Syntyche", chap 4: 2. If persons are not enjoying relationships, each of them has to make a move.

TRV Yes, that portion you refer to is very helpful: "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus", chap 2: 5. It is not some mind we agree to have, some set of rules, or creed; but it is the mind in Christ. So it is the mind that is referred to here: "finally, be all of one mind"; it is really the mind of Christ.

DCW It is; so that has been described as the mind to go down. We naturally like to fight our corner, to get an advantage over somebody else. We like to feel we are right and the other person is wrong, but if persons were of one mind there would not be such divergences. The question is, "Whence come wars and whence fightings among you?", James 4: 1. Joseph knew the measure of his brothers, did he not? He told them, "Do not quarrel on the way", Gen 45: 24.

SWS The thought of unity is extremely important in relation to your exercise as to peace: "using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the **uniting** bond of peace", Eph 4: 3. It is a principle that God has established.

DCW Yes, so it is not to be an inactive matter; maintenance involves effort on our part - "seek peace, and pursue it". We are not just to let things lapse; if there is something to settle, it is better to go and seek it out. The Lord spoke about the offering by the altar and something was at work in the conscience of the offerer. Well, he is to "leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go, be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift", Matt 5: 24.

DMW I am glad you said that; I was thinking about the two examples in Matthew's gospel, Matthew 5 and 18, where you are not waiting for the other party; you are taking it up yourself. So, as has been brought out by our brother, the principle of reduction, seen in the going-down mind, results in peace, and expansion into a fixed matter which is the unity of the Spirit; that is what it results in.

DCW Yes, "in the uniting bond of peace"; it is uniting not dividing. So our brother spoke about Gideon last evening, and Gideon had to learn that there had to be reduction; he was not going to have to rely on the largish army that he had assembled. It was reduced and then a test was applied to find those who would be worthy to engage in the conflict.

DMW There could not have been victory otherwise; and so it is with

ourselves in our relations, that there is no victory unless each of us take it upon ourselves to reconcile, or be in the gain of reconciliation.

DCW So what good is it for us to establish a point, what profit is it, or what do we gain from it?

DTH Is this the value of the Lord's supper and the way Paul speaks of it? He says, "the communion of the blood of the Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of the Christ?", 1 Cor 10: 16?

DCW Well, that brings us back to, "having made peace by the blood of his cross". The Lord says, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood", and He speaks of it being "poured out for you", Luke 22: 20. There is no reserve, no possibility of reserve on His part, or of retaining anything or holding anything back. He "gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously", 1 Pet 2: 23. He "by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God", Heb 9: 14.

DMW The cup bears contemplation on our part, does it not? It suggests a disposition to go all the way, a disposition of love personally by Christ, a divine disposition of God; and we are brought into that area of things. Should we not therefore be disposed in our thinking to be in the gain of reconciliation? The Supper helps us in our relations with one another.

DCW Can we take it lightly? We would have to ask ourselves, if we were not in the gain of reconciliation.

DJK It goes much further than that, does it not? We might have said in relation to Onesimus that seeking peace would have put him back in the place of a bondman, but pursuing it recognised him as a brother in the Lord, do you think, Philem v 16?

DCW Yes, so Onesimus was not only to be restored as a brother, but he was also to be profitable. That would raise another question with us: how profitable are we? Why do we have silences among brothers?

MJK In this section you have read, it speaks of blessing; can you help us as to the connection there? It says in verse 9, "blessing others, because ye have been called to this, that ye should inherit blessing". 1 Corinthians 10 speaks of "The cup of blessing which we bless".

DCW I am sure there must be a connection with that, so that it is a very rich inheritance that we have. It is something too that we can

share with others.

DMW Is the way this scripture presents reconciliation really what we are getting at? It is necessary for a new creation response; new creation follows reconciliation.

DCW The old man could never be reconciled; “our old man has been crucified with him”, Rom 6: 6. If new creation comes in there is a new creature, somebody different. Physical character may not have changed, although Christianity often brings a change even in a person's appearance; that is the outward man. But “the inward is renewed day by day”, 2 Cor 4: 16. That would not doubt be the work of the Holy Spirit.

DJW Would this little touch that he brings in - “tender-hearted” - link with our previous conversation about love? Is love not very sensitive to anything that might disturb peace? It is easy to get hard-hearted; the course of the testimony may make us insular and hard-hearted in relation to difficulties, but we can remain “tender-hearted”? The presentation here is really about how it would affect the Lord's feelings.

