

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 100

July 2015

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OBEDIENCE

Ian E Purdy

Genesis 2: 8, 9, 15-17

Matthew 26: 39

Mark 4: 35-41

John 14: 21-23

I have in mind to say a few words about obedience. In one sense it is a very simple matter; I do not suppose there are too many in this room who do not understand what it means to be obedient. My burden this evening is that we might understand a little better how precious it is to the Lord Jesus for each one of us to be simply obedient to Him; not just to know what it means, but actually to be obedient.

This first scripture speaks about disobedience, and most will know it well; I do not intend to speak much about disobedience: I would rather occupy you with the positive side of this matter; obedience. It was in God's mind from the beginning, from the very time that man was created; God had in mind this matter of obedience.

I trust we will be helped to contemplate the second scripture rightly and speak well of the obedient One. In relation to the third scripture, we might speak about the authority of the Lord Jesus in a general way, and in the fourth scripture, if the Lord will, we will perhaps consider what it is for you and me to be obedient, what springs from the heart in simple love for Christ.

It might be until now that, when someone has spoken about obedience, you might have tended to think rather negatively about it; I have known that. It might bring to mind rules and regulations; but when we are growing up we often need them. This matter of obedience is not just a simple matter of following rules and regulations. It is plain to see that it could not actually be specified what every single one of us should do at every moment of every day, but in the Holy Scriptures we have a wonderful, concise setting out of what the mind of God is, and what the mind of the Lord Jesus is, and if we consider prayerfully it will always be very clear to any lover of the Lord Jesus exactly what it is that the Lord has in mind for you to do. It might not be clear just immediately; it may take time to understand it, but in time if you are minded to understand what the Lord Jesus would have you to do and you are prayerfully before Him about it, I can assure you He will not disappoint you.

Although there might not be a very specific rule or regulation about any particular juncture in your life, He wants you to know what His mind is about everything. He wants to share that with you and He wants you to be obedient to it.

It is very interesting how this matter is set out in Genesis. God placed man in a garden. It was not a garden like we might be used to that is overrun with weeds and is a great deal of trouble to till and to keep right. God placed Adam in a sphere that was a very pleasant place to be, “and the tree of life, in the midst”, and every tree in that garden was “pleasant to the sight, and good for food”, a most gracious provision of a loving God. He made one stipulation: “but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it”. If it was so important for them not to eat it, why did He put the tree in the garden? In the midst was the tree of life and there was every other tree that was good for them but He placed there the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and they were not to eat of it; so why was it there? It seems to me that it is a bit like your life, dear young believer, dear young brother or sister and older ones too. You are set in a sphere where there is very much for your blessing, very much for your encouragement, for your help, for your growth but round about you see things that you know very well you should not touch, you should not have anything to do with them. I believe that if you know the Lord Jesus and you read the scriptures prayerfully you will gain that discernment, if you do not have it already, to know what is for your good and what is not. God does not separate you in that sense so that you cannot touch what is for your harm but He gives us clear commandment, very clear instruction as to what we should follow after and what we should not, and then it comes down to: will we be obedient? Will we obey Him? That is what it came down to for Adam; was he going to obey God or was He not? God delights in our obedience; the Lord Jesus delights in our obedience. I read recently, and I thought it was very precious, that obedience refreshes the Lord, as being the fruit of His own grace in our hearts, C H Mackintosh, Notes on Genesis (chap 18). That is what He is looking for from your life and mine. He wants us to be obedient. He wants us to simply follow His word and that is what Adam was set in this garden to do, “to till it and to guard it”. You might well say that they were the most congenial circumstances that man could be put in and, yet more wonderful, God comes to Him. We understand from later verses that God came to Him in the cool of the day, to walk with Adam and to speak over matters, but that one thing that God had said He was not to do,

Adam failed in.

It brings out in beautiful contrast the One who never failed, the obedient One, the Lord Jesus. We can read many scriptures about the obedience of the Lord Jesus; at every step His every word and every action was perfect obedience. He never strayed one hair's breadth from the will of God, but I think there is a very beautiful example of the obedience of the Lord Jesus in this verse that we read. We referred to it in the reading too, the One who was obedient even unto death. The Lord Jesus in contemplating this awful matter shrank from it in His holiness but He says, "not as *I* will, but as *thou* wilt". It was by the obedience of that One that we are constituted righteous, Rom 5: 19. The Lord Jesus went into death and that the death of the cross; He was made sin. The obedient One, the One in whom the Father had all His delight, perfect delight, went into death; when the matter of sin was dealt with God could regard with delight the obedience of the Lord Jesus, the One who glorified Him in going into death. The obedience of the Lord Jesus was not just that He did not do the things that He was not supposed to do, but He also did everything, and only did that which His Father desired for Him to do. Thus He glorified the Father. He delighted His Father in His obedience, and that, dear friend, dear brother and sister, is what I trust we can get through to. Obedience is not a negative thing; there is great glory for God in it. You might think of it as being very restrictive, you might think of it as being very negative, but there is something in your simple obedience that is delightful to the heart of God, which is delightful to the heart of the Lord Jesus. It might just be some very small matter but if you do it in simple obedience to the Lord Jesus there is great delight for divine Persons in that. It might be that there is something that you know that you should be doing or that you should not be doing. It is rather like a stone in front of the wheelbarrow wheel. You cannot move forward until that matter is dealt with. It may be you have considered it many times, it may be that it has been spoken about in meetings many times, over and over again, but you have been a hearer of the word and not a doer. I would exhort you beloved brother, beloved sister, that you might take up this matter of obeying and just do it; for the glory and pleasure of divine Persons.

When we come to Mark's gospel we see the Lord Jesus going on a ship with His disciples and "there comes a violent gust of wind, and the waves beat into the ship". I suppose it was on the face of it quite dangerous and they were fearful. I suppose you and I would have been

no different. They wake up the Lord Jesus and “he rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Silence, be mute”. I would like to draw your attention to the One that even the winds and the sea obey. We often get discouraged about what is going on round about. The wind may be what causes the agitation, and the sea might be a bit like us when we become agitated, but the Lord Jesus is able to calm both. Oh that we might be strengthened in our faith in relation to this. He has authority over the sea and over the winds; He has authority, as we see in other scriptures, over unclean spirits. It says later on, He has “authority over all flesh”, John 17: 2. The One that we trust in has authority over everyone and He has authority over you and me. We might sometimes wonder, 'How do I know what the mind of the Lord Jesus is for me, how will I know what it is?'. We have already said that the Scriptures are very clearly the word of God, and you will find in them an answer to all your questions about what the Lord's mind is. Sometimes we find it difficult to understand at any juncture, what is it that we should do because being obedient means first of all that we have to know what the Lord would have us to do. You have to be hearers before you can be doers. It comes down to a matter of prayer. We can read the Scriptures as much as we would, and that is a good thing, but it really comes down to a matter of prayer as well, to understand what the Scriptures would say to us.

