

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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PM I wondered if in these two readings we might get help to enquire as to the present operations of the Spirit. I have in mind in this reading the operations of the Spirit in relation to the kingdom; and in the next reading, unless we are directed otherwise, the operations of the Spirit in relation to the body.

Verse 28 of Matt 12 is particularly in mind to enquire into: "if / by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then indeed the kingdom of God is come upon you". It seems that this reference, "the kingdom of God is come upon you", has a bearing very much upon the present day. The Lord Jesus says in chapter 16, "the Son of man is about to come in the glory of his Father". That will be a remarkable day when the Lord comes in His kingdom; He will take up His rights here. By Him, there will be one will in the universe. It is a remarkable thing which we are not used to; there will be one will in the universe. The headlines in the newspaper today state that this country has gone to war: that is because there is more than one will in the universe. When He comes in His kingdom there will be one will. Not only will there be subjection but there will be blessing under the administration of that will. Man will live in a sphere of blessing.

As I understand it, the kingdom is now here in the Spirit. We may get some help as to the way the Spirit serves in view of the power of the kingdom being known by us. It "is come upon you". In Romans 14 we have the effect of the kingdom and what it is. It "is not eating and drinking"; it does not belong to what is natural. It is "righteousness" in the Holy Spirit, "peace" in the Holy Spirit "and joy in the Holy Spirit". Everything is on a completely new basis. In Matthew 16, the Lord speaks of Himself about to appear in His kingdom and it is as if the Spirit gives us a touch of what that is like. The glory of the King is set before us and the blessing comes by hearkening to His word: "*This* is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight: hear him". One word, one will and a sphere of blessing: I wondered if that might provide an enquiry for us.

AEM The Lord Jesus saying, "if / by the Spirit of God cast out demons", would bring the authority of the Spirit immediately into our

hearts.

PM That is important, yes; “if / by the Spirit of God”. The One who said that was none less than God. The authority and power by which He operated was by the Spirit of God. We might ask if He could not operate in His own power. I think it is to bring on to our view, as you suggest, the authority under which the effect of the kingdom and the power of the kingdom is to be proved. The centre of the kingdom is Christ. If there is to be an effect morally it must be in the power of the Spirit.

AEM This is very encouraging for us in this dispensation, because these words could simply be said today. There has been no diminishing because of the ascension and glorification of Christ; rather more, the Spirit maintains in all His authority everything that belongs to this realm.

PM What you say is important, because this chapter speaks of the power by which the Lord Jesus did things Himself. From verse 38 to 42 the scribes and Pharisees ask for a sign and the Lord says, “behold, more than Solomon is here”, v 42. I take it that that reference might involve the Holy Spirit as well, “more than Solomon is here” and “more than Jonas is here”, v 41. It is the power of the kingdom, the Lord operating in the power of the Holy Spirit. That was there then and it is here today. The power is undiminished, “more than Solomon is here”, and “more than Jonas”.

DJW The challenge was against the Lord Himself, but it is interesting the way He protects the Person of the Holy Spirit. In verse 32 it says, “whosoever shall have spoken a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him”. I was affected many years ago about how one divine Person protects another. It is interesting in this section that we get three different titles of the Holy Spirit; the “Spirit of God”, the “Spirit” and the “Holy Spirit”. Is that significant?

PM I am glad you refer to it. The presence of the Holy Spirit is protected in such a way in this chapter because of the lowly way in which He moves. Yet it is as if the Lord Jesus is saying here that the power of that divine Person is so great, although moving in a lowly way, His Person is to be protected. I have to come to that myself; I need to be careful what I might say about anything that the Holy Spirit might say to us.

IMcK Why was the power and presence of the Holy Spirit necessary when the Lord Jesus was here? The Lord Jesus as a divine Person could do everything.

PM He could in His Person but He was moving here as a lowly Man, as a dependent Man. We might just ponder that; He acted in the power of the Spirit. The Lord Jesus is the perfect model for us in everything. If He, being who He was in His Person, should be here dependent on the Spirit how much more so should I.

JW This man “possessed by a demon” shows the power of Satan. The power of Satan is operating but the power in the kingdom is much greater. The Lord moving as a dependent man relied on the Holy Spirit and His power. Is that the way we would prove the Spirit's power in dependence upon the Spirit?

PM It is the only way. I believe we are in times when divine Persons would have us to get back to the source of things. We may become occupied with many other things, we may even become occupied with persons. The Spirit would help us to get back to the source of things. In Matthew 12, there was a divine Person operating in lowly manhood, dependent manhood. In that dependent manhood the whole power of the kingdom was operating in One who was moving in the power of the Holy Spirit. This man who was healed becomes an evidence of how powerful the power of the kingdom is. What had been operating in the man was a power that nothing else could touch; there was no cure. The kingdom was operating to set him free, so that it says, “the dumb man spake and saw”. He brought the man into what was normal in relation to manhood according to God. That is what the kingdom does.

JW The Lord does not exactly say that the Spirit does this. He says, “/ by the Spirit”. The Lord was doing things by the Spirit. I wondered if we have to learn to do things by the Spirit.

PM We do, and that is a hard lesson. It involves that my will and any thought I have of myself has to go. Dependence is not thinking that I am weak; dependence is thinking that I am nothing.

QAP Part of the glory of the Spirit is that He has remained unseen: the Lord Jesus says, “the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see him nor know him; but ye know him”, John 14: 17. Is that a wonderful privilege that we have?

PM They knew Him because He was there in the Person of Jesus.

We know Him, if we do, as a divine Person. Do I know the Person? The Lord will test me, and is testing me, but do I know the Person of the Spirit or am I content to rest under an influence from a source that I am not acquainted with?

AEM What is your thought as to the demonstration of the kingdom in the casting out of the demon?

PM I think it is to bring before us that there is a power in the kingdom which is greater than every power that is opposed to it. That is going to be seen in a day to come. All the powers that are set against Christ are raising their heads today in an almost full blown character. They are going to be set down in a coming day; they are not going to be adjusted, they are going to be met, because they have already been met morally in His death. The power of that is upon us, upon those who have a part in the kingdom. Is that not a wonderful assurance to our souls that the power is here? It is resident not in ourselves but in a divine Person.

KM We may sometimes think how wonderful it would be if the Lord Jesus was here all the time, and so it would be, of course. The Lord puts it as though it is an advantage that the Holy Spirit has come, "if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come", John 16: 7. We have the Spirit and He is here. We are to be at no disadvantage that the Lord is not here because the Spirit is here.

PM Do we believe that?

KM I believe it.

PM I know you do: "more than Solomon is here" and "more than Jonas". The power is here in the Holy Spirit. We are in conditions of breakdown, but has the breakdown diminished the power? It is available to be drawn upon by those who seek to be under the effect, the moral effect of the kingdom.