DCW Quite so. The Lord takes account of these things. Remember that man Nabal; he spurned what we might call a gracious overture (1 Sam 25: 10), and his heart became as a stone, v 10. So we have got to be careful that sometimes conditions can become fixed. Paul says, “if ye bite and devour one another” (Gal 5: 15); well, what happens?

DMW The Lord eventually had to say, “your house is left unto you”, Luke 13: 35.

DCW He adds the word “desolate” in Matthew 23: 38.

APD Do you think the teaching of the year of release would help us, Deut 15: 9? It speaks about relaxing the hand, v 12. I am thinking of the reference to Onesimus and Philemon.

DCW So we are not to be grasping, are we? To relax the hand might well have had to be forced on the person who was the master. It might have been a very reluctant relaxation, but the Lord loves tender-heartedness and free giving; free and open relations with one another. And in those conditions, we can prosper. Reference has been made to Psalm 133, brethren dwelling together in unity, and “there hath Jehovah commanded the blessing, life for evermore”, v 3.

APD Paul says, “put this to my account” (Philem 18), as if he is

wealthy in the Spirit, do you think?

DCW And he reminded Philemon what *he* owed to Paul, v 19. It is a very interesting little epistle, as we study the various ways in which Paul approaches the question. He leaves it as a sort of obligation or duty upon them, but then there is another obligation in the fellowship, as a brother.

APD He is able to meet the matter because he has got wealth in his soul: “if he ... owe anything to thee, put this to my account”. If we are poor, we are unable to administer grace, and then peace, are we not?

DCW That is right. I might mention as an aside, going back now to 1945, we had once had a reading after the prayer meeting in our locality with Mr James Taylor on the Epistle to Philemon, and I remember that the theme was the value of a brother. So it is important that we should value one another, is it not?

DTH Paul could withstand Peter to the face and adjust him; the brotherly covenant was not broken: it was strengthened.

DCW So that comes out in Peter’s epistle: “according as our beloved brother Paul also has written to you” (2 Pet 3: 15); there were no hard feelings left behind. I suppose that is one of the desirable features of getting things right with one another; every matter should be dealt with and no root of bitterness left, but a full and total and deep appreciation of the value of each one to the Lord.

RG The effect of love in practice brings out enrichment, does it not?

DCW Yes; so we can speak about these things, but my exercise is that we should operate them, apply them, enjoy them, and share them together.

AML In Philemon, Paul says, “above a bondman, a beloved brother” (v 16); he adds that affectionate term.

DCW Yes, “a beloved brother”. The epistle to the Colossians may well have been carried by the hand of Onesimus. I have often pictured the way he might be received, this runaway slave going to the door of the master he had wronged and presenting this letter of commendation from Paul. But Philemon was also commended, and his wife; and I suppose the other person mentioned, Archippus, might have been their son. So there was a household that was going to be enriched by the

great matter of forgiveness.

DJW I was thinking of the way in which Paul addresses most of his letters to the saints - “grace and peace”. Is grace the resource to maintain the peace? We might wonder how it is going to work out, but there is a resource in grace to establish the peace.

DCW Yes, that is good. I had thought of that, that almost every epistle opens in that way; so that everything is set at rest even if there are perhaps some harsh things to be said. Some adjustments had to be brought in; he could not always commend what was in a place to which he was writing, but he would assure each of his hearers that he was thinking in a positive way about them. His intention was that they should come into the enjoyment of that grace and peace.

Our next chapter is in Philippians. This starts off on a good note: “Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice”. So he emphasises this, and we should be joyful people: Christianity may be thought of in so many quarters as a sort of gloomy religion; in days gone by some believers used to dress in a gloomy fashion and put on a gloomy appearance, but it is to be a matter of rejoicing. But we cannot rejoice properly unless we are at peace.

TRV So in the portion you began with in John, the disciples rejoiced; but this passage was written to those who had not seen the Saviour, and we are still to rejoice:

Hark, happy saints! (Hymn No 7)

we often sing.

DCW Yes:

Hark! happy saints! loud lift your voice,
Tell to the world **how** we rejoice.

So the great thing then is love for the Lord: “whom, having not seen, ye love, on whom though not now looking ... ye exult with joy unspeakable and filled with the glory”, 1 Pet 1: 8.

DMW Does it stimulate a state to be free with God? It says, “by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God” - that is His side. Does it not give liberty with God to be in that state of rejoicing? And then we are able to carry everything, which includes eating the sin-offering in a holy place, and making the thing our own, Lev 10: 17.

DCW Yes indeed. So that is in the Old Testament: “make them joyful in my house of prayer”, Isa 56: 7. The prayer meeting is an occasion when we can lift up our hearts. Very often, we forget the thanksgiving part of it. We may all be good at making requests and receiving things, but very often we do not show the gratitude even in practical things. In everyday matters if somebody gives us a gift, we should be thankful for that. It is a common feature of the age, and particularly among younger people, that things are taken for granted, and they do not think it is necessary to thank the donor.

