

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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“THAT NOTHING MAY BE LOST”

Mark 6: 35-56

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HJK It is interesting to consider these two accounts we have of this feeding of the five thousand. My thought is what is left over, what is “over and above” after we have eaten; that is after we have been together this morning for the breaking of bread. I would like some help on Mark’s gospel: it says, “The place is desert”; but in John it says, “there was much grass in the place”. We would not expect to find grass in the desert; and I hope we will get a little help in connection with that. Another thing is that John’s gospel tells us that it was a little boy who had the five loaves and the two fishes. It does not give his name, and maybe we can get some help on that too. But Mark’s gospel does not give us the little boy; it just says there were five loaves and two fishes. In both cases, there is the question of how you can feed so many people with this. I was thinking what a privilege it is to assemble with the Lord’s people, and to gather spiritual food as we are together, so that we might take something with us. There were twelve baskets: you would have to say they gathered up more than they started with. I think it is the way that the things of God multiply and enlarge in our souls as we are assembled together. They were settled as they sat down on the grass, which is how the Lord would feed us. In Psalm 23: 2, it is “in green pastures ... beside still waters”. So, I wonder if we might get some help in considering these things. It might be just the five loaves and two fishes but we can enquire for help this.

AKL Would you say it is divine grace that, in Mark’s gospel, the grass is green, and in John’s gospel it is “much grass”? It is true, as you said, that it was a desert place, but as the centre of divine operations it is a very precious occasion. Each gospel writer puts it a bit differently, but then there is a variety and wealth to enquire about. Would the green grass refer to the activity of the Spirit - freshness, some impression of Christ, and how this comes out in the disciples in distributing the food?

HJK It is interesting to see how each gospel writer looks at things. Mark speaks about what John the baptist ate, “locusts and wild honey” (Mark 1: 6); it was a desert place. This world *is* a desert place, but there *is* the side that there is much green grass for those who are the Lord’s. That is what I would like to get to, to see the place that we are in. Mark speaks of service, and sometimes we think, ‘What is the use of this or that?’. But I am thinking of what one soul can bring. Perhaps it was

meant just to be his lunch, but it fed five thousand.

AKL Is it significant that they sat down in ranks in Mark's gospel? Would that be under the affection, and authority, of the Lord Jesus as the One who is providing everything that is needed for the occasion? It might refer to subjection and dependence on our side?

HJK I wonder also if it speaks of fellowship. They sat down in ranks, by companies. It is a question of the fellowship, and enjoying fellowship with one another. If you are in a meeting with five thousand people, you do not get to know very many of them, and you go from one to the other; but it has been said that God is more glorified in small companies than in large.

D-IJK I was wondering if the green grass would speak of nourishment; there is plenty of nourishment and water, which would speak of the Spirit as was mentioned. There is plenty of food for the grass to be green.

HJK I think that is helpful, and another thing is that God provides a setting for us which is very comfortable and peaceful. They do not sit down on the thorns in the desert; there was green grass. Even though we are in a desert scene, God has provided very peaceful conditions for His own.

MJK How many did they feed?

HJK Well, in another place it says it was "about five thousand men, besides women and children", Matt 14: 21. It could even have been twenty thousand. It is interesting that it says "five thousand men"; so a man is responsible for food for his household, and God will provide. Those of us who are heads of households can rest assured that, as we go on in faith, God will provide for us.

MJK I thought that helped to enlarge upon the magnitude of what was done here, that it says there were five thousand men. But then, as you say, the heads of the households brought nothing. I think the thought of the desert here is that there was no food; there were five thousand men, but it was not any of them, it was little boy who brought the lunch. I wonder if that shows what we have in Matthew 18, where the Lord begins, "Unless ye are converted and become as little children" (v 3); dependence has to come in in order that there may be food. As soon as there is dependence, He can order things; it was a desert place until He ordered them to sit down. Then there was

something that was coming from the heavenly realm, both the food and the resting place. In Matthew, we have a place to recline (Matt 14: 19); there is a resting place now as having come under the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ.

D-gJK So the source is important. The Lord Jesus Himself drew nothing from the earth. He was “a root out of dry ground” (Isa 53: 2); so the desert is not going to sustain a person, is it? As being in the presence of the Lord Jesus, they were able to prove what He was able to do with what this little boy had. He is not only able to provide food but, as you already mentioned, He is able to provide comfort too. Do you think that is an important aspect? That is how there is abundance, is there not?

HJK I think there is a great deal to gain in meditation on what you have just said. It says in John that, when He asked the disciples, “he knew what he was going to do”, v 6. Jesus knew that there was a little boy there with the lunch. Why do you think his name is not mentioned- it was just a little boy? And remember also the maid in Naaman's house: it says there was a little maid (2 Kings 5: 2), but her name is not mentioned. And with David's mighty men, it speaks of three and their names are not mentioned, 2 Sam 23: 13. I am speaking to young ones here; it was a boy. I am going to tell you what I think, that every one of us could put our name in. You could be the little boy; you could be the little maid; you could be one of the three mighty men. I sometimes think that, when we are younger - and this applies also to the sisters - we might feel insignificant, that we do not have much value. But do you have a lunch - *what are you feeding upon?* What am I feeding upon? It is a question we need to ask ourselves; and then we can take account of what we have - what the Lord has given us. Another thing is that the Lord gave thanks for this: that is a good example for you and me, to give thanks for the food. How many people in this world have very little, nothing to eat; but how wonderful that we can give thanks for what we eat. So, we can carry that on now to what is left over spiritually, what God has given you and me. Do we share it with others, or do we hide and not go on and express our exercises and love for one another?

JDK I think that is something we can be encouraged by. I know it for myself - I even go back to the first time I preached; I felt I was not adequate and would not be able to do it very well. But it is something to be encouraged by, that it was just a little boy. The Lord has something that He can use in all of us that would be for His glory and blessing.

HJK That is what I am getting at, the encouragement that would be ours as we are together. The first time you preached, it was good! I remember it.

D-IJK This is just making me think of Joshua and Caleb. The disciples here did not believe. They said it was a desert place; and when he told them to go and find food, and they found these five loaves and two fishes, they said “but what is this for so many?”. They did not have any belief, but they were obedient. Joshua and Caleb were the only ones that believed that they could take the land, and they saw the size of the fruit. The people of the land were not giants in their sight; they said they could overcome them, Num 14: 9. The disciples are no different from the children of Israel except that they obeyed. They went forth and did as the Lord asked them to do; and because of that they saw. It says later on that their heart was hardened, so they really were not in the gain of it yet, were they? The Lord adjusts them but it is interesting how, even if not believing, obedience really shines forth here. Then He goes from a desert land, not only to green grass but a lot of grass. It helps us understand the favour in which we stand in Christ.