It is very interesting that in one of the incidents later on they go to fish and they caught nothing. Then the Lord Jesus says to them, “Cast the net at the right side of the ship and ye will find. They cast therefore, and they could no longer draw it, from the multitude of fishes”, John 21: 6. John recognises that it is the Lord. He immediately recognises that it is the Lord, the One who had told them to do this. When they see the result of it they can recognise it was the Lord that said it. Over time you will learn to recognise the voice of the Lord in this way. It can take some time; it might be that when we are young we do not recognise it all the time, but as time goes on and we are obedient and prove it, we learn to recognise it.

The last scripture is what I really wanted to get to. The Lord Jesus Himself says, “He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me”. That is the only right spring for obedience, dear friend. Do you wish to please the Lord Jesus? Do you love Him and desire to give delight to Him? The One who was obedient even unto death, the One who suffered for you, do you want to please Him? This

is the way to please Him: to be obedient, to have His commandments and to keep them. It is simple; there is nothing complicated about it. When we try and please other people you will find there will be conflicting things; sometimes it will be impossible to please everybody else. When it comes to obedience to the Lord Jesus, it is all beautifully simple. He never asks us to do anything that is impossible. It may be that it requires a great deal of exercise. It may be that it requires a great deal of sacrifice or sorrow. It might be that we wonder how it can be done. The Lord Jesus never asks us to do anything that is impossible. Everything is possible with God of course.

I feel particularly impressed that sometimes we might shrink back from doing what we know is right for fear of what someone else might think. Sometimes we might wonder what our friends might think, what our brethren might think, and in one sense it is right to consider for our brethren. Whenever we know that the Lord Jesus would have us to do something, it has to be our overriding priority. Do not consider what your friend might think. I expect we have all been in that situation. I know what it is like to think to myself, 'I really should not do that or have anything to do with that thing but it might offend that person or it might upset them and I do not want to do that'. Dear friend, this is too important a matter. We are speaking about the authority of the Lord Jesus; His is an absolute authority which you cannot trifle with. You cannot take into account anyone else's thoughts or feelings about it. If the Lord would have you to do something you must do it, but what a blessing comes thereby. It may be that you do suffer some reproach, it may be that you do suffer some loss in a temporal way, but consider the promise of this verse that we have been reading; the Father Himself will love you. The Lord Jesus will love you, and He will come and make His abode with you. Is there anything more precious to you than that? Is there anything that we should let stand in the way of such a precious promise as that, that the Lord Jesus Himself will come with the Father and make His abode with us? Dear friend, if you have never proved that, if you have never proved what it is just in the secret of your own room or wherever it might be, to seek the presence of the Lord Jesus and without any sense of need on your part, to just open your heart and listen to what He would say to you, ask Him to make Himself known to you and to open your eyes to see His glory, to open your eyes to see what His will is for you as to what He would have you to do. If you have never done it I would encourage you to do it. It is a very great privilege that we have.

We were speaking in the reading about how the systems of men would put up all sorts of barriers. It is a very great privilege we have, dear friend, to seek the presence of the Lord Jesus and enjoy His company. It is open to you; do not let anything stand in the way, but you have to deal first of all with this matter of obedience. You will not find that repose in His presence that I commend to you, if there is some matter outstanding. Is there something that He has spoken to you about that you have not dealt with? Dear friend, do not let it stand in the way. It is a simple matter; I trust I am not making it too simple, but it really is simple to be obedient to the One who loves you, to the One that you love, and prove the blessing of entering into His presence. I have been speaking of this in an individual way; it is an even greater thing in a collective way to enter in with others that are like-minded, others who are obedient to His word, those who gather to His Name, and those who love Him and together enjoy His presence. I would appeal to you, dear brother and sister, dear friend, that if there is some little matter or some great matter that is standing in the way of you enjoying this I would urge you, simply be obedient. Oh what a precious pathway the Lord Jesus has set out for us. He has gone before, He is our model, He is our example, what a perfect example He is as the obedient One and all we have to do is to follow Him and to be obedient.

May He bless the word, for His Name's sake.

Birmingham

24th October 2014

BEING BROUGHT INTO MORAL ACCORD WITH GOD

John Laurie

John 14: 21-23

Psalms 119: 1-8

Colossians 3: 12-15

1 Corinthians 13: 8 (to “fails”)

Revelation 4: 1-4

I seek help, beloved brethren, to say something about being brought into moral accord with God. I would like to speak of it in relation to four different settings from the Scriptures we have read. Firstly in relation to the mind of God, then in being brought into accord with the will of God, then being brought into accord with the love of God; and lastly in being brought into moral accord with the administration that proceeds from God.

It is not by mistake that I have read the same section as was read yesterday evening, and in some measure I have similar thoughts about the section to present. If there is a measure of repetition, may the Lord grant us grace to receive the force of the word. It is sufficient that a thing should be said by a divine Person once. If it be said more than once, then there is particular emphasis that we have to own and recognise. It would be understandable that it is in the mind of God that there should be moral accord with us in relation to His own thoughts. God's standard is Christ. That has been said many times, and if I have one overriding exercise in view of this occasion it is that may Christ be honoured in all that is said.

God has given Him the highest place in glory on high. He is worthy of it. He is worthy of the supreme place in our affections, and His word and commandments deserve to have our greatest attention. I thoroughly agree with what was presented on the past evening, that we must be obedient to the word of the Lord. The word “commandment” is used in this section and while it conveys an indication of the Lord's mind for us it carries the additional thought that it is presented in such a way that it bears divine authority in the speaking. The Lord has a right to speak with divine authority. I would go as far as to say that every divine communication carries authority with it. It may be at times that God speaks in all the blessedness of His grace and with all the appeal of His love; we can never disassociate the thought of authority from divine speaking and therefore it calls for obedience on our part to answer to

the light presented. Perfect obedience was a very precious feature that marked the Lord Jesus as a Man here.