TRV So would you suggest then that it is correct for us to announce the prayer meeting as a time for prayer and thanksgiving? And would this portion before us be a guide as to our thoughts - a note of praise and thanksgiving before we touch on the practical needs in the Lord's assembly?

DCW Yes, if I am announcing the prayer meeting, I always announce it as a meeting for prayer *and* thanksgiving.

KDD One of the ten lepers that was cleansed returned giving thanks, Luke 17: 16. The condition he was brought into would have given him a lot of peace.

DCW That is right. He was a stranger; the Jews took things for granted, but the stranger was the one who returned to give God thanks.

PRM We often find in the prayer meeting that we get through to the peace of God. We have a lot of cares, and a lot of troubles that we lay out before God, but we get through to the fact that He is over all these things.

DCW Yes; I think from experience that we find the prayer meeting a restful occasion, and an occasion for mutuality. I think it would be a rare meeting where we had a silent brother who could not get to his feet, and say even five words.

DJW I was thinking of what you said as to rejoicing, along with your subject to “pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace”; that is normal Christianity. We are in the profession, which may answer to what Paul refers to as “a great house” with vessels to honour and dishonour; and there are now very mixed conditions in the profession, but what you arrive at is normal Christianity, is it not?

DCW Exactly. We should not be occupied - or at least over-occupied - with what may go on in Christendom in general. Our first

occupation should be with the Lord, and we share that joy, that peace, in the company of others.

DTH What do you think Paul's objective was when he said, "The Lord is near"?

DCW Well, for one thing, he speaks in 1 Thessalonians 4: 17 of "we, the living who remain"; that is one view. But then it is so that the Lord is near now, and the Lord is observing things. The Lord is near to each one of us; Paul had that personal experience when he had the "thorn for the flesh" (2 Cor 12: 7), and the Lord spoke to him in an affectionate way. When he is writing to Timothy, he says, "no man stood with me ... But the Lord stood with me, and gave me power, that through me the proclamation might be fully made", 2 Tim 4: 16, 17. I am sure each one of us has had - or should have had - such an experience of the Lord; particularly in times of trouble. He gives us His own comfort and his reassurance; and a fresh sense of His interest in us.

RG This really helps us in our thinking. It goes on to say, "and the peace of God, which surpasses every understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts by Christ Jesus". It should really help us in how we think about things.

DCW So, do you think peace with God would make a peaceful person? Many nations have leaders who think in warlike terms; and that affects not only their immediate circle but it affects the whole country as well.

RG So "your hearts" has to do with our affections.

DCW That is a good word for the young people: "remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth" (Eccl 12: 1); and we also have, "My son, give me thy heart", Prov 23: 26.

MTH Do you think it is helpful to understand that the cause of issues is not just persons: "our struggle is not against blood and flesh", Eph 6: 12? Knowing that the Lord is near is the guard, the place of peace?

DCW So he tells us there that our struggle *is* "against spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies".

JRB I was thinking of the list of things here that we are to think upon: I think it is worthy of note that they are all positive; it is negative thinking that brings in discouragement, and troubled hearts and thoughts. I think there is a weakness with us that we allow what is negative in our thoughts, which affect our hearts. It is what is positive here that we are

to focus upon.

DCW Yes, I am glad you bring that in; so these thoughts would *lead* to a pure heart, would they not? We have been speaking of what comes *out of* the heart of man, dreadful things; the Lord speaks of them. But these things having entry into the heart would ensure that the pure heart is there.

MTH Do you think this would be the occupation of the “one mind” that you read of in Peter’s epistle - “be all of one mind”? They would be thinking on these positive things that our brother has brought to our attention.

DCW Yes, and Paul goes on to say, “think the same thing ... thinking one thing”, Phil 2: 2. This would be “the same thing”?

MTH I was thinking of that earlier; you spoke in your opening remarks about treaties of men and so on, but peace is not a matter of whether we agree to disagree, but, “think the same thing”.

DCW Yes; so the people who make those treaties are all thinking *different* things; they profess to have a certain common end or objective, but in practice each one of them retains his own thoughts.

AML When Paul draws attention to the features “both learned, and received, and heard, and seen” in him, would that really be his spirit and affection? It is not so much the authority as the spirit of Paul: “let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”?

DCW Yes, so Paul speaks about his ways as they are in Christ, 1 Cor 4: 17.