HJK That is a good connection there, to see that those two could see that they could overcome, just two of them. And so with each of us, we can all be overcomers in that sense because the Lord is on our side. I was thinking how this prepared the disciples for the storm that was ahead. As you say, their hearts were hardened, but this food prepared them for the storm that was ahead. As you say, they still had more to learn. There were five loaves. What does five speak of?

JAK I cannot answer that, but faith would come into this matter, would it not? I think if we moved in faith there would be enough for five thousand. I was thinking of what was said about when you first preach. I have not yet, but you would move in faith. The service is not about you, it is for God; and as long as you move in faith, He will provide something for you, whether it is something long or something very simple. The word will get across if you move in faith.

HJK So in another place, the Lord says as to faith, “why didst thou doubt?”, Matt 14: 31. So it is important to realise that faith is a gift. It is not something you work for, it is there, it is for us. That is good, but I want to get back to my question: what does five speak of? It says he had five loaves.

WJK It means weakness, does it not? So, even in man's weakness,

God was able to produce something?

HJK And that is what they were thinking; that they were unable to provide. You have five fingers, you have five toes, you have five senses; that is man's number. Seven is divine. We have seven days of creation, seven assemblies. Six is between five and seven; it is as much as man can attain to: six hundred and sixty-six is the number of the beast, Rev 13: 18. So we have five here, and if we depend on our own strength, we are in trouble. The interesting thing about barley loaves is that barley was the first crop harvested, which speaks of the resurrection of Christ. It is good to hold that. So this little boy can be thought of as having some sense of that. And now he has two fishes - what do you think the two fishes would be?

D-gJK I want some help about that, but God's desire is towards all men, is it not? The fishes might represent that; not only was something going to be provided, but He had an interest in each one. There were a lot of people here. I was just going back to the side of man's weakness in responsibility, and yet this little boy had something. All of us would fail in responsibility, but when we have an outlook in relation to things of God and what *His* interests are, something is provided.

HJK That is interesting. I was at meetings where it was said that the fish speak of fellowship. I had not thought of it quite that way, but I thought of this, that in the sea, there is a whole mass of fish. You may not be able to see them all, but the fish in the sea represent something that has gone through death; and the barley too is the side of resurrection. "He made them sit down in companies on the green grass. And they sat down by hundreds and by fifties". As we said before, it is a question of fellowship, and in a sense the fish would substantiate that thought; but two is also a witness, is it not? The Lord could have done with one fish and one loaf, but I think there is something in the two.

AKL Would the fish also refer to divine provision, sovereign provisions that God is able to provide? Also the fish would go against the stream: we should be overcomers in the power of the Spirit. I was also thinking of how this starts: the Lord was really challenging their faith: "Give ye them to eat". They had come to the Lord and expected Him to provide everything. They should have been able to provide something - "Give ye them to eat". And then He says, "How many loaves have ye?". They were not up to date with the provision they had. This young boy is provided, and Andrew is the one that brings him to

Jesus, which he does a few times, John 1: 41; 12: 22. There is some activity with the disciples which the Lord is drawing out - "Give ye them to eat". That would really cast a responsibility on each one of us to provide something for the saints.

HJK Do you not see the act of God in grace when it says in verse 41, "having taken the five loaves and the two fishes, looking up to heaven, he blessed, and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples that they might set them before them. And the two fishes he divided among all. And they all ate and were satisfied"? He gave it to the disciples to give to them. They were the administrators.

AKL In John's gospel He does it Himself; here He lays it upon the disciples. It really casts a responsibility on each one, that we should be under the guidance of Christ to provide for the saints. It comes from Him.

HJK So that goes along with Mark; he sees Jesus as the perfect Servant; he has to do with service. I would just like to say again that the Lord wants to use every one of us; and everyone is valuable to Him, and they should be to us. It is interesting to consider how we look at another sometimes. We should seek to see Christ in our brother, and if we cannot, we should seek to see our brother in Christ. It is interesting to see things that way, but He is bringing them through this. "And they all ate and were satisfied". In Ruth, Boaz "reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left", Ruth 2: 14 KJV. There comes a time - it is only natural - when you are sitting at the table, that you are satisfied, and you get up and leave. So here, they were all satisfied, they were all filled. And Christ would have it so with our hearts, that we would leave with our hearts full.

MJK I was wondering about this thought that our young brothers touched upon as to the gospel; it is interesting because the Lord says to His disciples that He would make them "fishers of men" (Matt 4: 19), which associates itself with the gospel. So, as our brother mentioned, the disciples were the most responsible; but not only were they responsible, they also knew. They were fishermen, but what did they say? They said "send them away that they may go into the country and villages around". That is a sad thought from the disciples, and yet you do not see them being rebuked by the Lord. I think He adjusts them, but it is not really a rebuke. Going back to the villages would be like going back to Egypt to get what we need, the leeks, the onions and the garlic (Num 11: 5); it would be earthly food. The sea is what *God* has provided,

and as was mentioned, fish can swim against the current. There is spiritual power to “overcome the wicked one”, 1 John 2: 14. Now, there are only certain kinds of fish which have fins and scales (see Lev 11: 9); so I think that is the type of thing He was seeking to teach the disciples. And then He says, 'now you can deliver it, now you understand'. But it is also helpful to understand how slowly we learn. And I say that for the encouragement of each one, because sometimes - I speak for myself - you beat yourself up because you feel you should have made more spiritual progress. In Matthew, He again feeds them, and the disciples *still* did not believe, Matt 16: 8-11. They had seen this miracle and they still did not believe, so I think how slowly we learn, but the Lord is so patient here in providing for the disciples that they might grow spiritually. We should seek to have something, but then be dependent on the Lord that He would help us to use what we have been given in a way that would provide for the saints.

PBK So it is important to share what we have without forcing it on anybody?

MJK If we share our enjoyment of Christ, it will grow; but if we force it, it comes from the first man. I think that is good, and I think we see here that none of these people were forced to eat. They had an appetite, there was an appetite created; and I think that goes along with what you say. The disciples did not force it; everyone was more than willing, an atmosphere had been created whereby these persons were ready to eat.

PBK As we said, there were two fishes; so that made seven with the five loaves. There was a fulness which was of God in what this little boy had. It was from God, and it was of God; so it can be food to eat. If it was something manufactured, if they had gone back to the villages, they could never have fed them.

AKL It is good to see that the progress here is really maturing. It starts in verse 34 where Jesus saw a great crowd. That leads on to the thought of the companies. There was progress here and they were learning from the teaching of Christ. It says, “And he began to teach them many things”. And gradually there is growth coming to light; and yet the Lord is challenging them - “Give ye them to eat”. There is something there that it should be possible to distribute. In John, Andrew says, “but this, what is it for so many?”. What this boy had was really almost not appreciated, but the Lord is drawing it out gradually.