I find it most interesting that we have three very precious references in a prophetic way to the ear of the Lord Jesus. We are told in the Psalm, "ears hast thou prepared me", Ps 40: 6. That was at the point of His entrance into manhood. We are told later in Isaiah, "He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed" (Isa 50: 4), which would allude to the course of His manhood here. In Exodus it is said, "his master shall bore his ear through with an awl", Exod 21: 6. That is a prophetic reference to the irreversible commitment of the Lord Jesus to carry out in its entirety what the will of God required. He has gone even to death. He never turned back and He never could on account of the blessedness of His perfect obedience. These references call our attention to the ears of the Lord Jesus as a Man in all His blessed perfection. Is it not appropriate then that we should have hearing ears in relation to what God might say, and that we should hearken to the importance of His word? I would include in my thoughts the written word of God. We are in days when some people are very willing to express their opinions about a great variety of things and sadly sometimes harmful opinions are expressed which are entirely contrary to the authority of God's word. What do we do? Do we go by the general consensus of opinion about matters or do we stand by the regulating authority of God's word? We must be obedient to the authority of the divine word. God's mind has been set forth; how blessed that that is so. How thankful we should be for the unfolding of the mind of God, and what a wonderful unfolding there has been. God spoke in many parts and in many ways before but there has been no speaking like the speaking in Son, Heb 1: 1, 2. The heart of God has been made known and not only His power and divinity, great as they are.

Men often fail to move in the true fear of God, not understanding the mighty power that God has to give effect to every requirement of His holy will. God has wonderful reserves of power. We have yet to see some of them released on the earth, although much will be brought out when the church is taken to be with Christ. God has mighty reserves of power but the particular character of His speaking at the present time is in all the blessed appeal of grace as set forth in the glad tidings. Oh the wonder of God's heart of love! What wonderful speaking continues in the testimony at the present time: the testimony to God's grace. Has

there been an answer in obedience from every heart here to the appeal of God in love? I would just take a moment to say, do not trifle with these things, dear friend. God speaks in grace, He speaks once, and He may speak many times. Some of us can look back on our own lives and recall many, many times when God graciously spoke to us. That reflects the marvellous grace of God and His wonderful patience, but it provides no opportunity for trifling with the importance and the solemnity of God's word. If He speaks, hearken to the appeal of divine love, and obey.

I not only make mention of the importance of answering to the word as coming from divine Persons, but I make reference to the wonderful appeal that would come home to our hearts from considering the compensation and the reward of hearkening to the voice of the Lord Jesus. It says here, "He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me; but he that loves me shall be loved by my Father". How precious are these words of the Lord Jesus. They set out the portion of those who hear His commandments and keep them. It is love's opportunity to respond to the appeal of the Lord's authoritative word and to come into the enjoyment of all the blessedness that flows in affection from the Father towards us because of our recognition of Christ. What things we are brought into in the sphere of Christianity! He further says, "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him". What rich compensation on account of adhering to the words of the Lord Jesus and going by the authority of all that has been communicated to us. We are in days when we should value these things, because sadly sometimes there is a public turning away from the authority of the word of God.

I am not here to criticise authority in government, but I do observe that sometimes legislation is passed which runs contrary to the word of God. We must stand by the authority of the Scriptures. We must be marked by this principle of obedience, and it carries its own blessed reward in the enjoyment of the Father's love toward us and the manifestation of Christ, because He makes Himself manifest as well. We read that "Judas, not the Iscariote, says to him, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us and not to the world?". The Lord had indicated He would manifest Himself to those that love Him. It is not characteristic of the world to express love for Christ. It is the scene of Christ's rejection. Oh that we might enjoy and appreciate our place

amongst the sanctified company, those who have been set apart in order to be for God where there is love for Christ and love for His word, and where the manifestation of Christ may be enjoyed. This beautiful thought is expressed of divine Persons coming to make their abode. What do we know of these things, beloved brethren? They spring from attention to the divine word. I leave that among us because I think it is a starting point. If I do not have an understanding of the mind of God I do not know how to proceed. We have no need to be in darkness. It is a terrible thing to be in the darkness. If you are in the darkness you are without God and you are without hope. Light has come in and involves the communication of the mind of God, and that light then becomes law. If God communicates His mind then the light of the revealed mind of God becomes regulatory towards us and that is why I read from Psalm 119.

It is a section that we may not too often draw upon. It sets out the earnest exercise of a soul having some understanding of the law of God and His testimonies and His commandments so that his walk should be regulated accordingly. I have just been indicating that light becomes law to us and as that is worked out in a practical way we are brought into moral conformity to the will of God; to walk in accord with the will of God. How delightful that is to God Himself. He found a full answer to that in all the moral perfection of the Lord Jesus in His pathway here. Oh what excellence marked the footsteps of the Lord Jesus! Think of the Father taking account of the movements of His own beloved Son as He pursued that pathway here in perfect accord with the will of God. Was there ever a step out of place? There never was. There was opposition against the Lord Jesus; there was temptation even from Satan himself; there were times when the Lord Jesus felt the coldness and hatred of men but never did the Lord step out of the pathway of God's will. Having committed Himself to fulfil the Father's will He proceeded to carry it out in every detail in divine perfection as a Man here. The standard is Christ. God is operating to form a great family at the present time.

There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that the family that is being formed at the present time will be brought into perfect accord with the mind of God. Each of the personnel will be clothed entirely according to God's mind. We shall have bodies of glory like unto His body of glory, Phil 3: 21. Christ will carry out that wonderful act and will transform these bodies into conformity to His own body of glory. He has

the mighty power to do it and He will transform these bodies of ours. It is a wonderful thought that we shall be brought into perfect accord even as to our bodies. We are told about that in Romans 8, "whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated", for such a place of favour before God, "to be conformed to the image of his Son", v 29. That is an area that is outside of contention and dispute, and springs from the declared mind of God from eternity. What a wonderful hope the believer has.

My point for the moment rather bears on the work that is proceeding now. That is, that we should be morally conformed to Christ now and brought into accord with the mind of God in a practical way through inward formation. That is part of the wonderful service of the Holy Spirit at the present time. Some may wonder about the use of the word 'moral'. It does not appear in the text of Scripture although you will find it in helpful footnotes in several places. Clearly the import of the word bears upon us because it shows how God has brought in clear distinction between what is good and what is evil and revealed His mind about it. He is working in order that we may be formed according to the perfect good that has been expressed in Christ. We use the expression, 'the moral perfection of the Lord Jesus'. If we do so, we would do well to say, 'perfect good in the midst of all evil'. The divine standard is there. God will not take anything into eternity in this wonderful family that falls short of the divine standard in Christ. What God is working out at the present time in a moral way in the souls of the saints is to bring us into perfect accord with His own peculiar delight in Christ His well-beloved Son.