APD Would it promote our peace to be submissive about judgments arrived at among us?

DCW Oh yes; I would say that is bound to apply; we have to honour the authority and responsibility of a local meeting. We must be prepared for the Lord to make manifest if a judgment is wrong. We have quoted earlier that “righteousness and peace have kissed each other”, Ps 85: 10. So there is a coming together of all these wondrous features, for the advancement and blessing of each one of us; so we are all to be of one mind about these matters.

BS Would these things characterise what we have in “a man in Christ”, 2 Cor 12: 2. We have there what cannot be touched by the enemy: we have that in “a man in Christ”. I was thinking of Paul and

Silas in Acts 16, they were bound in prison and beaten, and their lives were at stake; and yet they were singing praises to God and worshipping Him, v 25. The “man in Christ” cannot be touched; the enemy may be able to touch what we have physically: they touched Paul and Silas but they could not touch what they had as “a man in Christ”.

DCW That is right. So, as we have peace within ourselves, and are conscious of these other great matters of which we have been speaking; these are things that cannot be taken from us. These are possessions that have been given to us by the Lord Himself, and nothing can disturb the peace of a believer who has his mind centred on Christ.

BS I was thinking too that *these* are the things that are important for our peace: what we have as “a man in Christ”. Other things are not so important. Even if Paul and Silas were beaten in prison, they had “a man in Christ” which could not be touched. They had it and that was important.

DCW So “a man in Christ” brings a great many things before us. Paul heard things that could not be uttered, 2 Cor 12: 4. No doubt he heard much that shaped and guided and coloured his thinking, and his expressions in his epistles.

JRB We get a very positive suggestion when Ruth and Naomi came to Bethlehem, and Ruth found herself in the allotment of Boaz. It says that “Boaz came from Bethlehem; and he said to the reapers, Jehovah be with you! And they said to him, Jehovah bless thee!”, Ruth 2: 4. What a happy atmosphere there was in that local meeting; you can see how the Lord's interests would prosper in that kind of an atmosphere.

DCW That was a place that the Lord had visited, was it not? “Jehovah had visited his people to give them bread”, Ruth 1: 6. God has visited us also and given us some sustenance, something to carry us forward.

TRV Is that why, in these verses you have had us read in Philippians 4, “the God of peace” is mentioned? It is not the Lord of peace, and it is not *my* peace; why is it “the God of peace”?

DCW I suppose everything proceeds from that One, but I thought it might be a fitting conclusion to what we have had before us, that the

God of peace might be with us.

Reading at three-day meetings in Denton

26th March 2016

Key to initials: -

J R Bellamy, Vancouver; C J Brien, Aberdeen ID; G M Chellberg, Wheaton; W S Chellberg, Wheaton; A P Devenish, Edmonton; K D Drever, Calgary; H T Franklin, Grimsby; R Gardiner, Aberdeen, Scotland; M T Holland, Calgary; D T Howie, Edmonton; H W Jensen, Los Angeles; D J Klassen, Aberdeen ID; M J Klassen, Aberdeen ID; A M Lidbeck, Aberdeen ID; P R Mason, Warrenpoint; K R Oliver, Denton; B Selman, Denton; S W Selman, Denton; T R VanderHoek, Denton; D M Welch, Denton; D C White, Londonderry, D J Willetts, Birmingham

GOD'S GLORY SHOWN TO ISAIAH AND PAUL

Ernest W Hogan

2 Chronicles 26: 1, 2 (to “Judah”), 4-6 (to “Gath”), 16-18 (to “king”), 19-21 (to “being a leper”), 23

Isaiah 6: 1-9 (to “Go”)

Acts 7: 54-60; 8: 1 (to “killed”); 9: 3-12, 16, 17 (to “me”)

I had an impression to say something about Isaiah and Saul of Tarsus. I was thinking a little about the commissions each of these men had. Isaiah's was in relation to the glad tidings, the gospel; as we know, he is often referred to as the gospel prophet or the preacher of the Old Testament. How many of us have drawn often from the prophet Isaiah in relation to the gospel! Then in relation to Paul I was thinking a little about his commission in relation to the formation and building up of the assemblies.