MJK I think that is helpful, because the teaching created the appetite. It is right teaching.

HJK I was thinking what you mentioned, that the Lord was teaching them. Now, if we absent ourselves from fellowship, from the meetings where the Lord is teaching, we are not going to get fed. Those who were not there did not get fed. I am just thinking of the value and the privilege of what we have. We should enjoy it more. We might see that in what they got, and what they might then be able to witness of the fulness of the supply of the Christ.

D-gJK You have brought before us the practical side of it in giving thanks for our food. Now, we may stop there and be thankful for our food, which is good; but it would really look on to being built up so that the spiritual constitution would be enlarged, would you think? We are talking about what is natural, but the Lord is providing that too. But then the desire would be for growth and maturity as a result of that, do you think? We may just be thankful for our food, which is a good thing; but it always looks on to something greater so that there are baskets of fragments picked up.

HJK Yes, I would like to go on with that in connection with the baskets. We know that the little boy with his lunch was not carrying twelve baskets. He would have had a little sack. It is just interesting to see how the things of God grow and multiply. Sometimes we feel insignificant, that we are not good enough or cannot say the right thing. I do not think that is what we should dwell on; I think we should take what God has given us and we should share it. It just touched me that, even in the homes of the saints, where a lot of fellowship is enjoyed, if we do not share what He has given us, we are like a swamp. A swamp does not have an outlet, and becomes stale; and that is the way we will become in our souls if we do not take what God has given us and share it with others. If you cannot have fellowship with those with "like precious faith" (2 Pet 1: 1), who are you going to share it with? These things are practical, and we have so much to be thankful for, and so much to rejoice in. I think of what David said,

Why art thou cast down, my soul, and art disquieted in me?
Ps 42: 5

It is a good question to ask.

MJK Help us with the number twelve now?

HJK Well, does it have to do with administration?

MJK I think this is very helpful. So it says in Revelation that there are twelve gates, Rev 21: 12. There are twelve foundations that are established on the twelve apostles. There is a basket full of spiritual food here given to each disciple, and that has been distributed from the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 at the incoming of the Spirit. That is being distributed even in the present time by the saints who have taken up with sound teaching based upon a sure foundation, Isa 28: 16.

HJK I had not thought of it until you mentioned it, but you can picture each disciple having a basket, and going round for what was left after everyone was done.

AKL Is it significant that the Lord Jesus says in John, "that nothing may be lost"? Nothing of Christ, if it is kept rightly, will ever diminish, and that will be enough for the twelve baskets. It might also refer to what might be brought out in Israel in a day to come. Everything will yield response to divine affection. It is amazing that He can just say, "that nothing may be lost". What is of Christ, and what is of the work of God, will go through.

HJK Yes, and just before that it says they gathered to them the fragments "which were over and above". It was "over and above" that "nothing may be lost". It was Samuel of whom it was said, "Jehovah was with him, and let none of his words fall to the ground", 1 Sam 3: 19. Nothing was lost.

PBK Is this just a little picture of a reading meeting? It might be announced as a meeting for enquiry. It is a meeting for enquiry where things can be enjoyed because there has been something prepared; it might be so little - and yet so much.

HJK As you go further afield, what would you say about when we leave here? It says that the Lord dismissed them: "And, having dismissed them, he departed to the mountain to pray". And then we get the ship in the midst and the storm coming, and Jesus comes to them in the midst of the sea. As was mentioned, you wonder why they were surprised to see Jesus walking on the water, but we can say that is how slow we are to learn. They had just been filled, they had just been given something; and we can think of the twelve disciples each having a basketful with them. Now they are in the ship and the storm comes. When we leave - having been assembled together by the grace of God - we might just take one thing. But when we go out into the world, into the

mass confusion of men (which the sea speaks of), do we take even the one thing with us and feed on it in the day? It is a question I am asking myself.

AKL It does show the greatness of sitting down in the temple to enquire, and to get the gain of the teaching that comes out. It has a two-fold effect, if we ask in dependence and the Spirit is free, the Lord will provide what we need to mature, grow, and strengthen in our faith.

HJK These are all very good thoughts, and I would ask a question: if it is so wonderful, why do we not have a meeting every night and sit here all day long? Why would we not do that?

AKL How much are we able for? We are still in bodily weakness and not able to take in too much.

D-gJK Digestion is needed; things need to be digested. I was wondering if you could say if teaching and feeding are the same thing. It can be: He first taught them here and then he fed them.

HJK I remember a brother once said that some preach the gospel, and some teach the gospel. Both have somewhat of the same thought, at least in the gospel going forth.

JAK What is the reason for it being five loaves and two fishes; why not seven loaves, or five pieces of meat?

HJK Well, completeness comes in, in Christ's death and resurrection; the fish may speak of death and the barley loaves of resurrection. Five is what man can provide; I think it is interesting to think of that - we can provide, and then God takes and adds to it. So we might say that this little boy represents someone who is in the good of the death and resurrection of Christ.

D-gJK Does it also show the willingness of availability? You might have thought this was a big lunch for a small boy. I am just asking; could he be one that the Lord Jesus had prepared for the time? Is it a good exercise to be prepared, to be available?

HJK Have you ever wondered why the Lord gave you something, or you had some thought come to you, some special impression of Scripture? And you go to work, and the Lord uses it. I think what you say is helpful; that God provided that lunch, He used it.

AKL Is it good to see the end when they were all filled? The thought in seven goes through in perfection, and everyone is satisfied: "when

they had been filled”.

HJK That is what I wanted to mention, that they left satisfied. That is why I mentioned Ruth - “he reached her parched corn, and she ate and was sufficed”, Ruth 2: 14. Now as you get up and leave - and this is why I say we do not have a meeting every night - as was said, we go out and prove these things. I think that, as we prove them, we get more baskets full. So what we prove - what we have of Christ - is what we are going to take to glory with us. We may have a lot of knowledge, but “knowledge puffs up”, 1 Cor 8: 1. Understanding of the Scriptures, and wisdom, are wonderful.

CJB Would you say a little bit more about the fragments that were left? It is interesting that those are accounted for.

HJK Well, you could ask where the baskets came from. If you had enough for twelve baskets, you could not carry it all. So the Lord provided them; the Lord always provides, but the twelve baskets suggest administration, and the disciples were responsible in a sense for the administration of the testimony. It has been handed down; we can say that ourselves: we are responsible for the administration of the testimony, and how we handle the body of Christ today.