AJMcK Can you help us as to this matter of the kingdom coming upon us? Scripture speaks of our access into the kingdom and seeing the kingdom. What is your impression of the kingdom coming upon us?

PM What you refer to in John 3 is our side, "Except any one be born of water and of Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God", John 3: 5. That is our side; this is the Lord's side; to give us the assurance that the resource and power of the kingdom is here. It is right where we are. The exercise that it awakens is as to whether I am morally in a condition

that is able to get the gain of the kingdom. That involves that my will and what I am naturally has to go because there is going to be one will in the universe. Coming upon us would suggest its influence and sway known in the souls of persons here.

RDP The kingdom came in when Jesus came; it came in silently but it came in. We see the smallness of the little Child that came, but it was inescapable. The kingdom of God had come in, it was upon them. The appreciation of that, the entering into it, involves God's work and the recognition of it. The expression "come upon you" that has been brought before us is rather unusual. The world changed; everything changed here when Jesus came. The kingdom of God entered silently. As far as the world was concerned it was not noticed; it went on with its census. The kingdom of God had come in; things could never be the same again. Is that right?

PM Yes, the Lord Jesus does not say it has come to you. We might have been content with that. It gives us the sense of the power of that kingdom; it is here upon persons who are in the scene of the absence of Christ but under the influence of Christ and of the Spirit. I have to ask myself what influences me in my life.

RDP I think those two scriptures in John are very interesting. You have quoted verse 5, but there is also, "Except any one be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God", John 3: 3. We will only have any inkling as to the kingdom of God if God's work has begun in us and we have a sense that this kingdom is here. The entering into it involves the Spirit. The kingdom of God is a very powerful subject, perhaps one we do not speak about too much; it is here, and it is upon us.

PM I wondered that; we may say the truth of the kingdom is basic. It may be due to not speaking about it very often that we may become shaky about what is basic. This is open to us all. If the Spirit has wrought sovereignly in the believer, the power of the kingdom is available to him. We have to put ourselves in the way of it, but it is available to us. Elsewhere the Lord says that "the kingdom of the heavens is taken by violence", Matt 11: 12. I come into it by exercise, not natural force or the ability of mind, which has to go. I come into it through soul exercise. The righteous take it by force, and I get nothing substantially in Christianity without exercise with divine Persons.

RDP That is right; we often speak about the Acts of the Apostles as to the assembly, but largely the Acts of the Apostles is the truth of the

kingdom and right at the beginning the coming of the Holy Spirit is prominent: with “a violent impetuous blowing”, chap 2: 2. I think Mr James Taylor says it stresses heaven's right to be heard, JT vol 6 p241. What you find in the Acts is those who have submitted to that and come under the power.

PM Acts 9 is full of the witness of the kingdom. There are more references to “the Lord” in that chapter than any other chapter in that book. Paul, bowing to the Lord in chapter 9 and submitting to the will of the Lord in the recognition that there was One who was greater than he was, whose will had to be supreme over his life, is a witness of one who was coming into the kingdom. All the blessing that flowed from that flooded into Paul's soul.

DJW Is the liberty of the Spirit connected with the atmosphere of what you speak of, of what is moral. I was thinking the public testimony of His coming in this book is when the Lord says, “thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness”, Matt 3: 15. Is that the moral basis on which the Spirit can be at ease?

PM Yes; you are leading on to the company and that must be so. Righteousness must prevail in the company: Paul says that “grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life” (Rom 5: 21) and that must be the basis. We speak of Matthew as the assembly gospel; flowing through Matthew's gospel is the truth of the kingdom that fits us for the assembly. We can never rightly fit in to the assembly if we are not the subject of the kingdom.

RMB I was thinking of what the Lord Jesus says in Matthew 18, “Unless ye are converted and become as little children, ye will not at all enter into the kingdom of the heavens”, v 3. I wonder if that would fit into what you have in mind.

PM Yes, it would. There are the two thoughts there; being converted, which involves turning round completely and getting God's view both of myself and of Christ, and become as a little child, moving into the spirit of dependence. Any element of selfwill on my part or the mind of man is against the operation of the kingdom. That is a sobering matter because we must each one of us come under the authority of the One in whom everything is vested from the divine side. As I come under that authority I find that it is for my blessing.

JAT You referred to Paul's conversion and I think the way that he

puts it is most wonderful: "Who art thou, Lord?", Acts 9: 5. He has found someone who was over him; he uses that title. The Lord could have said, 'I am the King of kings and Lord of lords,' but He does not. He says, "*I* am Jesus, whom *thou* persecutest". Is there a certain attractiveness about the King? In Matthew's gospel He went up the mountain and His disciples were attracted to Him and they went up the mountain to be with Him, chap 5: 1. As converted we are attracted to the Person the Spirit calls to our attention, and that is what makes the kingdom so wonderful.

PM Yes, attraction is important in relation to the kingdom. Perhaps we will come to that in chapter 17. The Lord Jesus led His own up the mountain to be occupied with Himself. In our day the Spirit is doing that. He is taking us up to another sphere altogether outside all that is pervading here, that we might have heaven's view of God's Man in whom all authority is centred.

JAT As gathered today, I would think there must be some affection towards Christ and then towards one another.

PM Yes, love operates in three directions: love for God, love for the truth and love for one another. If we try to change the order we shall get into difficulty. It has not changed.

JW I appreciate what you say and the importance of it as to the bearing on ourselves. It would appear that the Lord says this to these Pharisees who were opposed. I wonder what you could say as to the bearing of that.

PM The kingdom is here in a scene of adversity. The rights of Christ and the rights of the Spirit are maintained in a scene from which Christ has been cast out. This chapter begins a new section in Matthew's gospel. In chapter 11 the Lord Jesus is rejected, all His works of power rejected, and at the end of that chapter He is calling persons to Himself. He says "Come to me", Matt 11: 28. That is the King establishing His rights; He says, "Come to me", and "learn from me". In this section He goes over the power in which His authority and dominion are going to be proved until the time when He takes it up publicly and exercises it Himself.

JW It is very helpful to see that, so that these persons have to reckon with that power. It works in a positive way but it is also working against evil.

PM It is working against evil, and it is working against the will of man and the mind of man. I feel this very much in the moment in which we are. It is so easy for the mind of man to start working things out and coming to a conclusion that may be according to man, but there is one will that must prevail in the universe. I am sure we would all agree to that. To come into the gain of it, and thus for the kingdom to be upon us, involves that I have to submit myself and come under the sway of another Man. That takes me away from every other influence that might affect where I am at the present time.

IMcK It is something that flourishes, answering to the Lord's call and proving submission to that one will and the power of the Holy Spirit. It says, "the dumb man spake and saw". It is beautiful.