That led me to think about what went before that, hence we come to this king that we read about in Chronicles, king Uzziah, because it was in the year of his death that Isaiah had the vision. Isaiah himself said that he “saw the Lord ... high and lifted up”. I rather think that it was this death was what affected him in relation to the situation he found himself in. I did not want to say too much about Uzziah because, as we know, he failed, and we can all fail, but some positive things come into Scripture that we could perhaps draw attention to. Uzziah was only sixteen, he was a young man, when he was made king instead of his father Amaziah. He had a lot of responsibility on his shoulders and initially he seemed to discharge that responsibility well. It says in verse 5, “And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God”. I think that is important: Uzziah sought God, and he sought Him in the days of the prophet. I think that we can learn from that that our blessing is in seeking God. Scripture says, “Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near”, Isa 55: 6. That verse has often been used in the gospel, but I think it is important that we seek Jehovah, particularly in the area of responsibility such as Uzziah was in. It says, “... and in the days that he sought Jehovah, God made him to prosper”. That is good; and I think we can take something positive out of that.

Unfortunately, Uzziah failed. In the later section of the chapter it says, “But when he became strong his heart was lifted up to his downfall” (or 'to act corruptly' as note 'a' says). There are dangers in

becoming independent of God because he was blessed in the days that he sought Jehovah, but I think he began to act independently, and he began to act corruptly, and he “was lifted up to his downfall”. It says that he burnt “incense upon the altar of incense”, which was a matter for the priests. He moved out of his orbit. If we move independently of God, beloved brethren, we move out of our orbit; and we see in Uzziah the dangers of a lawless person trying to act as the priest should act. I do not want to draw attention to the past, but we have seen that in previous history; those of my generation will remember problems like that. It goes on to speak of leprosy rising up in his forehead. It was a sad end to what we might say was a good beginning; the sad thing is that he died a leper.

There are other instances of lepers in Scripture. On Lord's day we were reminded of one who was healed and got the blessing. We are reminded too of the ten lepers in the New Testament; one returned and gave glory to God, and the Lord said, “but the nine, where are they?”, Luke 17: 17. I think the Lord would maybe just raise that question with us at this time as to where the nine are, and if there is anybody here who perhaps has not yet answered to the call of the glad tidings and the claims of the Lord Jesus as Saviour over them by asking in relation to the breaking of bread, then the Lord would say, 'Where are you tonight?'; “but the nine, where are they?”. One got the blessing and we are glad of every one that is recovered. I did not intend to say as much as that in relation to Uzziah but I think the positive details of his reign are important.

It was in the year of his death that Isaiah got this view of “the Lord ... high and lifted up”. I suppose he had seen what was mortal, and he got a view of what was immortal. He also got a view of what was transient and a view of what was permanent; it says, “Seraphim were standing above him”. We know seraphim witness to and maintain the holiness of divine Persons, but, beloved, they are also administrators of the grace of God. I think Isaiah came into that benefit because he had a sense of the greatness of the One that he saw, and also his own weakness, his own insufficiency. I think the Lord would perhaps impress us with that as we have a sense of His greatness and His glory. How puny we are in relation to the glory, but then there is a real blessing, and Isaiah came to it. He said, “Woe unto me! for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of

hosts”.

What a view Isaiah had and, as having that view, and taking the position of lowliness and need, he was open for one of the seraphim to administer the blessing. It says, “And one of the seraphim flew unto me, and he had in his hand a glowing coal, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar”. It reminds us of the Lord Jesus and the way that He went; it reminds us that there was no alleviation of the suffering for Him. Speaking very carefully and reverently, there were no tongs for the Lord Jesus: He had to suffer at the hands of a holy God in relation to the matter of sin and sins. He went that way, and He went that way willingly, beloved, and He went that way for you and for me. The One that Isaiah saw in His glory is the same One as it says in chapter 53: 10: “When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see a seed, he shall prolong his days”. It was that One who “made His soul an offering for sin”, beloved, on your account and on my account.

Well, Isaiah got the blessing. It says, “Behold this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin expiated”. What a blessing Isaiah came into and, as having got that blessing, he was available to God and typically to the Lord Jesus for whatever service lay to his hand. As we know, that was a service in relation to the gospel. “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? And I said, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go”. Well, I think this is open for us, beloved, but it is essential that we have a sense of the greatness and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the One who has died for us but who now lives for us in glory at the right hand of God. That was the background to Isaiah's blessing; in the year that king Uzziah died, and he got the blessing that enabled him to be a suitable servant, suitable to the Lord Jesus Himself.

I read in Acts about Stephen but I did not actually have in mind to speak about Stephen; it was more Paul I was thinking about; but you can hardly consider Saul's background without thinking about Stephen's sufferings because Saul was *present* at the time when Stephen was martyred and, not only that, he was serviceable to those that were stoning Stephen. Think of that, think of such a person, one who became an ambassador for God in relation to the glad tidings, but also in relation to the truth of the assembly, and he was available to those who were intent on murdering Stephen! But I think Stephen's spirit would affect our hearts, as I have no doubt it affected the heart of Saul of Tarsus at the time. It says, “And they stoned Stephen, praying,

and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And kneeling down, he cried with a loud voice, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And having said this, he fell asleep". What a spirit Stephen showed in the face of the most extreme adversity you can imagine!