D-gJK Does the Spirit come back into this again? You mentioned the green grass earlier. The Spirit is securing vessels that this might be held, do you think? There is the side of administration being needed, but then there is the side of you and me being needed too. The Spirit is securing vessels to contain what is left, or contain what is given.

MJK I stand to be adjusted if what I am going to say is not right, but it impresses me that, as you look at these baskets, they are baskets for a journey. There are twelve baskets (which speak to me of sound teaching), and I think it is important to realise that there are no more than twelve baskets. In other words, we need to be very careful not to carry another basket that would be according to the mind of man. “Remember your leaders who have spoken to you the word of God”, Heb 13: 7. We each have a basket to carry with us according to the teaching of the apostles. The five loaves were mentioned - here it is in relation to man, is it not? In the feeding of the four thousand in Matthew 15, there are seven baskets and seven loaves; and that is in relation to what divine Persons give; and the baskets are much bigger - they would call them a fish basket.

WSS Why did they collect the leftovers? Why did they not throw the

rest away, or eat it all?

HJK That is a good question, because naturally we live in a country of much waste. But John says, “that nothing may be lost”. Nothing was lost; when the Lord does something, there is no spoilage or deterioration. It is food that will go on continually. What we have got here today never grows old; it does not grow mould. What we gain spiritually will continue to go on. It speaks of what is moral, but the thought that nothing might be lost is very helpful. God did not let any of Samuel's words fall to the ground. Nothing is lost - think of it in your life, when you share what God has given you with others, God is not going to let any of that be lost. When you talk to them, you have their conscience on your side, and nothing will be lost. I think it is a moral issue, but is that helpful?

RBC The boy must have come from a good home. Five thousand came together to hear what the Lord had to say, and he was the only one that had the food to sustain him. I was thinking about the question about why it was fish. The fish must have come from home; he would not have found these in the desert either. He probably would not have found a loaf in the desert. What he brought must have come from his household. Is that the way we should come?

HJK That should really be an encouragement to us as parents of children, that we send our children to school with something. That is really helpful.

CJB The Lord's estimation of what the boy brought is very different from Andrew's. He just says they were “small” - what do you say about that in relation to what our brother just said?

HJK I suppose in our own eyes that is sometimes what we see, but if we look at it in the eyes of God, what do we see?

CJB As a parent, that can be quite a challenge, but I wonder if the Lord does take account of each small step in faith in our households, but also of what we bring in faith no matter what our age. Is that right? It is interesting how Andrew says that, but the Lord is able to take it and create abundance.

D-gJK Coming back to what was just said, this little boy would have thought it was normal to be provided for. Is that an encouragement to us again as parents, that bringing children up “in the discipline and admonition of the Lord” (Eph 6: 4) is normal to them? So there is not

something abnormal as they go out and face the world.

HJK These are wonderful thoughts; we could almost continue on with another reading.

AKL I was just wanting to ask about the reference to what was kept: would the twelve baskets also contribute to the glory of the assembly in view of the eternal day - nothing will be lost? Everything that has been accomplished by the death of Christ will remain, and give glory to divine Persons in a coming day.

CJB That is a contrast to the manna, which would spoil. I was thinking about that earlier, but what you say about the assembly is helpful.

Dg-JK The foundation is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (Eph 2: 20); that comes back to the earlier comment that this is firmly established. Nothing is to be lost; “Jesus Christ himself being the corner stone”. The apostles built upon it, but then you and I take advantage of it. Then we come in as our own vessel.

PBK After we have been fed by the Lord, do we come into the enjoyment of what David writes in Psalm 23: 2, “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside still waters”?

HJK Can you think of a more peaceful setting?

Aberdeen, Idaho

23rd December 2015

Key to initials (all local in Aberdeen, Idaho):-

Colin J Brien; Raymond B Clark; J Alex Klassen; Daryl J Klassen;
Doug J Klassen; Harold J Klassen; Jonathan D Klassen;
Michael J Klassen; Phil B Klassen; William J Klassen;
Anders K Lidbeck; Wesley S Selman

FEATURES OF CHRIST UNFOLDED

Walter M Patterson

Hebrews 11: 4-7; 3: 5, 6

We were occupied a little in the earlier occasion with matters that related to ourselves as believers. We considered how we might be divinely helped to be here more in relation to the pathway of the will of God, to know what it is to serve God intelligently, whether in our Christian walk here; or in relation to what enters into His service; or intelligently as we are with one another in our local companies, working out the truth in love. But with all these things, what God has in mind is that our attention should be drawn to the Lord Jesus, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Man of God's purpose; He is the Beginning, the moral Beginning of everything that is for God. And so if we are to think about what is morally suitable to God, we must begin with Him; we must begin with Christ. I would like to use these passages of Scripture to show how God begins the unfolding of moral features and traits in the Scriptures. In every case He begins with the Man of His purpose; He begins with Christ. He must begin with the Man that He ever intended to bring in, for in the bringing in of Adam, a figure of the One who was to come, God intended that Adam, would set out headship as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What led me to these scriptures was our local reading last Lord's day in which we spoke about how these great personages at the beginning of Genesis bring out and reflect the wonderful moral glories of the Lord Jesus. God would draw our attention to them that we might be affected by them, not exactly impressed in our minds only, as we might be, but affected by all that has come out in perfection in Jesus. Locally we are reading in Genesis and we had noted the way in which the features of the Lord Jesus that are to become known to us and appreciated by us as believers are brought into relief, into illustration in persons. So I believe the early part of Genesis presents types that speak of the Lord Jesus to us.

We begin with the securing of order out of chaos, that which was to be fruitful and for the pleasure of God brought out of a chaotic sphere. Well, that speaks to us of the work of the Lord Jesus, all that He has effectuated in His death and what He has secured for God. There is a type of the Lord Jesus, too, in "the great light" (Gen 1: 16), the thought of a great controlling influence there in the heavens. There is a type of the

Lord Jesus seen in the tree of life, and another in the river that goes out of Eden. So we come to these personages that are given to us, the ones that I want to speak of, Abel and Enoch and Noah and Moses. When we come to these personages, we have what marks them substantially, not only that they present a type that leads us to the Lord Jesus, but there was a moral substantiality in these persons that brings the Lord Jesus before us, and I would seek the Lord's help to speak of that.

So we have this man, Abel; what does it say of him? That he was "righteous". What a wonderful thing that there was a Man here in this scene who was the righteous One, "Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2: 1), One who was here. You may know He came in to do the will of God, but He "loved righteousness and ... hated lawlessness", Heb 1: 9. How had lawlessness come in? Man had sinned, and the Fall had come in, and the result is that God speaks to Satan, to the serpent, and He says, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall crush thy head, and thou shalt crush his heel", Gen 3: 15.