PM I think it is wonderful. Submission is what is effected through the initial appeal of God in the gospel. I submit to One, like Saul did on the Damascus road. Then by the Spirit there is a state of subjection wrought out. That is a state; it is not exactly action. The actions of obedience flow out of subjection. Subjection is not exactly actions; it is a state. You say, 'That is a subject sister'; it is not because she does things differently from everyone else: it is because of her quiet spirit. That is subjection. Obedience, which the gospel requires, because it is preached for the obedience of faith, is in the actions that follow and that I think all lies behind the kingdom coming upon you.

RDP I was just thinking of Paul again, or Saul of Tarsus, as he was. He had to come to it that he had been persecuting what he thought was a system of things, an organisation of saints, persecuting them to death. What he comes to on the Damascus road is that it was not just a system. The kingdom is not a mere system of things; it is a Person and the Lord says to him, "why dost thou persecute me?", Acts 9: 4. He realised that the kingdom is in a Person. Everything for God is in a Person. The Lord says, "why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against goads", Acts 26: 14, and Paul says, "What shall I do, Lord?", Acts 22: 10. There is a man there who comes under the power of the kingdom, but it is in a Person rather than a system of things. Perhaps we think of the kingdom as a whole system. The kingdom really is Christ.

PM Yes; if the Queen walked in here today the epitome of the United Kingdom would be in front of us. That is what she represents, the kingdom. The Lord Jesus does not just represent the kingdom. He *is*

the kingdom and the character of it. The power of the kingdom is thus available to us because, even though the Lord Jesus is not here, the Spirit is here to occupy us with this Person, so glorious and so great, and to bring us under the influence of the King.

JB You read the verses about the kingdom, “every city or house divided against itself will not subsist”. Is that a word for us at the moment? As we are each subject to the Spirit there will be no division.

PM That must be the basis; if our wills have gone and we are subject to the Spirit and under the influence of the kingdom we shall go on together; it is not a question as to who is He supporting. We may come to meetings and it may be in our minds to wonder who is a brother getting at, who is he supporting? It is time we became men and ceased to be babes and came under the influence of the King and the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit would help us to get our eye off of persons and be drawn to this high mountain apart and just show us what the King is in His glory. One who alone is to be hearkened to. The One whose voice is going to control the universe in a day to come, is the One who is, as the poet says -

To claim *supreme submission* in my soul.

(Robert G Fear, 1944 - Poems 1953, Page 61)

AEM You have spoken of the Lord being the character of the kingdom. I wondered if that helps us to be relieved of these things that are earthly. We spoke earlier about it coming upon us. You spoke about the high mountain. The place where this kingdom has been established is a heavenly place. I wondered if it would help us to see that. It comes upon us; it comes from somewhere.

PM It does: it comes from the scene where God has set His Man. “/ have anointed my king upon Zion, the hill of my holiness”, Ps 2: 6. I remember Mr Fred Trussler saying, 'God has set His King where He can no longer be touched by the hatred of man, but where He is available to all'. How wonderful that King is: “/ have set my king upon Zion”. It would be an interesting piece of homework for some of us to see how many persons in the scripture were taken up, or called up. These three men were taken up to a high mountain apart and that is what the Spirit would do for us. He would take us up to have a different view of the One in whom everything for God is centred.

AEM I was thinking of your comment about our hearts and how they

are set as we gather to an occasion like this. Jesus took them up the mountain here. Where you finished reading, they still had to lift up their eyes and see Jesus alone. There is exercise in that, but the sight of Him here is unobscured.

PM And is effective as they came down. It affected their part in the testimony. To see Christ where He is established as the One in whom everything is vested for the divine pleasure will affect our part in the testimony. It will draw us away from every other power and influence and see that there is a Man here who is great enough to eclipse everything else.

RDP-r We started the Lord's day recently with the hymn -

Gazing on Thee, Lord, in glory (Hymn 302).

It struck my heart then that that is what Satan is trying to prevent us from doing at the present time. If we get our eyes on the Man in the glory, it is going to change everything.

PM If I have my eye on the Man in the glory I will not want anything here. I will not want the world; I will not want the scene from which He has been rejected, even the religious world I will not want, because I have seen the Man in the glory.

RDP-r I think it is a good thing to get our eyes on Him now. It would help us all together if we are kept with our view upon this blessed Man. There is nothing better to help to deal with issues that may be amongst us than for all of us to have our eye on this blessed Man.

PM The Lord was going to be moving here; He was moving on to Jerusalem, on to the cross. It seems that He gives these three men the view of Himself glorified in order that they might take up their part rightly with Him in the movements of rejection in the testimony. That is what is in view here. The Lord is in rejection; we are conscious of that, and the Lord is moving in His testimony. We have exercises that you refer to, and they are very deep, but where is the Lord going? His objective is not just the resolving of a problem, if I might say carefully; that is not just His objective. Where is the Lord going today?

AJMcK Is it significant that He takes them with Him? It is very deliberate, "Jesus takes with him Peter, and James, and John". I was just thinking of what you were saying as to our wills. These three submitted to His will. They were available but they submitted to it. That

was required for them to be able for this; for them to be able for this height. It speaks of “a high mountain apart”. That is the place where He belongs but they submitted to His will that they should be with Him there.

PM He takes them and He brings them. That is helpful. They were amenable to leading: am I? When Peter wrote of this moment he says he wanted to stir his readers up, 2 Pet 1: 12. I have wondered if that is what the Lord is doing to me; to stir me up, not to make us downcast. Peter did not want to make downcast but he says that it is time we were stirred up. I feel the edge of that for myself because we may settle down in a company and be content with the company. We may settle down in the social side of fellowship and be content with that, but what are we seeking to get to? The Spirit's service is to take us beyond that, to take us into a scene which “is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit”, where everything is vitally established in the power of a divine Person here with an objective of a Man in the glory.

AJMCK They came to that, righteousness, peace and joy. The three found that here on the high mountain.

PM Yes, they had to be adjusted to reach it. We are quick to criticise Peter, but I might have said far more than he did; he says, “it is good we should be here. If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles”.

JW When he wrote in his epistle he spoke of being “eyewitnesses of *his* majesty”, 2 Pet 1: 16. I wondered if you could say something as to the way the Lord is described here: “he was transfigured before them. And his face shone as the sun, and his garments became white as the light”.

PM I wondered, speaking reverently, if the disciples were given a preview of the Lord in His body of glory. He was transfigured before them; there was a change in His appearance. It was not what they had been accustomed to. They had been accustomed to a lowly Man moving here in a bondman's form. Here was One now who was going to be the Centre of the universe, and who was the Centre of the universe of God, and “his face shone as the sun, and his garments became white as the light”.

JW What you say is right. The sun is influential, an influence for good. His face was shining as the sun; it will be seen in the world to

come. These persons saw it now; do you think as coming into the gain of the kingdom we come under the influence of such a One? His face, which has been described as the face of the lowliest Man, shining as the sun and His garments white as the light: it is enlightening. If we get into the presence of this we shall become enlightened as to everything.