I think with that background Saul was open to the voice that came out of heaven on that Damascus road, "and falling on the earth he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord?" He recognised, in some sense, the glory of the One who called to him. He does not address the Lord first. He says, "Who art thou, Lord? And He said, *I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest*".

But then there was something more for Saul: "But rise up and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do". Saul, under the hand of Christ, became an obedient person, a leadable person, no longer one who was available to the enemy, but one who was available for the Lord Jesus Himself. "But leading him by the hand they brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without seeing, and neither ate nor drank". What a test that would be for him! I think the work of God would be proceeding in Saul during that time and Ananias, when the Lord spoke to him, said, "Behold, here am I, Lord". That would just emphasise to us the need to be available for whatever service the Lord Jesus would direct us to or, indeed, who He might direct us in relation to, because there is one thing certain in the days in which we are, that there is a need for recovery. So he said, "Behold, here am I, Lord. And the Lord said, to him, Rise up and go into the street which is called Straight, and seek in the house of Judas, one by name Saul, he is of Tarsus: for, behold, he is praying". Think of that, think of one like Saul of Tarsus and, beloved, he was praying. Well, in such a situation, I think Saul became available for service under the hand of Ananias, but under the divine hand.

And it says, "And Ananias went and entered into the house; and laying his hands upon him he said, Saul, brother". I think at that point Saul was introduced into the divine family. He said, "Saul, brother, the Lord has sent me, Jesus that appeared to thee in the way in which thou camest, that thou mightiest see, and be filled with the Holy Spirit". Well, Saul became available to the Lord in that sense in whatever service into which he was directed: "Saul, brother". May each one of us have a sense of being part of God's family and being available in relation to whatever service the Lord might direct us into.

Well, we know that when Paul recounts this journey on the Damascus road, the light becomes brighter on each of the two occasions. I think that would be the normal effect of Christianity, that we have an increasing sense of the blessings into which we have been brought.

These were just my few simple thoughts, beloved. May the Lord just help us and bless the word for His Name's sake!

Word in a ministry meeting in Grangemouth

5th April 2016

MAINTAINING SPIRITUAL JUDGMENT

Walter M Patterson

1 Samuel 7: 15-17

The teaching and application of this passage is well known among the brethren but it is good to be reminded often of how Scripture speaks to us for our help and guidance. The apostle Paul said to some that “to write the same things to you, to me is not irksome and for you safe”, Phil 3: 1. So there is safety for us in going over the truth together, and in understanding that God is not moving from the principles that He has set out in Scripture.

The matter in view in this passage of Scripture is judgment; having spiritual judgment. It is quite remarkable that it should be said of this prophet Samuel that he “judged Israel all the days of his life”; every day he had a right spiritual judgment. I am sure that would test all of us, dear brother and sister. You might question how it can be possible to be maintained in spiritual judgment given all the circumstances of our lives here, the pressures and sorrows and distractions that come in, household exercises, personal exercise - but this man was! So this scripture shows us the way to it. It shows us that there are certain fixed matters that were in his life, and that are to be in my life and your life, if we are to be maintained here on this line, not being diverted or being on a divergent line from what is according to right judgment.

So he begins in Bethel, which means the house of God, Gen 28: 17-19. We are about to read of the house of God in Genesis locally; what a great matter that is; what a great regulating matter for me and for you in your life as a Christian with the Holy Spirit. We know that as believers we are never out of the influence and thought of what the house of God is - the dwelling place of God here. The apostle Paul reminds us of that when he speaks about how to comport oneself, or “conduct oneself in God’s house, which is the assembly of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth”, 1 Tim 3: 15. So the sense of that is to govern our thoughts and our minds in all that we take on either individually or in our exercises collectively here in this city. We would have in view that there is what belongs to the house of God. It says in the psalms, “holiness becometh thy house”, Ps 93: 5. So that is a sobering thought, but you see how my judgment is to be affected by that and formed by that thought that there is what is suited to the divine presence, what is suited to God Himself.

And as we are affected by that, I believe that it would have its own influence in our souls and affect us in our spiritual judgment. What is suited to His house would be the first thing that I might start with if a matter presents itself before me. Is this the way that I am going to think? Am I going to think of what is for God, to think of what the assembly is to the Lord Jesus, and what is proper to the area where the Holy Spirit is operating? The Holy Spirit has got full liberty in the house - do I then accord Him that liberty in my soul and in my thoughts?