That bears on our understanding of the mind of God and it bears on us being formed and helped to walk in accordance with the will of God and the ways of God. These things found their perfect answer in the Lord Jesus. They were a source of delight to His Father's heart. God did not hide His delight in His own beloved Son. The heavens were opened and the voice was "uttered to him by the excellent glory: This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight", 2 Peter 1: 17. What delight the Father had in calling attention to Christ. We were reading a passage recently in our local meeting and the expression was used "boasting in Christ Jesus", Phil 1: 26. A young brother asked why we should be told to boast. That is a healthy enquiry, for we have no cause to boast in ourselves, but if we are making much of Christ Jesus then that is honouring to God. God's delight is in Him. Let us be

preserved from making much of ourselves, and from seeking any place of importance amongst the saints for that it is not according to the will of God. The will of God is that Christ should be magnified among us and formed in us. May the Spirit of God graciously operate in our hearts to form the true characteristics of the family in us so that the heavenly character of the family comes into expression in a greater way.

We often say that the assembly is a vessel heavenly in origin and destiny, which is perfectly true. I always like to add this thought that it is heavenly in origin, *character* and destiny, JBS vol 7 p14. What is being formed of true assembly character is something that is entirely in accordance with the mind of God. What God is forming in the souls of the saints is a perfect work. That is a feature of the Spirit's work. It is perfect in the soul of the believer at any point according to what has been formed. The Spirit never forms imperfect work: He is a divine Person and His operations are perfectly in accordance with the counsel that has proceeded from God Himself. The work of the Holy Spirit is distinctive in its glorious nature. What has been formed and written in the hearts of the saints will neither be deleted nor amended. It is written indelibly there according to His perfect work and will go through into glory. That is a marvellous thing about the work of the Holy Spirit that is being currently formed in the souls of the saints. You may feel weak in your body or you may feel as if your mind is beginning to fail a little and you cannot remember all the things that you once remembered, but God does the writing in the heart. He does not write it in a failing memory. The Spirit is able to recall things to our minds, and graciously serves us in that way too, but the work of formation is an inward work in the souls of the saints. It is a work of new creation, meantime housed in old creation vessels. We are soon to have bodies of glory that will be completely in accordance with the new creation sphere into which we are to be brought. All this is proceeding meantime so that we should be brought into perfect harmony with the will of God in our pathway here. May we preserved from projecting ourselves and from causing confusion or disarray amongst the saints. He is the God of order and is operating in view of a glorious answer being wrought out among the saints down here.

I would now like to say a little about the love of God. What a wonderful thing it is to be brought into accord with the love of God. The measure of my stature is largely judged by the measure of my formation in love; that is a sobering thought. We may have access to devices to

help us to become expanded in our knowledge of things. It is well and good if they are used wisely, but the measure of our true stature is the measure in which we are formed in love. Love provides wonderful opportunities. Some of the features to be wrought out in love amongst the saints are outlined in the section that we read from in Colossians. What scope there is for these activities in love to proceed amongst us! Would we not admit that there is always opportunity to bring out the grace of the Lord Jesus in a practical way in our relationships with one another and in the promotion of what is proper to the family and in the sight of God?

I would like to speak about Epaphras who constantly prayed that the saints should be preserved according to the will of God. He was local in Colosse and spoke to Paul about his local brethren. He did not criticise them, but told Paul about their love in the Spirit. That is a beautiful thought. I do not wish to be hard in my comments, but I just pray that we may all be preserved from harmful gossip and be helped to speak well of our local brethren: they are among the brethren of Christ; they belong to the heavenly family every bit as much as I do. When Epaphras was telling Paul about the saints, he was not at that time resident in his local meeting; he was in the prison as a fellow prisoner with Paul in Rome. He never gave up his love for his brethren. There is always room to add love. Perhaps you think there is not as much love amongst the saints as there should be. Beloved brother, beloved sister, that is love's opportunity for you. Take up the opportunity to add love. Even to brotherly love add love. I may feel I have fulfilled my obligations to my brother and nothing more can be done. "Love never fails". Perhaps something else can be done. Oh to have wisdom to know how to apply love in order to bring in an answer to needs among us. Does love ever conflict with truth? It never could, for both proceed from God, love being His very nature. Truth includes the glorious unfolding of the mind of God. The two things cannot conflict, it is not possible. Light from God helps us to know God's mind, and being obedient to it helps us to walk according to His will. Love provides the ability to work it out in a practical way amongst the saints so that what is perfectly consistent with the truth may find its workable expression and happy enjoyment among us as belonging to the family.

I was thinking about the tabernacle system. I was recalling that Moses was given instructions about the pattern, and the erection of the boards which held up the curtains, Exod 25, 26. The boards are like the

persons, and the curtains are like the principles. If you do not have the persons the principles will not be rightly supported, but God has provided us with the persons. Let us have true regard for the persons of the saints, our brethren. There was a bar, the middle bar, which bound those boards together. That was like adding love when the middle bar was put in. It speaks very interestingly about the middle bar "reaching from one end to the other", Ex 26: 28. We may feel that tests us. I may get on with most of the saints but find there are some that I still have some difficulty about. The bar goes from one end to the other. We need to have regard in love for all the saints. I am not putting a word upon my brethren that I am not taking to my own heart, but if there is need of more love amongst us then let us all add it. If you were to ask me if it will work, I trust without boasting, that I can tell you that I know it works. I have seen it working locally. I have seen it in practice amongst the saints and I know it works. We have the authority of God's word telling us that love never fails, but when the exercise is practically taken up in love for Christ and for those who truly belong to the family, divine support would bring in help to make it workable. Love never involves compromise or departure from adhering to the principles of the truth. It is the very way that the workability of the truth is made possible amongst the saints and Epaphras shone in that. I do not know if he was a gifted brother or not, but he is said to be a bondman in Christ Jesus. You do not need gift to be a bondman. It is a question of taking up the exercise in devotion to serve the Lord and His people in love, and taking it up carries an outstanding reward. It brings joy amongst the saints. It cheered the heart of the apostle Paul. Even in the prison, when deprived largely for the time being of the company of his brethren in other parts and the liberty to move among them, he was cheered to learn of what God's operations were amongst the Colossian saints as reported by a faithful bondman in Christ Jesus. I think there is plenty opportunity for faithful service among us in love. As loving one another, and adding love, it promotes what is pleasing to God.