PM That is where we see things clearly; “in thy light shall we see light”, Ps 36: 9. That is where things are seen for what they are. “Until I went into the sanctuaries of God: then understood I their end their end”, Ps 73: 17. Everything became clear. If I go into the presence of the Lord, without my will operating, and just lay everything before Him, I can be restful. You cannot be agitated in His presence.

JW We would come out different. If we have some sense of “his face shone as the sun”, surely that would have some effect and reflection in us.

PM I think so. The beneficence of the majesty that Peter speaks of would be carried here in testimony.

HTF In John 11 the Lord uses words of power and authority that bring Lazarus out of death, and I wondered if that is another preview. I was going to ask you earlier about the power in which that was affected here in Matthew. It is one piece, is it?

PM It is good to refer to the power in which He brought Lazarus out of death. We have to remember who He is in His Person. We are in the time when “the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard shall live”, John 5: 25. I think Romans 1 bears on your question “concerning his Son (come of David's seed according to flesh, marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead)”, v 3, 4.

JAT The queen of Sheba was a remarkable woman and she travelled a long way to see and ask questions of Solomon. We spoke earlier of a greater than Solomon here. That must relate to the Lord Jesus, but as you say, it could relate to the Spirit, although it must relate to the Lord Jesus as well. She was subdued under the effect of what she saw and heard. It is God's goodness that He presents a Man to us, a lowly Man. He could have reigned earlier but He did not; He was qualified to reign. God has presented this Man to us in all His glory. What has been said about Him is wonderful, and I would like to know as to His garments. Mark speaks of them in a unique way “such as fuller

on earth could not whiten them”, Mark 9: 3. Here, “his face shone as the sun, and his garments became white as the light”. Could we be helped as to that?

PM I do not know how much I could say as to it: “his garments became white as the light”. We need to be very careful that our minds do not operate in things that are not told us. It seems to me that the garments becoming white as the light are witness of the character and of the sphere in which He is King and supreme. When it comes to us, we have to wash our garments that we might have a right, Rev 22 v 14. He never had to wash His garments; He gave character to a scene in which His supremacy was known.

JAT It would speak of glory. The great thing about Jesus, as we understand by the Spirit, is that He never feigned anything. He never put on airs and graces: He was what He was; God would let us see that He was born King but here He was who He was and what He was. That is the attractive thing. We have nothing to doubt in our minds about the Lord Jesus at any point. He says He is, “Altogether that which I also say to you”, John 8: 25. We walk together in the light. Everything that is done should bear on the matter of light showing in that way. It is an important matter.

PM “If we walk in the light as *he* is in the light, we have fellowship with one another”, 1 John 1: 7. This was taken up in London a little while ago and I found it helpful. It is not that we come into fellowship but we have it. It is the light of the revelation of God, a wonderful thing; “if we walk in the light as *he* is in the light”.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE BODY

1 Corinthians 12: 1 - 13

Ephesians 4: 9 - 16

Colossians 1: 17, 18

PM It is in mind to look at the Spirit's service in view of the functioning of the body; and that the headship of Christ might be known. It is not in mind to go into the various gifts that have been set, but more to see the power of the Holy Spirit that gives life to this body here. Every believer who is alive today, who has the Spirit, forms part of the body; although I might not be walking in the light of it, nevertheless I form part of it. It is not as wide a thought as the assembly because it relates to those that are alive. The assembly is a wider thought because it covers all those who have been indwelt by the Spirit, from Pentecost until the rapture. The fact that the body is here at the present moment gives us a fresh sense of the present active operation of the Holy Spirit. Each one of us who has the Lord Jesus as our Saviour would be exercised to have the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is very important. In the early chapters of Acts it says, "Repent, and be baptised, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit", chap 2: 38. It is almost as if in that presentation the receiving of the remission of sins is in view of the gift of the Holy Spirit being known in the believer. How do I know I have the gift of the Spirit? I can remember when I asked to break bread, a brother asked me that and it was a good thing he did, because I did not know. It may be a question that needs to be revived, not to arouse doubt but to create certainty. The wonderful fact is that, as having the gift of the Holy Spirit, I form part and I have a part in the body of Christ, the most glorious vessel and company that is on the earth.

Before Paul touches on the teaching of the body in 1 Corinthians, he has to speak of a lot of other things, which is how we come into the gain of the teaching. He has to touch on the fact that there was evil among them and they had to judge that. He speaks of the marriage relationship which must be held in honour. He speaks of the recognition of his apostleship; he touches on the important matter of fellowship in chapter 10, and then the teaching as to the Lord's supper in chapter 11. Having touched on those great truths, he is able then to speak of the body, and the Person and power of the Holy Spirit is operating in the body as its life. I wondered if we might get some impression that the service of the Spirit is in view of the headship of

Christ being known in the body. They are not separated from each other, two blessed divine Persons; but they work together with a view to the enhancing of the other in the body. I wondered if that might give a little scope for enquiry.

AEM The distinction that you make as to the assembly and the body gives us a clue to the very vital activity that is continuing at the present time under the Spirit's guidance. I wondered whether that was the secret of where the Spirit is particularly focussed at the moment in His service, and that would keep us alert.

PM I think that and I would ask myself: 'Am I conscious of what the Spirit is doing at the present time? What is He doing?' He is operating in the body, but why? He is bringing us to appreciate what that body really is. We have it in the end of verse 12, "so also is the Christ"; that is the anointed system here, the Christ. It is not Jesus personally but it is His body and if I might say reverently it is just as glorious in His eye as He is.

RDP Is the reference, "no one can say, Lord Jesus, unless in the power of the Holy Spirit" a link with what we had in the first reading. I was thinking of the Spirit in relation to the kingdom, the side of the truth which underlies all our relationships, the thought of "Lord Jesus". I notice it says, "**no one**, speaking in the power of the Spirit of God, says, Curse on Jesus", which marked those who were outside. Then he goes on with this positive side: "no one can say, Lord Jesus, unless in the power of the Holy Spirit"; that seems to me to be a link with the kingdom: it is the same Spirit.

PM It is indeed, and the same Lord Jesus. I am thankful you draw attention to it because I cannot rightly take up my part in the body if I am not rightly in the kingdom. Even an unbeliever could use the *words* "Lord Jesus", but that is not what Paul is saying here. This is someone who from the heart is saying "*Lord*" to Jesus. It is not just quoting the two words; it is a heart matter here, and someone who is coming into the gain of the body is in the power of the Spirit saying "*Lord*" to Jesus. What a blessed thing that is.

RDP The kingdom underlies all the truths that we have to do with and if we find difficulties and failure in some facet in assembly truth we will usually find that there is some defect in relation to the truth of the kingdom. It is a very important thing, using the simple words, "Lord Jesus", if that is truly meant.