And then Samuel proceeds to Gilgal, which is where Israel were circumcised, Josh 5: 3-9. How sobering that is too! As we find ourselves in relation to what is for God here, we see that man after the flesh has no place. God has had to say to the order of man that has so offended Him, and He has had to say to it in His own beloved Son. So when the apostle speaks about circumcision in relation to the Christian he says that it is "the circumcision of the Christ", Col 2: 12. So, dear brother and dear sister, that is the standard, it is not my standard of what I think circumcision is, because we know sadly only too well what we might tend to allow in ourselves, and it has often been said that we are keen to judge in others what we allow in ourselves. How valuable then that the Holy Spirit is available to help us to judge rightly, to have to say to the flesh, to have the power to deal with it in ourselves. We can thank God for the wonder of that sacrifice, and the power and glory of that work that Christ has accomplished in removing the first man from His sight forever by going into death and into the grave, and coming out of it triumphant, victorious, so that you and I can be here in victory at the present time.

Samuel goes on to Mizpah; you can see that in all of this the thought of watchfulness is important (see Gen 31: 48, 49) and I would say humbly, watchfulness in relation to myself, that I might be watchful that I might not handle or taste things that are not for my spiritual benefit, not for the gain of my soul. I think there is a great danger of that in the present world in which we are with technology and all that it might bring into the home, bring into your hand, bring into your pocket! We need to be watchful. And then watchful in relation to one another. Think of how we are exhorted in Scripture, "but by love serve one another", Gal 5: 13. I think a watchful person is like that; they are watching out for what may come in that might hinder and limit right judgment, but they are watchful also in relation to one another that they might be preserved together in relation to what is for God here in His

house and its representation in this place.

And then it says of Samuel's house, "and there he built an altar". Well, dear brother and sister, if I am to be maintained in spiritual judgment I need to maintain my personal links with the Lord, I need to maintain my personal links with the Holy Spirit, and my personal links with the Father. I think that is a great preservative to my soul and I would commend it to us.

For His Name's sake.

Word in a Ministry Meeting - Glasgow

7th June 2016

LIVING IN THE LOVE OF GOD

Neil C McKay

2 Corinthians 3: 2-6, 15-18, 4: 1-2 (to “shame”), 5: 14-21

I received a touch recently as to the Lord Jesus as the One who alone was fully able to make known the love of God. What an amazing matter that God should be made known! He desired to have man before Him for His pleasure, and that involved that He must make Himself known to man, that man must know who He is in order to be intelligently for Him, to honour and worship Him. God being love - the essence of His nature - that love must be understood, and it presented a great question: how was that love to be expressed and known?

Moses was the mediator of the old covenant, between God and man, and came down the mountain with the tables of stones in order that man should recognise what God required from him in order to be in relationship with Him. God required a certain standard of behaviour from man, but all that Moses could do was to bring the stone tables; he could not effect anything in man's heart. But the new covenant, or the teaching of the new covenant, involves, not that God's requirements should be made known, but that God *Himself* should be fully expressed. That involved the Lord Jesus not only in His life here, but in going to the cross and bearing the wrath of God against sin and sins, meeting that whole matter, and going into death and the grave. The fulness of the love of God involved that the Lord Jesus went the full way to express that God loved us, that God “yea, has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all”, Rom 8: 32. So that the Lord Jesus in His life, and in His death, has made known the love of God in its entirety; a most amazing matter! If we want to understand or know what the love of God is we see it and we find it in that blessed Man!

It is then also most remarkable that, as the Mediator of the new covenant, which we touched on in Hebrews, “he is mediator of a better covenant”, (chap 8: 6), and “to Jesus, mediator of a new covenant”, (chap 12: 24), the Lord is not only able to express that love towards us but He is able to make it effective in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. He is able to write it by the Spirit in our hearts through new covenant ministry, and is able to give effect to that love, to make it effective in us; and to make us appreciate that love. One of the early things we get in Romans is that the Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts (chap 5: 5); think of the stability in that God loves us, and His love is

towards us: the Mediator of the new covenant would help us understand that. He would give us the great assurance that the love of God is entirely towards us; and now through this character of ministry, the ministry of the love of God towards men, it is being made effective in the hearts of men; men are being affected by the love of God. It may seem somewhat abstract, but it is not: what makes a real difference in our affections and our souls is something of the knowledge and experience that divine love is towards us and that divine Persons love us; it actually has an effect in us. It transforms us: "But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed". This is in contrast to what they saw in Moses. Moses came down shining with somewhat of the glory of God, having been with God, and the people could not look on it because of their conscience and what they were. But the believer is changed; there is another order of manhood there now; he has the Holy Spirit; he is able to live and feed on Christ and be changed.