I pass on to my final thought, in touching upon the scene in Revelation. It is future, but John was given a preview. He saw a throne, and I may add that the throne comes in at the beginning of Revelation and it comes in at the end of Revelation. The whole book is encased with the thought of supremacy on the throne. God will never depart from His thoughts. God can never be forced into any situation but He proceeds according to the wisdom of His ways. Much is yet to be accomplished that John was privileged to get a preview of and it is

most interesting to look into these things that have yet to be seen.

The elders were round that throne. The elders are being prepared now. They do not abruptly come into view on the heavenly scene. The term elder would rather indicate that they were persons of experience who had been formed by God in view of having their part in sympathetic interest around the throne. I link that with the thought of administration and it is suggestive of what is proceeding now. I will say for the help of some of our younger brethren that the twenty four elders do not seem to be twenty four specific persons but they are representative of the fruit of experience with God. I do not limit the thought to those of the present family. I have no doubt the thought includes the wealth of experience from other families too and of times when God has been operating amongst others such as Abraham, Moses, David and many more. It bears in a special way upon the saints of the present family, however, because there is no time of administration like the administration that is being wrought out now. There is a wonderful administration proceeding that Paul makes reference to in Ephesians 3. Things hidden throughout the ages have now not only been revealed but the administration of them is proceeding. We are under observation from heaven, beloved brethren. Heavenly dignitaries are looking down upon the all various wisdom that is to be found in the assembly at the present time. Is the administration in our localities in keeping with such a dignified thought? Are we adhering to the principles that give honour to the truth and are in accordance with it, and thus are not divergent from the authority of the word of God?

These things search us and one would speak in love to the saints in order that we all may be helped to work out things in a practical way, so that the experiences gained may indicate that we are in sympathy with what proceeds from the throne. Neutrality is an impossibility in Christianity. You cannot put neutrality alongside the rainbow which encircled the throne. It is a testimony to the abiding faithfulness of God Himself. The elders are round the throne and they are in perfect harmony with the declared faithfulness of God Himself. They are there and they are "clothed with white garments; and on their heads golden crowns". These are wonderful allusions to the characteristics of the dignity of the experience gained from the administration at the present time that will then be suited to the scene round the throne in a future time. The present time is the time when the experience of many of the elders is being gained. It is not only

experience, because I might have bad experiences as well as good experiences: I would suggest it is the *fruit* of experience. It will display the fruit of what is wrought out amongst the saints in proper administration according to divine wisdom.

There is need of these things being carried out in true love for the Lord Jesus whom we seek to honour in the time of His absence. He will soon take up direct administration when He takes the throne. He is presently seated on the Father's throne and occupies that worthy place. We shall share Christ's throne, but I know of no one else who shares the Father's throne, save Christ Himself, Rev 3: 21. It is a witness to the place of honour that the Father has given Him. It is also a witness to the wonderful love that the Father has for Him, that He so honoured Him and glorified Him, and has set Him down there at His own right hand in glory. Oh that we may consider what is worthy of the Lord Jesus during the time of His absence when He is seated on the Father's throne and is looking to the saints of His assembly here under the influence of His headship and under the authority of His lordship to carry out what is pleasing to Himself. It is the time when the formation of elders is being brought very close to completion so that there is sympathetic interest in wisdom and in suitability with all that proceeds from the throne. All this will shortly be brought into display, according to John's view.

There is great value attached to the present time of formation. Let us take advantage of the Spirit's day when the Spirit is operating down here. May we be amenable to the activities of the blessed Holy Spirit so that the work of formation in us may not be delayed in any way through obstinacy on our part or through self-will that would hinder these things. Lack of love would tend to prevent the liberating flow of divine activities among us in the family. May we be helped to honour God as coming under these worthy influences from heaven in view of God's glory.

Birmingham

25th October 2014

THE GREATNESS OF THE ASSEMBLY

James Drummond

Psalm 24: 7 - 10

John 21: 24 - 25

Acts 1: 13 - 15

Ephesians 1: 19 - 23

I have a simple impression, beloved brethren, as to how great the assembly is because of her appreciation of divine Persons and divine things. We had some impression of that on Lord's day from Acts 20 when we spoke of "the assembly of God, which he has purchased with the blood of his own", v 28. It is not the word redemption that is used there, which would suggest atonement from sin, but the thought of being "purchased" brings out the intrinsic value of the object that was before God in the assembly. A brother referred to the "pearl of great value", Matt 13: 45, 46. Think of God's estimation of the assembly. I feel challenged as to my appreciation of the assembly, but think of God's estimation, that it was "the blood of his own" that He gave to secure such a vessel. It is a vessel that would then become such an accompaniment, we may say, to His own beloved Son.

We read first of all in Psalm 24. Here we have a scene of glory. I think it has been linked to when the Lord was received in glory. "Lift up your heads, ye gates; yea, lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in". Think of what a time that was when Christ was raised from amongst the dead. It says elsewhere in Scripture, "whom heaven indeed must receive", Acts 3: 21. He was not only received up to glory, He "has been received up *in* glory", 1 Tim 3: 16. Think of all that Christ is. So the writer asks the question, "Who is this King of glory?": and later, "Who is he, this King of glory? Jehovah of hosts". What a One He is! It links to the millennium when Christ will come in His glory and be seen publicly. There is a reference to the gates: "Lift up your heads, ye gates", perhaps the gates suggest more what is public; "and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors", suggests more what is internal. Think of the appreciation that the whole universe will have of Christ: the assembly's appreciation of Christ, and Israel's appreciation, and also the nations', when His glory becomes manifest and becomes public. But at present the assembly has a unique appreciation of Christ and His glory, and of God and His glory. It says here, "Who is this King of glory? Jehovah strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in battle". What we sang

in our hymn comes into that, God in Christ went on alone. It was referred to in prayer -

None could follow there, blest Saviour,
When Thou didst for sins atone; (Hymn 298)