PM Yes; what is taught in the world and in schools is that you have your opinion and I have mine; and you get a room full of a hundred people with a hundred opinions. That is not the fruit of the kingdom. The fruit of the kingdom is that there is one thought, one will; and that will is the will of the King. If I am to take up my part in the body it is not a question of my opinion about anything. It must be Christ's will. It seems to me that the Spirit is making way for that in Corinthians. He does not actually speak in Corinthians of Christ being Head of the body. He cannot bring that in in Corinth, there was not the state for it, but he is speaking of the preparatory work of the Spirit that would make way for the headship of Christ which comes into expression in Ephesians and Colossians.

RDP The truth of the body grows and dawns upon the believer as moving rightly. You get a touch as to "one body in Christ" (Rom 12: 5), which is not exactly what is in this passage, but here there is a suggestion that there are many believers together in Corinth. Then you move on to the body in Colossians and Ephesians, and you come to the height of it. There is a dawning it seems of the truth of the body.

PM I think so, and the way it is presented here is to awaken exercise with the Corinthians and with me as to whether I have found my part in it. If I have, do I know the source of the power of life in it?

RMB On a practical level, would it be right that, in speaking to the Lord, when we address Him, we would use this name "Lord Jesus" rather than His personal name on its own.

PM Yes I think so, especially in assembly response; I have felt more at liberty in doing so and I think the Spirit would help us to do so. I would not like to be legal about it. You remember Mr Darby broke out in one of his doxologies 'Oh Jesus, Jesus', Notes and Comments vol 7 p135. I think normally it would be the attitude of someone who was in the gain of what we had this morning that we would address Him as "Lord Jesus". Would you go with that?

RMB Yes; His personal Name is very precious to us. It says in John 20, "Jesus came and stood in the midst The disciples rejoiced therefore, having seen the Lord", v 19, 20. I wonder if that confirms that when we are together He is the Lord Jesus.

PM I think so; it shows the spirit of the one who speaks on behalf of all who are present. It shows a spirit of subjection and reverence in the

presence of One who is so great.

JAT Saul as a young man witnessed the address and death of Stephen. It was a wonderful moment when Stephen spoke; he had to address Israel but now he is addressing the Lord Jesus. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit", Acts 7: 59.

PM That was a remarkable moment; they previously "saw his face as the face of an angel", Acts 6: 15. It shows how close he was to the Lord, that he had the Lord's own feelings as to Israel.

DJW Can you say more as to this expression which comes several times in this chapter "the same Spirit"? It is as if it permeates the whole body.

PM I think so; as we look at the saints, each one differs, as Paul says: "for star differs from star in glory", 1 Cor 15: 41. Each one has a personality, but when we come to the power in which every operation in the body is to proceed it is "the same Spirit". There is no variation in that; it operates the one and the same Spirit. Paul is clear as to that. It is not that there is a different character from one operation to another; it is one and the same Spirit and His service in this regard is to prepare the ground in the saints in the recognition of what that body is for the headship of Christ. I have wondered if that is something that is being drawn attention to at the present moment, the headship of Christ.

QAP The Lord prays to the Father, "that they may be one, as we are one; I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one", John 17: 22, 23. Would this reference to "the same Spirit" and one Spirit lead to that oneness and unity practically amongst us?

PM That will be seen in its fulness in the day to come: "and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me", v 23. It is a witness to what will be seen in a day to come, that the divine operation has been so perfect that the saints may be seen as perfectly one. I think what you say is important, that the Spirit in any measure in His operations at the present time has that in view. He has in view that not only should there be the same power but that there should be the same supply in the body, without variation.

CCDR You have mentioned several times that we are to take up our place in the body. How do we do that practically, and where does that lead us?

PM I could ask how did you do it? It is set out here: “in the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body”. That is a very glorious movement of the Spirit; the reception of the Spirit is not only coming to dwell in me individually but He has come to dwell in me in view of my blending into this wonderful vessel, the body. The thought of baptism here is not the thought of water baptism at all. It is more that the Spirit is made way for in the believer. It removes personal distinctions that mark me out in order that I might blend into this company in which He is the life of it.

CCDR I think what you say is helpful. I wonder if it would lead on to what we speak of as assembly privileges, the Supper and the things we can enjoy as together.

PM I am sure that is right. If we consider the truth of the one body in relation to fellowship, we must consider the place of the death of Christ in the basis for fellowship. But we could not rightly enter into the partaking of the Supper, or any other privilege, without the one and the same Spirit. I might come to the Supper, I might break bread, and we give thanks for all that do, but if I am to be in it vitally it must be in the power of the one and the same Spirit. That is really the burden of one's exercise today, that we might be in things vitally.

JW On our side, we are told here that we “have all been given to drink of one Spirit”. I wondered if there is a connection there with the Supper, particularly in the drinking of the cup. We are set together at the Supper in an organic way, through links in the Spirit. We have the same Spirit and, drinking of one Spirit, we find satisfaction from the same spiritual source.

PM I think that is the force of this. The drinking is for satisfaction and maintenance of right feelings from a satisfied heart in relation to the body here, and it is presented here as if it is the only source of life and satisfaction for the believer. As having a part in the body it comes from the one and the same Spirit.

JW Would you say that through receiving the Spirit, the Spirit has given me a place in that sovereignty? My place is not your place, and your place is not my place, there is variety but unity, and the Spirit has done that sovereignly.

PM The Spirit would help us to find our place in the body and help us to be satisfied in it. I do not get dissatisfied because I am not a hand.

The Spirit would help me and if I ask Him to help me to find my place in the body, He will do it.

JW This matter as to an organic link with one another in the Spirit is important for the function of this. We each have the same Spirit; therefore, as having that, we have an organic link with one another in the Spirit.

PM It is important to get to that in our links together. Some of us have quite strong personal peculiarities; that is not what we link on with. What is of the flesh would be under control; that is another side. What we are according to nature is not the link that we have together. The link we have together is in the Spirit. The enjoyment of fellowship and the enjoyment of the Lord's supper comes from a moral and spiritual base and not just from what is positional. This is more than being among the brethren. I say this to the young people: we are glad for all who are together and gather with the saints and remember the Lord, but do not just rest in that position because that does not lead to vitality of enjoyment for you and it does not lead to vitality of response to the One who has died for us. It seems to me, as having known what it was just to rest in a position when I was younger myself, to be so important to form this link actively with the Holy Spirit so that I might fit into the one body and take up my part in it and be here for the pleasure of Christ.

JB It is "according as he pleases".

PM You are referring to verse 11; "all these things operates the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each in particular according as he pleases". You have some thought?

JB I was thinking of how the servant told Isaac all that he had done, Gen 24: 66. It is a joyful thing to the Spirit to know that there is that which is here in the body which is for the pleasure of Christ.

PM Yes; I am sure it is and He operates with that in view. Oh that I had that in view more, what is for the pleasure of Christ! That is what the Spirit has and this refers to His sovereignty. He imparts as He pleases, it is a sovereign operation and movement of the Spirit; so that you may have an impression of Christ that I do not have, and I might have one that you do not have. It does not set us at conflict with one another; it makes us appreciate one another. Those impressions are needed to fill out what the body really is.