Now, the first man to be born, Cain, is brought in. Which of these lines was he on? Was it the seed of Satan, or the seed of the woman? Scripture tells us that "Cain was of the wicked one" (1 John 3: 12); that is, that lawlessness had an entrance in Cain. In the midst of this, man becoming lawless, there is one, Abel, who comes in of the seed of the woman, on that line. What is he going to display? Righteousness! You might say, in every feature of Abel's life there was righteousness. What did it lead to? Suffering! Dear young believer, it would cause us to think about the Lord Jesus because that is who I want to speak of. We know that these personages have their application to ourselves in our faith, so that we might be built up and strengthened and we might see in them some model for us. And, of course, if they speak of the Lord Jesus, they must be models because He is the great Model in everything.

There was One here who was righteous and He suffered for righteousness' sake. He was prepared to do that, to be here in the midst of a world that was entirely lawless and away from God, to represent holiness, to love righteousness, to be here to carry out the will of God, which He did in blessed perfection, to be committed to the will of Another, and to secure the righteousness of God through His sacrificial work on the cross, to suffer for sins and to bear the wrath and judgment

of God in relation to sin. What a wonderful work He has accomplished! Indeed, what a glorious Saviour He is!

So we would say that Christ, morally, was there in Abel, and it speaks of the seed of the woman. "Seed" has in mind that there is to be a continuation. This line, this moral feature that was seen in this man, Abel, is to be continued, continued in faithful men, men of God, all down through the dispensations. And so God is going to unfold one after the other, and something of these features is going to come out in them. It is a feature that we are to learn to love. Jesus "loved righteousness". Do I love it? Have I learned to know what that is, to love righteousness? But I see it in Him; I think that is just the simple thought. I want you, dear young persons, to have this impression, not exactly about these individuals, but about these glorious features in Jesus. We often use that expression, 'the glories of the Lord Jesus'. We speak about how wonderful they are as we speak to Him in praise and thanksgiving, but have you ever taken the time to reflect on them, to value them in your mind? So we have to value this, that He was the righteous One and He suffered for righteousness' sake. He was here as the suffering One in His pathway. What was the outcome? For Abel it was death, and it was death for Jesus, the One who displayed such divine righteousness. Man would not have that line; they refused it, and they refused it in putting Him to death.

You ask if that is the end of the matter. This righteous Man, His life taken from the earth, is that the end of it?'. As we proceed in Genesis, we find at the end of chapter 4 another son, Seth: "And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son, and called his name Seth: ... For God has appointed me another seed instead of Abel", v 25. Is that not wonderful? Think of the divine consideration that such a One, the righteous One, should be wholly vindicated, and that God should bring Him out of death and establish Him, bring Him into a whole established order of things where everything is to be centred in Himself! So that seed continues in believers, and it is going to continue to the end; the Holy Spirit is here to help us to be on the line set out for us in this man Abel.

And then the writer to the Hebrews speaks to us of this other substantial figure of the Lord Jesus, Enoch, a man in whom God had pleasure. Think of this, that in the midst of that lawless scene that we have spoken about, there was a man who walked for these three hundred years in the company of God, and it says. "he had pleased

God". How like the Lord Jesus, here as a blessed Man, wholly committed to the will of God, displaying that in His ministry and in manifesting divine affection towards men. But this is a period in the life of the Lord Jesus of which not much is spoken in Scripture, these hidden years, these thirty years, from His incoming until the acknowledgement by God at the waters of baptism, "This is my beloved Son" (Matt 3: 17), and in another gospel, "*Thou* art my beloved Son", Mark 1: 11. Think of the divine interest and affections expressed in that way, and expressed in relation to this One, "Jesus himself ... beginning to be about thirty years old", Luke 3: 23. It shows us that there was a life in which God delighted, a life of communion, a life of prayer, a life in which "morning by morning" His ear was opened "to hear as the instructed", Isa 50: 4. There is a further wonderful type in this book of Genesis. When Abraham and Isaac were going to the place of sacrifice, it says, "and they went both of them together", chap 22: 6. The Father and the Son went on together, the Father finding such delight in the holy perfection and manhood of Jesus.

What does it mean to you, dear young friend? Is it something that has attraction for you? Not according to this world or the things of this world, not according to man's measure of things because Enoch does not appear in man's register; it says, "he was not", Gen 5: 24. In that sense he does not enter into public history, and yet that is what we are very conscious of in the life that we live. We are conscious of things that are in the public history, persons who are in the public domain, brought before the eyes of men, but there is a Man here who lived in the light and joy of His Father's love and His Father's communion, and it came to that point where He would enter into His short period of ministry for men, but before that He is hidden, and what does God say? 'I must have that for myself'. God took Him. He looked at this poor world with all its lawlessness, all its corruption and He found in it a Man for His pleasure and delight, and He says, 'I must have that for Myself. I must have that in heaven'.

So the Lord Jesus knew in John 13 that He was going to the Father; it is not exactly a matter of His ascension there, but He is going to the Father: "he came out from God and was going to God", v 3. God looked for that order of Man. That is what it points to, an order of Man, entirely different from what is in the world, but entirely pleasing to God. Has it become attractive to you? You say you understand how the Lord Jesus is presented in the Gospels, and His wonderful ministry of love

and grace. You can feed on that; you can feed on the expression of the mind of God and the life of God in the Gospels. But have you ever taken time to think about this wonderful, glorious Lord Jesus, His thirty years of hidden life in which He was wholly committed to the things of His Father, and which afforded delight to His own heart? The Psalmist says prophetically:

Jehovah is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup:
thou maintainest my lot.

The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a
goodly heritage. I will bless Jehovah who giveth me counsel;
even in the nights my reins instruct me, Ps16: 5-7.

There was a Man, a dependent, praying Man, here for the pleasure of God, and God must have that for Himself! So He says, “and I, if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all to me”, John 12: 32. He is going to go out of this world and, as being lifted up, He is drawing all to Himself. Are you drawn to Him? Do you find these wonderful, moral features in Jesus? I trust it would draw out your interest and affections in relation to Him. I trust that will be the result of the word spoken.

There is another thing said about Enoch; we are told that he was “the seventh from Adam”, Jude v 14. I think it points to how he was drawing on experience. We spoke in the reading about progress and experience. Enoch is able to draw on that, so that he rightly understands what is suitable to God and is able to maintain what is due to God in this scene. We should note that where we read in Genesis 4 there was another Enoch; Cain's son was called Enoch: the world is like that. I spoke about the personages in the world, and the world would say to you, 'We have an Enoch too. We have better intelligence, men of science, workers in brass and iron and music. We have these intelligent and cultured persons that must be listened to'. In the gospel, God is calling your attention today, this afternoon, to His glorious Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the perfection that marked Him as truly here for the pleasure of God.