But then too the Name, "Jehovah strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in battle", includes the wars of the testimony. There have always been the wars of the testimony, throughout the whole dispensation. We find that if we look at Mr Darby's ministry or look at 'The Recovery and Maintenance of the Truth', or Mr James Taylor's ministry; we find that there has always been conflict in relation to the truth. Yet it says, "Jehovah strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in battle". It is His battle, it is not ours, and the ground on which we seek to stand is the ground that God has secured in Christ. We speak about the principles of the truth, and rightly so, but these principles are not the brethren's principles but God's principles. They are not new; they have been established by God since the beginning, and here we have this encouragement that Jehovah is strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in battle. That comes first; I think there is order here. You may say the principles are presented in verse 8: "Jehovah strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in battle", and then we have the persons presented in verse 10: "Jehovah of hosts". There is a divine order in that, as we seek in simplicity to be faithful to the principles that God has established, you can have confidence in God that He will help us take care, and He Himself will take care, of the persons. So we have "Jehovah strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in battle", the principles, and then we have, "Jehovah of hosts", the persons. And then the result is seen in the last sentence, which is just one word, "Selah". It is one word meaning peace. If we follow this order, the peace that is established is definite, it is permanent, and there is no compromise involved in this peace. It stands on its own in that one word, "Selah". This order is also presented in the scripture we read on Lord's day where Paul announced the kingdom of God, which would involve principles, and then he says, "I have not shrunk from announcing to you all the counsel of God", v 27. Counsel suggests what is operational. It is not only purpose, which may be viewed abstractly. Counsel involves what is worked out in persons. Again we may say there is a divine order, the principles and the persons. We also see in Acts 20 what begins and ends with an embrace. We might say that love covers it all. Whatever ground we take it must be motivated by love, love for God, love for

Christ, love for the truth, love for the saints.

In the second scripture we read we have the reference in verse 25, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they were written one by one, I suppose that not even the world itself would contain the books written". What skill, we may reverently say, the Spirit used to record the different accounts in the Gospels as to the pathway of our Lord Jesus here. How great His activity was in the relatively short life that the Lord had here, and it says, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they were written one by one I suppose that not even the world itself would contain the books written". I think we can say that these books are in the assembly, and I do not suppose there is a greater library than what belongs to the assembly. Think of the library of the assembly; the assembly really is the library of heaven, the library of the universe. I suppose the largest library in the world is the British Library in London, but there is no library like the library of the assembly because everything that has been revealed of Christ is treasured in the assembly. What a wonderful matter that is! This is John writing and as we look at the beginning of John's gospel it says that "No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, *he* hath declared him", John 1: 18. Everything that has been declared of God, everything that has been revealed of God, is treasured in the assembly. The world could not contain these books but the assembly can! It is a wonderful vessel which has been secured throughout this dispensation. In the world to come it will be seen. Everything that is to be known of Christ in the millennium will be seen through the assembly. If you think of her as a library, what a point of reference the assembly will be to Israel and to the nations, the one through whom even now "the all-various wisdom of God" (Eph 3: 10) is made known. What a vessel she is, almost too great for us to fully comprehend, but nonetheless there is a wonderful vessel, the assembly, that is an expression of what God had in mind to make known and has made known.

So I read in Acts and was thinking especially of what it says in verse 14, "These gave themselves all with one accord to continual prayer, with several women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren". What a touching reference it is, "and Mary the mother of Jesus". John brings before us not only the pathway of Christ but the Person of Christ. The assembly has a full appreciation of all that can be known as to the Person of Christ, but where we have read in Acts would

bring before us that the assembly also has a full appreciation of the manhood of Christ, and that nothing that belongs to the humanity of Jesus, the manhood of Jesus, has been lost. It has been preserved in the assembly. I think that is why it says, "and Mary the mother of Jesus". It is all gathered up. Think of that. Think of what this means to God. That is why the assembly is so precious to God. He would not allow any impression of Jesus as a Man here, as a perfect Man before Him for His own pleasure, to be lost, and He has a vessel in which the preciousness, to put it simply, of Christ is preserved, preserved in the assembly. How wonderful a vessel the assembly is!

Then lastly we read in Ephesians where we have the truth presented at its height. We read a few verses but I was thinking especially of verse 22, "has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the assembly, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all". Headship in Colossians is more personal. What a moment that is in the believer's life when he reaches Colossians because the headship of Christ impresses itself upon him. Personally and morally, He is before all in the greatness of His Person, but here in Ephesians it is more official. It is what God is doing. We read of that, "and what the surpassing greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of the might of his strength, in which he wrought in the Christ in raising him from among the dead". Then it speaks about His Name, "and he set him down at his right hand in the heavenlies, above every principality, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name named" - now think of this - "not only in this age, but also in that to come"; and then, "and has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the assembly, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all". What a vessel she is! We sometimes think about the assembly having the nearest place to Deity and perhaps this is a scripture that would bear that out, because I think the reference we have to "the fulness of him" must be a reference to the fact that Christ is a divine Person, and what underlies "all in all" is deity. We clearly understand that the assembly has no part in deity, but how great she must be if she can be described as that "which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all".

Well, may we be encouraged, beloved brethren, by thinking about this wonderful vessel. What marks us in our weakness and any breakdown in the testimony is one thing, but this vessel in all its prestige and glory remains intact, remains complete. There is a view in which

there is no breakdown. It is His body; that is what we read: “which is his body”. There is no breakdown in the thought of the body. The assembly remains a glorious vessel for the pleasure and glory of God and of Christ. May we be encouraged, for His Name's sake.

Aberdeen

3rd June 2014

BROUGHT TO DAVID

Bill W Lovie

1 Samuel 30: 11-15

I have a simple impression, dear brethren, as to what would sustain us. Our brother has asked what would sustain us. And in the first word our brother brought before us the greatness of what the assembly is, which is very wonderful to contemplate; what food that is for us. It is not simply to be a lovely-looking picture on the wall, as we are often reminded, but it is to mean something; there is to be some practical result. This Egyptian found in the field is an example. He is often used in the gospel, related to someone that is in their sins and away from God, without hope in the world. He is found; David finds him: typically, Christ finds him. But there are those that are with David: "they found an Egyptian in the field". I wondered if there may be some suggestion that those that are with David know where there is resource. The true David has resource, and is marked by grace. We find in the first book of Samuel that Abigail comes to light; she is one that suggests the assembly to us, and she has tremendous resource. What wonderful resource the assembly has! It is available practically at the present time. It is not merely going to a reading in Revelation and looking forward to the millennium and what it will be, and all that will flow out in the way of wonderful 'blest administration', as hymn 221 says, but there is something of that to be known now, and it is for our blessing and for our benefit.