I do not think what we read at the end of verse 18 refers exclusively to what we enjoy at the Lord's supper. It refers to what is available to believers: the glory of the Lord is available for us to look on and to enjoy, to see that the love of God shines there in that blessed Man! It is "the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth ...", (2 Cor 4: 6); there is a shining into the hearts of men now! I think that we can see the importance of that, the influence of the love of God in a believer's life. As long as we live our life in regard to the first covenant, that is, governed by the idea that God is expecting something of man in the flesh, then we will always be in bondage. God is expecting nothing of man in the flesh; He has done away with that man entirely. He is fully satisfied in Christ; He has found everything in Christ, and if He finds delight in us, what He finds delight in is that which is of Christ, Christ in us, features of Him. Therefore, we grow in this by feeding on Christ, and we learn to appreciate and respect what we see in Christ. The world did not respect Christ - the humility, the going-down mind, going on to the cross and being crucified, the words of grace; the world did not respect that. The world respects the teaching of great men, the feats of sports men, of politicians, the proud postulating of men's ideas: the world respects that. The believer does not; he recognises that that is man after the flesh. What the believer learns to love and respect is the supreme manhood as seen in Christ, the blessedness of that kind of Man; the believer appreciates that and grows to be like Him.

I think this outshining of divine love is followed through in the ministry of reconciliation. Reconciliation means that we are to be here for God's pleasure. As we see by scripture, God has effected reconciliation by Jesus Christ. Mr Raven said (vol 11 p35) that reconciliation means that God has entirely removed one order of man and now He has another order of man before Him for His pleasure eternally: there is great stability in that! We do not need to look for anything in that first order of man; God has entirely removed that order of man! What God is looking for and what He finds pleasure in, is Christ and the order of man that He finds in Christ and in the saints, "that we might become God's righteousness in him".

So God has shown and expressed His love so fully towards us in that blessed Man, and the answer to it is that we please Him, that we become reconciled to God in practical effect, we become like Christ. We feed on Him and we value that blessed love. If we do enjoy communion, it involves that we live our lives in the consciousness that divine Persons love us without reserve. Divine Persons love us! And if we lived out lives in the light of that, the value and joy of that, I think it would help us in practical reconciliation, being here for the pleasure of God. The present love of the Lord Jesus towards us gives us such a great lever to do everything just to please Him. And reconciliation involves that we do things to please God; we are here for the pleasure of God because we love Him since He has shown forth His love so perfectly and so fully in that blessed Man. These things are not doctrinal; they are immensely practical. I feel the value and the test of them because so often I do wrong. I know it is wrong, and my conscience tells me it is wrong, and I think to myself God would not be pleased with that, and I am right: He would not be pleased with that! But nonetheless in going to Him immediately I can find in repentance before Him that His love is towards me, and He would help me in every way.

Our brother mentioned Gilgal, and covered many practical matters; it is very helpful to go over these principles, long held and long stood for. There is a need of being before God in regard to these things. The morning and evening lamb involves that we speak to divine Persons in prayer at the beginning and the end of each day; and that our appreciation of what we enjoyed in the morning would be the same at the end of the day. Also, when we go to bed at night (and pray at the side of our beds no doubt; or we should!), we go over the day and recap before God all that we have done; it has struck me how important that is.

It is important to start the day well and speak to God about the Lord, and go over what we have appreciated in our morning reading, and ask for help in the day, and seek help for the family and the brethren; all these things. It is important to go out of the door having a good link with God, seeking to please Him for the day, and appreciating all that Christ has done. But it is important also at the end of the day to go over these things with God, and what our experience has been in the day with God. I think it makes our link with God real. Maybe if we were honest with ourselves, in our experience, in going over our omissions or our faults before God to get everything clear, we go over the same thing that we did wrong yesterday, and the day before: but it is important to do it nonetheless! If we keep going over these things with God we will recognise that there is a fault there, and we see that God will help us in judging that matter; God recognises our weaknesses. Gilgal is an important place to go; it keeps things right with God and your relationship with Him, and if it is the same fault again and again, maybe God is saying something to you!

Therefore you can see the great importance of these practical matters in scripture that ministers of the recovery have set out for us; how important and how real they are. They were brethren that lived in the love of God, and went through these things in experience, and we are to learn from them. I trust that through these few simple words we are encouraged to live our lives in the love of God, to keep short accounts, and to keep near to divine Persons in communion and prayer.

May we do so for His Name's sake.

Word in a Ministry Meeting - Glasgow

7th June 2016