GMck This would be collective, would it? Would it be right to say we

can be rightly in the kingdom as an individual? This must bring us into contact with others, into functioning with others. I was noticing the word later on in verse 21, “The eye **cannot** say to the hand, I have not need of thee”. It is an impossibility. Is that right?

PM It is; and I think what you say is important, that as giving place to the Spirit it awakens the desire in the soul to be set together with others who are indwelt by the Spirit and giving place to Him. There is an expression that so and so is a 'loner'. There are no loners in the body; there is no such thing. The indwelling of the Spirit as made way for in the believer sets me in relation to the work of God in others and the desire to be in the company where the Spirit's operations are known. There may be times when that is not possible, and John on the island of Patmos knew what that was, but he “became in the Spirit”, Rev 1: 10.

GMcK You would have to say that he was not enjoying the body at that time. You cannot on your own.

PM I do not think you can enjoy the operation of the body on your own, even though you may be part of it. The body requires for the fulfilment of the operations of the Spirit that there should be others. The Lord in looking on to our day in Matthew 18 speaks of “two or three”, v 20.

JW The body is more than a collection of persons. It is a vital unit; there is a vessel here and we belong to that, a vessel here that is in the power and dignity of the anointed, which is for God's pleasure.

PM We might just ponder that for a moment. This expression is so important. It says, “we, being many, are one body in Christ”, Rom 12: 5. That must be a reference to the anointed vessel that is here. There is that here upon the earth that is entirely in accord with the Man who is in the glory. I might ask where it is; the Spirit would help me as to that.

JW Do you think Christ was the anointed vessel here? God committed Himself to Christ. Do you think this involves that there is something here that God can commit Himself to?

PM He delights to; not because of what you or I are, but because of the indwelling of the Spirit. I trust, dear brethren, that we can work at this because I see a very grave danger in settling into 'Brethrenism', without the vital power and life that is needed to maintain a living testimony and a living response for divine Persons. If we settle for something less it will become the worst sect in Christendom.

JAT The gatherings of the saints are very important. It is a wonderful thing to assemble: these are members of the body but assembled together. As we recognise the Spirit and the headship of Christ then liberty is proved immediately. It is not worked up to; it is known.

PM It says, “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty”, 2 Cor 3: 17. We cannot bring that in.

JAT I think the liberty connected with the Spirit is very important. It is the Spirit that brings in the liberty, I agree entirely. As we are available to the Spirit then we are part of that liberty amongst the brethren, amongst the saints.

PM That is the key: to be available to the Spirit; maybe the Lord would adjust my view of things because if we are not careful I might think that so much depends on me. Everything depends on the Spirit, and the Spirit operates in vessels. My responsibility is to have a free flow for the Spirit within my own soul.

DJW This letter was written before the public breakdown but it would be true to say wherever I see gift it has come from the Spirit, and there is a good deal of gift outside of those with whom I walk.

PM We have brethren who were converted under evangelists who we do not walk with, and we give thanks for their service. We would that there was more, but the question that I have to ask is, 'Where am I?'. What place does the Spirit have with me? If I come into the gathering having grieved the Holy Spirit I shall bring the weight of that into the company.

RDP I was thinking of Genesis 24, and how easy it is to divert from this. It is all about the servant - typical of the Holy Spirit - and at the end there was agreement as to the marriage of Rebecca. Then Laban says, “Let the maiden abide with us some days, or say ten”. The servant replies, almost sharply, “Do not hinder me”, v 55, 56. Some idea came in which sounded innocuous enough but was in actual fact a hindrance to what the servant was doing. How easy it is for there to be a blockage with something of my own thoughts in it.

PM I think that is important. I was thinking of reading that section; you could not say what came in was evil or wrong, but it took the place of Isaac for the moment. 'Let her stay with us rather than go to him.' I have to search my own heart, because the service of the Spirit is to

make way for the unhindered headship of Christ. In this epistle, Paul is only able to speak of the headship of Christ in relation to us individually. That is important because if you and I are under the headship of Christ as individuals, we shall be agreed and go on together. It is a moral impossibility for two persons to be in the gain of the headship of Christ and to be at variance with one another.

JW The organic link we spoke of helps us by the Spirit to merge together. It is not a question of one person being dominant. I wonder if that would help in the exercise of making way for the headship of Christ.

PM I think so, and recognising the body. We are set in local companies and sometimes we do not always see things the same. We have to say that humbly. There has to be a respect for one another and working things out with divine Persons. It is not a question of who is the strongest; that is not what pervades in the body. What is the Spirit saying?

GJR You referred to 1 Corinthians 12: 12, “so also is the Christ”. Did you say that is just as precious as Christ Himself?

PM I did; just as glorious as Christ Himself.

GJR That is something to lay hold of. It is striking and therefore with what care we should treat Him. We would all seek to treat the Lord Jesus with the utmost care, but in that case with what care should we treat His body and the expression of it.

PM And to make way for the Head of that body; the head supplies all that is required for the body. I got a touch of this at the Supper: “His head is as the finest gold”, Song of Songs 5: 11. Think of what is coming from Christ: “His head is as the finest gold”; that is what permeates and directs the body, and the Lord Jesus needs that body now. He is not here corporeally but He is here in testimony because His body is here. The light of that dawned on Saul of Tarsus in Acts 9 and gave character to the whole of his ministry, that the body was here.

QAP That verse in Acts 9 confirms what we have been taught, that the body is really the continuation of what was seen in the Lord Jesus here Himself in testimony.

PM Yes; but I am tested by it. It can only be true practically as everything is done in the power of the one and the same Spirit. Unless what I do or say is in that power, it is not a continuation of what was seen

in Christ personally; that is sobering.

In Ephesians 4, we have these references to the giving of gifts but what was before me was that “we may grow up to him in all things, who is the head”. Lying behind that is the service of the Spirit: “we may grow up to him in all things”, links with what you said as to the character being seen in testimony. It also relates to the object that the Spirit forms in the affections of the believer so that we might grow up to Him.

JW The reference, “grow up to him in all things”, has been spoken of as all round growth. That means growth in every sphere in which I am.

PM What does all round growth really mean?

JW Whether in the work place or school place, in the home or in the assembly, there is evidence of growth in each sphere. It is not that I grow in just one sphere. It is a challenging thing but I wonder if “grow up to him in all things” involves that.

PM I think so; we had earlier about arriving at “the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ”. What you say links with that; that there is the formed expression in the saints by the fruit of the Spirit, an expression of Christ in every sphere in which the believer finds his life. It comes into expression in an appreciative way in the assembly but it is to mark us in our lives. I cannot be behaving foolishly in the office and come and sit down in the assembly and seek to teach the brethren; the two are not compatible. Someone referred this morning to the Lord Jesus being, “Altogether that which I also say to you”, John 8: 25.