Noah is interesting. He was “a preacher of righteousness”, as we are told elsewhere (2 Pet 2: 5), and Noah goes through the whole matter of judgment. You can see how he expressed these wonderful, moral features of the Lord Jesus here as preaching the kingdom of God. Mark's gospel brings that in, Jesus presented as immediately “preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom of God”, chap 1: 14. You might say it was an urgent matter for Mark. Think of a blessed Man

here, appealing to men, who was here *for* men, here to serve them, and He brings before them “the glad tidings of the kingdom of God”.

And we have too, in this type of Noah, the thought of going through, carrying everything through the judgment. Well, Jesus has done that, but what I want to draw your attention to, dear hearer, is what Noah's name means, and we are told that in Genesis 5: 28 and 29. It says, “And Lamech lived a hundred and eighty-two years, and begot a son. And he called his name Noah, saying, This one shall comfort us concerning our work and concerning the toil of our hands, because of the ground which Jehovah has cursed”. So Noah's name suggests 'comfort'. And I want you to think about the Lord Jesus in that way. You agree that He is wonderful, and as you have come to know Him as my Saviour, He has become a Comforter to you, and He is. We have spoken in prayer about the pressures and sorrows in the souls of the saints, and the Lord Jesus is surely that, surely a Comforter for every heart. But, actually, He is the Man that has brought in comfort for God. He brought in all that was for the rest of God, the comfort and rest of God. How has He done that? He has done it through His work, His sacrificial work on Calvary, His going in to death, His coming out of it, a risen, glorified Man, and His ascending into heaven and establishing a new world, a new order of things, for the will and pleasure of God and, in doing that, He has established what is for the rest of God, and God intends that we might enter into it. He presents that for us that we might find our rest, our own rest, in that blessed Man. But firstly it is for God. Someone might say, 'How momentous!' Where we read initially in Genesis 3 we have disruption; a whole disruption had come into the world. A dislocation, a fracture, had entered into the world, and brought in distance between men and God, but *in Christ* we have a blessed Man who is able to bring in peace and is able to establish in Himself, as a risen Man, His work accomplished, all that is going to be eternally for the pleasure of God and for the joy of His own heart. I just want you to have a sense of how momentous that is. In order that it might be resolved, the whole weight of that fracture or that dislocation, rested on one Man, rested on the holy, perfect, righteous One, and He has accomplished that work. I wonder if you view a risen Christ in that light. He has accomplished everything for God. You may say that you have your salvation; thanks be to God for that! But do you see that the whole solution, God's solution, to that dislocation is there established in Christ? There is a new order of things in an ascended and glorified Christ, the order of man that was pleasurable to Him here. He now has

it in risen life in His presence, and that Man lives there and He lives to God. You can see how the rest of God is secured, secured there in Him, and our affections, our interests, are to be drawn to Him there to see all that is connected with Him, all that is connected for our blessing, but all that is there for God Himself. God is going to have a universe that is centred and founded on the Lord Jesus Christ.

What Lemech said is quite interesting, is it not? He said, "This one shall comfort us concerning our work and concerning the toil of our hands". So there was a world full of toil and trouble and sin and lawlessness, and there was one who came in in Noah, who brought comfort, and in whom, Lemech prophetically says, 'There will be comfort and rest'. When God has that, you then see that that world must go. That world in which there was "our work" and "the toil of our hands" must go. And God removes it through the deluge. He has Noah in whom He could have a confidence and delight and who is "a preacher of righteousness", and He brings in the mind of God, working with God, and God says, 'I have that, and the world can go. I can dispense with it. I can bring in a new world'.

And so we have the new world after the deluge, but I want to draw your attention to the fact that that was not enough. It was not enough only that there should be a cleansed earth, all that had marked it removed, but God looked for the burnt-offering, chap 8: 20, 21. There has to be what is sacrificial. I ought to have spoken of it in relation to Abel because what Abel represents is that thought, the thought of a sacrifice that is suitable to God, and the Lord Jesus was that. He knew what the righteousness of God required and He was that, became that precious Sacrifice. And so the burnt-offering had an odour, and we know that from Leviticus. That is the first offering, a voluntary offering, and it brings us into acceptance before God. There it is, "to Jehovah of a sweet odour", Lev 1: 9. So we need these two things. We need the understanding of all that there was for God in that death, the death of Christ, as God appreciates Him.

I want to speak about this last matter as to Moses. You might say, you are jumping over a few examples. You are jumping over Abraham, one who is a type of Christ in his separation from the world, and becoming the one to whom all the counsels of God were revealed. He becomes a repository really of that, the counsels of God. And Isaac is a type of a risen Christ. And Joseph, Christ rejected by His brethren but glorified among the Gentiles.

But there are many things we could say about Moses. I suppose in one sense we could have occupied the time by speaking about Moses and the way that the Spirit of Christ came out in him, the meekest man on all the earth (Num 12: 3), one who shines as a mediator. What a wonderful type of Jesus he is in that! He put himself between God and the people as a mediator. But he was “faithful”. So where do we find that? Where was Moses “faithful in all his house”? Well, he was faithful when he came down from the mountain and came into the camp and found that there was idolatry there, Exod 32: 15-35. You might have said to Moses that this was a people that he was going to carry in your bosom through the wilderness. He was going to nurse them. He was going to love them. There is no doubt that Moses loved the people. It says in Deuteronomy about Jehovah that “he loveth the peoples” (Deut 33: 3), but Moses did too. You might have asked Moses what he was going to do if he loved these people? Moses was faithful to God. What was the motive behind that? It was that he had been with God on the mountain. He had come from the presence of God. He had a glimpse of what was suitable to God, and so he comes down and he was faithful to that, faithful to what he found in the presence of God. So that is what the writer to the Epistle to Hebrews draws our attention to, that he was “faithful”. “And Moses indeed was faithful in all his house, as a ministering servant”, that is the house of Israel, the tribe of Israel. Moses was faithful to God in that matter.

The Lord Jesus is presented to us then as “Son over his house”; so we can think of the Lord Jesus in that way as “Faithful and True”, Rev 19: 11. He is faithful and true to all that is of God and all that is according to the truth. He remains faithful. So I just speak simply among the brethren; the Lord Jesus is not changing His mind. He is not changing direction; He maintains all that is according to the truth as Son over God's house. We are given a presentation of the Lord Jesus in His function in relation to the whole matter of the house of God, all that is to be for God's glory and His pleasure in His people here; because the apostle says, “whose house are we”. It is a reference to those of the assembly, “whose house are we”, and the Lord Jesus is faithful in relation to His assembly. He presents Himself in that way, as we know, in the addresses to the churches in Revelation.