So here is one, you may say, who had been entangled in sin. Scripture speaks of "laying aside every weight, and sin which so easily entangles us", Heb 12: 1. Well, have we got entangled in the world? Maybe we all know something of that. What an opportunity there is in being brought to David; thus the local assembly is a place of resource. So that they "gave him bread" - that is something staple that is needed. - "and they gave him water to drink", which is needed as well. What refreshment you find in the local meetings. "And they gave him water to drink, and gave him a piece of fig-cake and two raisin-cakes, and he ate". You see, there is a bit more there. These cakes relate to formation, do they not? The fig speaks of sweetness. It is not human sentimentality, but think of the sweetness that there is, and you get some taste of what Christ has done for you - suggested in David's victory in Ziklag here.

Ziklag relates to Romans, does it not? It refers to the beginning of the believer's pathway, coming to know Christ. Romans is foundational. How important it is that we have right foundations. We

need to have right foundations in ourselves. We need to be founded securely on the work of Christ; how vital that is. What a foundation it is! And then building and progress take place from there. These persons were with David; and so this Egyptian came to know David in this way. You might say, the brethren brought him to David. How wonderful that is! So we would want to stay near persons who bring Christ before us, would we not? What blessing and salvation is involved in that. So it is important to have right foundations, and it is important to be building with right things. In Leviticus 14, God puts a plague in the house, v 34-53. There is that which has to be scraped out and that which has to be taken away. Other stones are put in. Stones that are marked by leprosy are taken away and other stones are put in. Well, if we are constitutionally right, if the priest comes back and looks, there is no sign of the leprosy. Right principles have been established. If the principles are not rightly applied the leprosy comes out. These are important things; they are vital things. (As was said, the assembly is the library of the universe. Think of all it contains.) All these vital things are here; in principle they are all here, because they are going on a journey. David is going on to Jerusalem. Here is Ziklag; it teaches us that all that was lost by man has been recovered by Christ. How wonderful that is! That is an initial appreciation. Christ has recovered all: that is Romans.

But then they are going on to Hebron. David is made king in Hebron. I suppose that refers to what has been said as to Colossians. How wonderful that is; you are growing in your appreciation of Christ and what He is personally. What a moment that is! You find that God had Christ before Him, before the foundation of the world. How wonderful that is to contemplate these things. Everything is beginning anew here for this Egyptian that has been found in the field. How healthy he is made, and he continues with David and goes right on into what suggests the truth in Ephesians, because David comes into Jerusalem and takes the city, does he not?

Well, what a place the local assembly is. May we be helped in our appreciation as we look at the assembly, the greatness of the assembly, the greatness of Christ, but also the assembly as it is seen in its local setting.

May we be helped and encouraged in these things.

For His Name's sake.

Aberdeen

3rd June 2015

“LOOKING STEDFASTLY ON JESUS”

Rob Gardiner

Hebrews 12: 1-6

I was thinking, dear brethren, about verse 2 of this scripture when we sang our hymn (No 298): “looking stedfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith: who, in view of the joy lying before him” - especially this part - “endured the cross, having despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”. I was thinking of what we sang, and we see true love divine set out in Him who was despised of men and forsaken of God but who continued “in view of the joy lying before him”. Think of the perfect and balanced mind and judgment of the Lord Jesus, and all the awfulness of what was before Him, but it was “in view of the joy lying before him”, including what has been secured. Think of what has been secured in the assembly, what is precious to Him, “who, in view of the joy lying before him, endured the cross, having despised the shame”. Think of the perfect mind and judgment of the Lord Jesus, and it is recorded here, “having despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”. Think of His present, exalted position. “For consider well him who endured so great contradiction from sinners against himself”.

This would be a word for us, “that ye be not weary, fainting in your minds”. There are many things that would come in to try us and test us, and perhaps we *can* get weary, but the exhortation is “that ye be not weary, fainting in your minds”. The previous chapter speaks of those who moved in faith, and it is always a test to move in faith; we are tested as we walk and sojourn here on our pathway. We are tested in faith in many ways, but a chapter like the previous one would be a great encouragement to us, and indeed where we have read too. Think of the joy that indeed lies before us, and what we can indeed experience now. Think of the Lord Jesus, the One who “in view of the joy lying before him, endured the cross”. I was particularly thinking of the perfect balance of the Lord Jesus, and all these things that were before Him and how He endured that, “endured the cross, having despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”. I feel very weak in anything I can say regarding this, but was encouraged by these verses, dear brethren, and may we be able to take something from them. It is a great matter here, but again for ourselves, “For consider well him who endured so great contradiction from sinners against himself, that ye be not weary, fainting in your minds”. It goes on

to speak about chastening. Perhaps we can be slow to benefit from chastening, and chastening might seem a hard thing, but perhaps if we are slow to benefit from chastening we might have to bear some of that too. It says, "Ye endure for chastening, God conducts himself towards you as towards sons; for who is the son that the father chastens not?". It goes on to say, "But no chastening at the time seems to be matter of joy, but of grief; but afterwards yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those exercised by it". I feel that is a word for myself at any rate, dear brethren. These things are written for our help and for our encouragement. There is no chastening - Scripture is quite clear about it - that "at the time seems to be matter of joy, but of grief; but afterwards yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those exercised by it". There are matters we have to bear and go through which would be chastening, but it speaks about "afterwards". The Lord Himself indeed suffered; "looking stedfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith": what an example we have in Him. It says, "Let *us* also therefore, having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us"; there are those who have gone on in faith, those who have died in faith. It would encourage us, "Let *us* also therefore, having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, laying aside every weight, and sin which so easily entangles us, run with endurance the race that lies before us, looking stedfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith". That would be looking stedfastly on the perfect Example. How encouraging that is, dear brethren, that we can be sustained. It says, "run with endurance the race". It would be clear that we are in this but, as we look stedfastly on Jesus, that would be where we would find our resource and find our strength so that we have the ability to be found running "with endurance the race that lies before us, looking stedfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith". That would involve faith; "run with endurance the race" would involve faith. "Run with endurance the race that lies before us": how can we be sustained in that? It seems to me that it is quite clear here, "looking stedfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith", looking on Him "who, in view of the joy lying before him, endured the cross, having despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God".

I feel tested and feeble in speaking of these things, dear brethren, but may we be encouraged and may we be helped in them and think of what has been secured for the Lord Jesus; and of the joy that was lying before Him, what is secured in the assembly, what is precious to Him. And what is precious to Him is to be precious to us; the

delight He has in the assembly, that holy vessel that is entirely pleasing to Him. May we be encouraged to hold these things in our hearts.