JW Do you think this spiritual growth will promote the experience of the headship of Christ?

PM I think that; and I trust these occasions today may awaken a little with me the exercise to prove the headship of Christ in a greater way, to prove what is coming from a glorified Head that is not only the answer to every situation through which the testimony passes, but provides the resource for there to be this growth and stability in the scene from which He has been rejected.

DSB How do we prove the headship of Christ?

PM We would have to search our own hearts as to that. Proving His lordship is perhaps more easily recognised but proving His headship involves nearness to Himself. It involves the drawing of impulses from

Himself. It is more than teaching; in the household the head normally does not teach his wife what to do, although he gives leadership in the house. Headship involves the working of love between Christ and His assembly and Christ and His own, in which He imparts what is near to His own heart and dear to His own heart, so that there might be movement here in relation to Himself.

IMcK You spoke about unhindered headship. We are used to things being exhausted and finishing and stopping. The Spirit would give us that sense of supply that is unhindered.

PM It is available always; the Head is always available. In the office there may be disagreement and you might sit down and hammer it out. Among the people of God, sadly, there might be disagreement; but we do not sit down and argue things out; we get back to the Head. We get back to the one who is the Lord. That is the way things are resolved. They are resolved morally in our links with divine Persons. It has often been said that the conflict proceeds in the soul of man because the enemy is seeking from different directions to put in his bid and spoil what is for Christ; the conflict proceeds in the soul of man and the answer is for me to get back to the Lord Jesus to acknowledge His claim and to prove His headship.

KM I was thinking of your expression, 'to hammer it out'; Christianity does not work like that. Christianity is more like a magnet; it is more the power of attraction. "Wilt thou go with this man?" has been referred to; I wondered if the Spirit would interest us all the time in whatever environment or circumstances we might be, to hear that small voice, "Wilt thou go with this man?". He will not go with you if you are going to be hammering things. I know you just used it as an expression; but the power of attraction would be the way the Lord does things, the way the Spirit would attract us to Christ; 'Wilt thou go with Him?'. Can I take the Lord with me; is it compatible, would it be agreeable to him?

PM There is no one more attractive than the Lord Jesus. We do not get His deity explicitly mentioned in Ephesians, but we do get the greatness of the Person of the Lord Jesus as Man. In chapter 1 He is presented to us as the One who is the Centre of everything for God and, as we go on through the epistle - even the practical exhortations- He is there as the point of attraction. We may grow up to Him. Where are we growing? Are we like a plant that grows to the light? We grow to that which is attractive to us.

JAT There is normality in what you are bringing before us, and I need exercise as to whether I am in the gain of it personally. If we make way for divine Persons, the way is clear. You have spoken of growing up to Him; in Zechariah there is this vision: "What seest thou? And I said, I see and behold, a lamp-stand all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and its seven lamps thereon, seven lamps and seven pipes to the lamps, which are upon the top thereof; and two olive trees beside it, one on the right of the bowl, and the other on the left of it", chap 4: 1-3. It seems a great system of supply. It is a beautiful illustration. It might link on with what is available to us in the Spirit and having to do with Christ.

PM Paul speaks of "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ", Phil 1: 19. Dear brethren, what a supply it is! It is unhindered and unlimited. I may rest in the knowledge of scripture and in the terms of the truth, but the Lord would bring me to the point where I come to realise that - precious as those things are - they are not enough in themselves. I have to come back to my own relations with divine Persons.

AJMCK I wanted to ask if this growing is continuous?

PM It is not seen here as stopping.

AJMCK That is what I wondered, but I would like to know more about it. It seems as if it has to continue.

PM Yes, because of its Object; we are growing up to Him. What fulness there is in that glorious Person that we could never exhaust, or measure; He is sufficient to be our Object here. And not only our Object; but the Spirit is working in the souls of the saints that those very features are not only seen objectively, but valued in a moral and subjective way in the affections of His people. Would you go with that?

AJMCK Yes, I would; growth needs light and it needs nourishment. All of that is in the Spirit; it is in the activities of the Spirit that you are bringing before us; and that is the power for this growth. He is the Object but the power for the growth and the resources for it are all in the Spirit.

PM I trust we may lay hold of that today; that resource, the power and the strength all lies in the Spirit. We can be in the divine presence in admiration of the One who the Father admires and we can be there as being formed by the Spirit. There is nothing to substitute for being in the divine presence.

RDP-r Could I just ask about this growth; it seems to be collective here, is that right? We have all to come into it individually but there is something collective that is growing.

PM Yes, because He is the Head of the body; we are growing up to Him because He is the Head of the body. That brings in the importance of those of us who have responsibility in our local settings, that this should proceed in our local gatherings, and that what is foundational and necessary in teaching should not be left behind. We cannot afford to do that - maybe we have. It is in view of growing up to the One who is the Head.

RDP-r So it is “until we **all** arrive” at the full grown man. It is a collective thought. Ultimately, we all get there collectively.

PM Yes, and we shall be there very soon because the One of whom we are speaking is the One who is about to come.

In Colossians, we have the greatness of the Person again; One who is “before all, and all things subsist together by him”, is the One who “is the head of the body”. We speak carefully; it could not be anyone less.

AEM Could you say something as to the Spirit's appreciation of this One? We have spoken of the power of it, which is more than influence. Could you say something as to Him having taken the lowly place here and the Spirit's appreciation of a glorified Christ?

PM You could have three days meetings on that! Think of the Spirit descending upon Him as a dove; He had never been able to do that on anyone else. A glorious Man was here in holy, humble circumstances and the Spirit could rest and find a dwelling place. But now He is saying, “That is my master!”, Gen 24: 65. There is no one greater in the Spirit's affections than the Man who is coming to meet us.

AEM We have had quite a bit recently as to the Spirit descending upon Him but also dwelling in Him. Now we come to the point where the Spirit has come to provide what is so precious for Him and to point our gaze to Him.

PM He has done it because, if I might speak carefully, He loves Him. There is love between divine Persons. It is not only what there was before the foundation of the world; there is love between divine Persons in that appreciation of one Another. The Spirit has served

throughout this dispensation in love for Christ in order that He might have a perfect answer.

QAP In this epistle the Holy Spirit is almost out of sight, to magnify Christ.

PM It has often been said that in Colossians you do not have the Spirit emphasised at all but what you do have is the headship of Christ. It seems to me that it really sums up what we have been seeking to get at, that the Spirit is serving in view of there being a vessel here that is living in the appreciation of the headship of Christ and taking character from Him.

JW The only reference to the Spirit in the epistle is “your love in the Spirit”, chap 1: 8. Does that suggest that what is brought out is fruit of the Spirit's work in the saints? It is as a result of that that the glory of Christ is appreciated.

PM It is not 'love *by* the Spirit'; “your love in the Spirit”. That is the link we have together; those are the affections we have together. They are in the Spirit. It puts everything on a different level.