I would just like to close with that because I think that is the thought: He is faithful over all God's house. So in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 we see it coming out. We see it coming out in the Lord Jesus

making Himself known: “he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamps”, Rev 2: 1. In the earlier part of Revelation he appears to John with “his feet like fine brass” (chap 1: 15), suggesting judgment. I just have a simple impression, that there it is, the writer to the Hebrews draws attention to this feature in Moses in the Old Testament, Heb 3: 2. He might have said many things about him. As I say, how wonderful a type he is, a man who continues spiritually right to the end, a man who writes a fifth book, Deuteronomy, that is full of energy and life and vitality and spirituality. But this epistle draws attention to this feature that is necessary for the present time, that he was faithful in God's house. And he says that Jesus was faithful as Son over God's house. You might say, He is looking at things. So in these addresses to the assemblies, the Lord Jesus looks at things, and He says, “I know”. He is the One who knows; so where the word of adjuration was required, He brings it in, and to Philadelphia He can provide the word of comfort, “/ also will keep thee out of the hour of trial ... I come quickly: hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown”, Rev 3: 10, 11. I think the Lord would give that word to us all today that we might “hold fast” what we have, for His Name's sake.

Grimsby

10th October 2015

“BUT GOD”

David C Brown

Ephesians 2: 1-6

Psalms 74: 1, 10-17

1 Samuel 10: 6, 7

Genesis 45: 5-8 (... “but God”)

These seem to me very powerful words: “but God”. These are only a few of the samples of the way in which the phrase comes in in the Scriptures. We see different circumstances, different needs, different tests, different views; and then we see that there is another view, not ours, not something we can do anything about: “but God”.

How thankful we can be that the gospel would come out for us, and look at us in our need and our desperation, as seen in the first verses of Ephesians 2. Without it there is no hope; we need to look back on our history and appreciate just what there was, or what there was not, in ourselves. The apostle looks at the Gentile first, then the Jew; he looks at their circumstances and in every case sees the same hopeless and helpless condition. We need to be kept aware of that; apart from God, away from Him, there is no response, not a spark of life towards God. We can be thankful, as we read in these verses, having thought of the state of deadness and offensiveness, that God has intervened and the gospel comes in in that powerful phrase to us as far from God, “but God”. He has come in; how blessedly He has come in, not simply to meet a need. How thankful we are that He has met a need; there is a need of life, a need that there should be something responding to God. But I wonder if we ever find in the Scripture that God merely meets a need. You look at the gospels and you see the activities of the Lord Jesus and you see persons with needs, and you see that He meets the need; how thankful we are for that. Does He ever merely meet the need? If He raises Jairus's daughter, He does not simply meet her need: “he commanded something to eat to be given to her”, Luke 8: 55. Before that, the woman with the flux of blood: He does not merely meet her need but He brings her in to the family, addresses her as “daughter”, brings her to confession, Luke 8: 47, 48. Or the man before that, he is not merely relieved of the pressure of the demons within but he is “clothed and sensible, at the feet of Jesus”, v 35. If blessing comes in, if God comes, He does not merely meet a need. How blessed it is that we can have all our experiences as having come

to Him.

“But God” does not simply mean that God is going to come in to meet the need of man in his desperation, but He gives more: look at what more He gives: the riches, and the fulness, and the blessings. I am not minded to go into much detail of this today but just to look at that phrase, “but God”. How is He coming in? He is coming in as One who is “rich in mercy”, who “because of his great love wherewith he loved us, (we too being dead in offences,) has quickened us with the Christ”. That would be you and me, dead in offences and sins; it would be fine that He would quicken us, that He would give us life. That is not sufficient; that is not God's mind: He has “quicken us **with the Christ**, (ye are saved by grace)”. How blessed it is, how full it is, that there should be such excess. There is always excess on the part of God; He never merely meets a need. If He is coming in, He is going to come in with a richness of blessing, “being rich in mercy”. He has “raised us up together, and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. How wonderful that He has that in mind for you. I do not know whether you enjoy it, perhaps you do not enjoy that fact. It is a glorious fact that, as a believer on the Lord Jesus, that is your position, your place to be enjoyed as one who is “raised up together, and made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus”. How thankful we are that if God intervenes: if your need is there, “but God” comes in; He is going to raise you up and make you enjoy the fulness and the grandness of His thoughts for you, and not simply to merely meet the need that you may feel.

We have an interesting person writing Psalm 74, Asaph. You get this series of psalms in the beginning of the third book of Psalms (Psalm 50 is also his), but these are all interesting and I think that in a lot of them, although he only uses the term in Psalm 74, you can see that it is the spirit of the phrase we are referring to that has affected this man, Asaph; there is a turn. You speak of that in poems, you come to the turn; here is one of the great poets, and time after time, going through an exercise, going through a concern, even a depression, something comes into the psalm and it turns. Where is the turn? Here - “but God”. In perhaps a more familiar psalm, Psalm 73, he looks around, looks at the world, looks at man, the prosperity of men, what is going on that is not according to God, and it seems to him that men away from God are prospering; he cannot understand, and then the time comes in Psalm 73 when the turn comes: he goes into the sanctuary (v 17) and you can

see in the principle there, “but God”. God has His view; have you got God's view of matters? That is the question; that is the exercise. You will be in that same depression that he was in until such time as you see “but God”, His answer. In Psalm 74 he is looking again; there seems to be no answer. He seems to be praying; perhaps you have done that, prayed and felt as if there was no answer. He goes on for several verses: what is happening, God does not seem to be answering their prayer? God does not seem to be giving me what I am asking for; why is that? Then he comes back to the point, he comes back to the glory that was in that One, and he can see, and God intervenes in this powerful word, “But God is my king of old”. The present circumstances may not suit you; there may be these tests, and perhaps you feel as though you are not being answered. We have all possibly been in that circumstance; God is not giving you what you desire. What is your circumstance? If you keep looking at that then you will get increasingly depressed. What you have got to look at is what is underlying it all,

But God is my king of old, accomplishing deliverances in the
midst of the earth.

That is what is underlying it all. You can leave it in His hands. Whatever it is that may exercise or concern you just now, you can leave in His hands. There is a blessing in waiting, and He will come in in His way, in His time; He will come in His own way of blessing, “But God”. Be assured as you look at that; “But God is my king of old”. You have experience with Him; He has answered you before; you may not see the answer just now; perhaps He is just waiting, testing you. How patient are you? He has it in hand. How blessed it is that we have that reassurance, and reassurance from our experience with Him, “But God is my king of old”.