May it be so for His Name's sake.

Aberdeen

3rd June 2014

HEALING

Stephen McLaren

Exodus 15: 22-26

Psalms 147: 1-5

Jeremiah 8: 18-22

Malachi 4: 1-3

Matthew 8: 5-9 (to “soldiers”), 10-17

It would be plain enough to see the link between the scriptures I have read. What our brother read in Philippians encouraged me to speak about it. He read that scripture in Philippians which speaks about “the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory”, chap 3: 20, 21. What a wonderful transformation that is, and will be; but at the moment we are still in conditions where we are subject to what that “body of humiliation” means and implies. We are in conditions in which we are sometimes tried and tested. We are not exempt from the illnesses that beset men generally. We need healing in many different aspects. It struck me when we were reading in Deuteronomy recently (in chapter 25 which speaks of the restraint on the number of stripes used to punish a person), and it affected me, when thinking of that, that although the law is dealing with one who rightly deserved to receive those stripes, yet they were limited in number. It reminded me of that scripture in Peter's epistle, “by whose stripes ye have been healed” (1 Pet 2: 24); I suppose he is referring to Isaiah chapter 53, that wonderful chapter in which the sufferings of Christ are so clearly portrayed and spoken of in detail. How affecting they are! As we all know, that scripture says, “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed”, v 5. No doubt that refers to His atoning sufferings. How affecting that He “bore” those: as Peter quotes, “by whose stripes ye have been healed”. That is a very affecting matter to speak of. Surely it would affect all our souls to think about that, that such a One endured those sufferings on our behalf, and by that means we can be healed.

Where I read in Exodus, there is an early experience in the wilderness journey, perhaps indicative of the experience of young believers, who are newly on the way. The children of Israel had just begun the journey here, and so soon they came across these waters and could not drink them because they were bitter. The answer to the bitterness of the water was to cast in wood. We have often been

reminded of how it speaks of the Lord Jesus and how He was here - came here personally - entering into these circumstances, which prove bitter to us. It is *His* entering into them that makes them become sweet, so that whatever exercise we face, we understand the Lord Jesus Himself has gone through these things when here, and He entered into them fully. The chapter we read from in Matthew's gospel illustrates, perhaps more than in any other, the way the Lord Jesus entered into every circumstance in detail and had to do with suffering and brought in healing by His wonderful ministry of grace. I have often been impressed in reading through that chapter, for it is food for our souls, and not only food, but it has healing capacity too. And here says, Moses "cried to Jehovah; and Jehovah shewed him wood, and he cast it into the waters, and the waters became sweet. There he made for them a statute and an ordinance": the note says a 'judgment'. That is not the way we normally think of judgments; we often think of them in relation to what is punitive. It means it is established before God. That is the way He operates in mercy and in grace towards us, and it is a matter that can be relied upon. There is a statement made at the end of the paragraph, which I think is very attractive. God commits Himself to it: "I will put none of the complaints upon thee that I have put upon the Egyptians; for I am Jehovah who healeth thee". That is a very wonderful statement that God makes. He commits Himself to His people and shows His feelings of compassion for them and shows them the way that healing is to be known; He identifies Himself as their God who *will* heal them.

I also read in the Psalms. There are many scriptures we could have read: the Scriptures are full of instances of healing. It was often in answer to the cry of faith in one and another that God came in and showed His power in healing. How often that happened! No doubt everyone here can think of instances where that was the case. Psalm 147, which is well on in the book, of course, is a point arrived at when there is assurance and certainty. The psalmist, whoever wrote Psalm 147, says:

Jehovah doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth the outcasts of Israel.

He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

There was healing needed not just for physical sufferings but for sufferings in spirit too. There are "the broken in heart", and He can provide exactly what is needed for them too, "He ... bindeth up their

wounds". It says further:

He counteth the number of the stars; he giveth names to them all.

Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.

I think that in itself is a very great comfort, just to appreciate and understand simply that He knows everything about us, all about our circumstances, things which may affect us and cause us grief. He is the One whose "understanding is infinite", and He can bring in exactly what is needed with all the compassion which He would manifest in His dealings with us. If He can count the number of the stars and give names to them all, surely He can understand and enter into the detail of things that may affect us, and He *does*.

We read in Jeremiah as well and I have often thought of this scripture. Jeremiah has been spoken of as the weeping prophet, JT vol 78 p252. He was one who felt keenly the burden of what he had to convey to God's people. Where we began to read he says, "My comfort in my sadness! My heart is faint in me!", but I have been thinking of the last verse particularly. He raises the question, and perhaps we can take some instruction from the question that is raised, "Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? Why then is there no dressing applied for the healing of the daughter of my people?". Sometimes we are made aware of situations which go on and on, and we might wonder why those conditions are allowed to go on. It should not be. The prophet says, "Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there?". Do we not know the One who is the great Physician? He is always available to bring in healing where it is needed. But then the prophet says, "Why then is there no dressing applied for the healing of the daughter of my people?". He just raises that question. Perhaps we must ask ourselves if there are situations which require healing. How much do we feel them, and do we get into the presence of the One who can bring in healing, who can bring in what is needed to bring in a cure, as it says, a "dressing applied", so there is restoration?

We read in Matthew because I was struck as to the case of the centurion, since he rightly makes clear that he believed that he only needed a word. The Lord Jesus says, "I will come and heal him". He was prepared to come all the way, and visit that man's house, but the centurion said in his reply, "only speak a word". How true that is! Jesus finally said to the centurion, "Go, and as thou hast believed, be it to thee". The word of the Lord Jesus was sufficient to bring about healing

and it is still today if we hearken to His word. If we are under the sound of ministry which comes from Him in the power of the Holy Spirit, if that is attended to and answered to, then healing can come in. His presence will be known as we submit ourselves to His word.

I also referred to that scripture in Malachi which is very comforting. It says, "And unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings". We know who that is, of course. "The Sun of righteousness" could not be anyone other than the Lord Jesus, and He will "arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth and leap like fatted calves". That is addressed to those who fear His Name. The verse before speaks about "the proud and all that work wickedness"; we certainly do not want to be counted among that company. How much better to be in the company in verse 2: "Unto you that fear my name" the promise is "shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings". When He comes, that is what He will do. How necessary, how needed it will be, that great work of service towards His own, and He will do that.

These thoughts have occupied me and I have felt some profit and blessing from them, and I trust they will be likewise blessed to all of us.

Dundee
6th January 2015