Asaph can expand on the various ways that God has operated in the past. He can see these examples; we have examples in the past of how God has operated. He will come in in His way, in His time, whatever your pressure, whatever you feel; be confident: “But God is my king of old”. You find this as you go through Asaph's psalms. Psalm 78 is a great history, and he looks at the history of Israel and its failure after failure after failure until he comes to a point where he sees God's man come on to view. You can see that God intervenes there, “but God”; God is bringing in His man. He brings David into the psalm; He brings in Christ as the answer, the anti-type of David. How wonderful it is that we can depend on God; we can say, “But God”. He has His

intervention, and He will intervene, but we can trust Him until the time comes.

In Samuel, you have the most spiritual man of the day. Someone comes before him, and for the moment he gets the wrong view. Most of us have done that; we have had the wrong view, the wrong person before us. Those of us who are a bit older have a sad experience of having the wrong man in our view. "But Jehovah"; you see the way in which God intervenes. He intervenes in your view. What is your view? Is it God's view? That is always a test for us, a test for every one of us to have. Do you have the right Man before you? Do you say of the one who is before you, "Surely Jehovah's anointed is before him"? Is that God's view of that person? Is that God's view of that question? Is that God's view of the issue that is concerning you? That is a concern. Have you got God's view? He would intervene, He would bring you up, He would take you before Him, and say, "but God", "But Jehovah". There is another view and you need to have His view.

Samuel is a spiritual person, and therefore he is rapidly adjusted. That is one of the great features that you see in the history of Samuel: he is a man who is rapidly adjusted. He rapidly comes into God's view. He had perhaps given too much space in his life and time to Saul, and we can understand that, and understand what his feelings were, because Saul had been one who God had used at one stage. That man is taken out of view, and another who seems to have that character seems to fill his view for the moment. He has another man like Saul in view. God has another Man in view and the intervention is here. Why is that? It goes on in the verse, "man looketh upon the outward appearance". Be careful of looking upon the outward appearance because God has another view, a deeper view, a fuller view, "but Jehovah looketh upon the heart", v 7. Do you know the heart? Some things come out in behaviour that you can get some notion of what is going on in the heart, but the exercise is, what is God's view? Does He know? He looks on the heart; He knows how the heart is operating; He knows that in you and He knows it in me. Let us be careful that we have His view, and are ready as Samuel to adjust to His view.

Joseph is another spiritual man, and he looks at things and says, "And now it was not you that sent me here, but God". He has God's view of the exercise that he had had to go through. Think of how sore it had been with his brethren; you could think of how resentful he

might be, how naturally he would react. They had done him wrong, they had acted murderously towards him; some had actively advocated his murder, others had taken another view for the sake of what they could get out of it, or whatever had been in their minds. Reuben had been somewhat feeble in running along with it. What kind of view might he have had? He looks at them and says, "it was not you that sent me here", 'I am not putting the blame there, I am not laying it upon you'; "but God". He looked through the circumstances, he looked through the needs, he looked through all that had affected his brethren, and their hatred of him, and he said, 'I can see that there is another way, a wiser way, and a necessary way and all under God's hand. It is all in His way, that there should be what He has in mind to achieve, and what He has in mind to achieve is that there should be a people kept alive'.

Have you looked at the circumstances? You might just look at the surface, but are you looking at God's way? What God is working out is what matters. It is wonderful to see this whole history of Joseph and his brethren; he is a wonderful example to us. Think of what they were in contrariety and in hatred towards him. They come and they are in his hands, and what does he do? He puts them in custody three days. It is not that he is allowing what is wrong without it being kept under control. They are under custody, but then he sends them away. How does he send them? With the food that they require, and the return of their money in full. That is the spirit of Christ: someone is sent away with all the food supply, and the return of the full money. They come back again; the need is there and they come back. How does he send them away? Before he sends them away he brings them in, and supplies them and feeds them. He also identifies Benjamin in his innocence, he identifies the innocent element, but then he sends them away, and again with the full money. That is how the spirit of Christ operates; matters are not to be resolved without them being resolved righteously. Judah takes the blame in due course, but he is someone who has received the return of the full money, someone who has already been dined by Joseph himself. Then Joseph makes himself known, and he shows them the picture of how God has been operating in matters. That is a feature we saw with Asaph; he looked at the way God had been operating in matters, he saw things from God's viewpoint. Do you see things from God's viewpoint, and what He is doing, how He is operating? You could look at the externals and say, 'That was hatred; that was what was contrary there', and Joseph is a man who is able to see God's view and say who is operating; God is

operating. It is God who is the One who is securing things, “now it was not you that sent me here, but God”.

I simply leave these words with you that the power of them should be with each one of us. If you find yourself in a problem or exercise, “but God”: He will come in, He will come in in His own way; wait, see His view, see how He is working things out, see what there is that is to be secured for His pleasure in a great people kept alive.

May the Lord bless the word.

London

21st November 2015

TWO PROMISES

David H Marshall

John 14: 1-3, 15-17

I seek help to say something simply and briefly as to these promises that the Lord Jesus makes. There are two promises here: there is one that relates to the future, when the Lord Jesus tells us that the prospect and hope of the believer is to be with Him in this place that He Himself has prepared.

What a wonderful promise that is - a promise for us all to take great comfort in. The Lord Jesus at this stage was nearing the end of His life here; these are the closing chapters, and yet He had great concern for His own, particularly because He was about to leave them soon, and He makes this promise that He will come again and take them to be with Himself.

It is a wonderful hope, a very real matter; it is a prospect for every true believer, that the Lord Jesus has made this promise which He will keep for each one of us. Whether He takes us individually or at that great day when He shall come for all His own, that prospect is assured, a promise that we can rely on.

You might say that is a promise for the future. But this further promise that He makes is really for here and now, and that is very encouraging, because promises still to be realised can sometimes seem distant, and we may not think of them as much as we should. But in the interim period there is this wonderful promise that He makes of the gift of the Spirit. What a wonderful promise it is! And that is a promise that is realised. We have actually experienced that, because we know that those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus and His finished work can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; if they ask the Father that gift is freely available, and indeed is essential to enjoy Christianity and links with divine Persons in a full way. That promise was made to those that love the Lord Jesus for when He was going to be absent from them. But His concern was not only for those within earshot but for the here and now, our dispensation, our generation, the people in this room. That promise is for us. We have the Spirit to comfort us; we need the Spirit to guide us into the truth; we need the Spirit to guide day by day; and that promise is one that the Lord Jesus has given us to sustain us until that day when the first promise is realised.

May we all be encouraged. These promises are real matters to be experienced in a real way now, but also to be looked forward to. May the Lord bless the word.

Word in Meeting for Ministry

Edinburgh

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