RDP It says that “*he* is the head of the body, the assembly”. You made a remark at the beginning as to the assembly being a wider thought; it seems remarkable that they are linked here. There is a widening out here which leads into this great thought of the assembly. Perhaps the assembly is here in responsibility, but the assembly is the great vessel for the heart of Christ.

PM Yes; it is also for the heart of God. What an answer the assembly is for divine Persons. You think of divine praise proceeding in the assembly, glory to God in the assembly; what an answer! Through grace you and I have a part in such a vessel.

RDP It seems to me to be unfolding glory. Paul is introduced to it; the Lord says, “why dost thou persecute me?”, Acts 9: 4. There is something here that Paul saw that is identified as persons, ordinary persons, weak failing persons: the Lord says “*I* am Jesus, whom *thou* persecutest. But rise up and enter into the city”, v 5, 6. There was something there, acting for Him. As you go through the Acts what comes to light is the assembly; but now you get the thought the body, the assembly which is for Christ's heart and for God's glory and so we are on a very ascending line. Your exercise would be that that would always be the Spirit's service.

PM I think so; that we might touch it and know it vitally. This glorious answer is still here because the Spirit is still here. You might say it is in ruins; so it is publicly, but it is not spiritually in ruins. The service of the Spirit proceeds that what is true for the heart of Christ might be maintained to the end.

RWMcC You drew attention to the Spirit not being prominent in Colossians. It is “that *he* might have the first place in all things”. I was thinking of what you said as to the affection of divine Persons for one another; this is what is in mind. The Spirit has His place and we are thankful that we have the liberty to acknowledge that and worship Him. The Lord is to have His place; the Head is to be first. It is what has been worked out now.

PM I think so; the place He will have in a day to come is already fixed. This relates to His having that place practically now. Divine work is proceeding whether the conditions are difficult, or whether it is in His normal service in opening up the glories of Christ; whether it is meeting conditions that might exist, His service remains constant and the object is “that *he* might have the first place in all things”.

Witney

27th September 2014

Key to initials:-

D S Bodman, Dorking; R M Brown, East Finchley; H T Franklin, Grimsby; J B Ikin, Manchester; R W McClean, Grimsby; A J McKay, Witney; G McKay, Manchester; I McKay, Witney; K Marshall, Colchester; P Martin, Colchester; A E Mutton, Witney; R D Painter, Yeovil; R D Plant, Birmingham; Q A Poore, Swanage; C C D Remington, St Albans; G J Richards, Malvern; J A Turner, Malvern; D J Willetts, Birmingham; J Wright, Witney

STONES FOR GOD'S HOUSE

John Speirs

1 Kings 5: 17 (to “hewn stones”); 6: 7

Acts 9: 10-17

I felt encouraged to speak, as the words which we have had already confirmed me. This scripture in Kings has been before me a little and I seek help by the Holy Spirit to say something about it. I was thinking of these stones: we see from other scriptures that believers in the Lord Jesus can be viewed as stones; in that way they are God's building material. It speaks earlier in the Bible of men making bricks (Gen 11: 3), which were man-made, man's mind entering into that, but God's building material is stone. Dear fellow believer, you can view yourself as one of God's stones. And what is the purpose of the stone? To be part of a building, and it is to be part of a building for God. That is what God's intention is for you as a believer, that you are to be a stone in the building that is for His pleasure.

In this scripture, Solomon was building a great house for God; that was the objective. Now there are many 'stones' here tonight, and I just wondered if we could get help to see how God views these stones, because I think it would help each of us as to how we view one another. It says the “king commanded”; this is no haphazard idea; this is no imagination of man; this is no mere matter of convenience: this is a commandment of the king! I suppose it is a little like “the truth” as our brother has spoken of it. There are certain things that are not to be broken, and one would be the king's commandment. Then it says they brought “great stones”. Think of the value that God has of every believer: “great”. Think of the divine selection of each and every one; chosen in Christ “before the world's foundation”, Eph 1: 4. Think of the Father's choosing! If I view my brother as one that God has chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, I would surely view him in a more elevated way, view him as excellent! Think of God referring to the saints as “the excellent”, Ps 16: 3. We are entitled to view ourselves as chosen of God, and our brethren also, chosen of God. Does not Peter speak of that, “but with God chosen, precious, yourselves also”, 1 Pet 2: 5. How precious the saints are in the eye of God; let us view them that way too.

Then “costly stones”: think of the price that God had to pay, that these stones should be secured for His building. The precious blood of

Jesus is what has redeemed each one. The same price for every one; again, how would that make me look at my brother or my sister? How precious they are to God! How much He has paid so that they should be part of His assembly; “purchased with the blood of His own”, Acts 20: 28. What a wonderful way to view the brethren.

Then “hewn stones”; think of the workmanship, the divine working, the Holy Spirit working tirelessly, perfectly, skilfully, that there might be suitable material for God's house. Surely that would cause me to respect my brother or my sister, when I recognise that he or she is one in whom the Holy Spirit of God has worked and is working. Think of God beginning a work in every believer and finishing it perfectly, working in a patient and perfect way by the Holy Spirit.

And then further down we see what the result is; the house when it was being built “was built of stone entirely made ready” - no adjustment needed, the different stones fitting together perfectly, happily, quietly.

That is why I read in Acts, because I wondered if we see an example in Ananias working with Saul. The comparison of the two passages has been made in ministry (JT vol 9 p288); I am not claiming to say anything new exactly, but I was attracted to this exchange between Ananias and Saul. You may view them both as stones and there is some making ready going on! Think of Saul, a name that might have human greatness attached to it. That is not the kind of greatness that God had in mind! He became Paul, which means 'little'. We are not to view one another as great naturally, not after nature, but what we are in God's sight, chosen, those that are precious, the objects of God's purpose. The Lord says of Saul, “this man is an elect vessel to me”; potentially a great stone, you might say! How is he going to be fitted into God's building? You might say it is impossible. Here is a man who has been breathing out threatenings and slaughter; Ananias would have been one of those subject to those things. Ananias needs a little adjustment. What does the Lord say to him regarding Saul? “This man is an elect vessel to me”, he is to be a great stone. “I will show to him how much he must suffer for my name”; there is going to be some workmanship needed. The Holy Spirit in His skill would allow suffering in order that there might be something brought out for God's glory through this vessel. Think too of how Paul elsewhere says, “the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me”, Gal 2: 20. How conscious he was that he was a costly stone; think of how he would be

able to look back at this occasion and view Ananias as another precious stone in God's building. How perfectly they met together. "Ananias went and entered into the house; and laying his hands upon him ..."; it has been said there was no need of mortar (JT vol 9 p288); there was no gap between these two stones. Ananias was able to lay his hands freely upon him, adjusted by the Lord, given a divine view of this person; and so there was no noise "of iron": "Saul, brother". The natural reaction would have been much different, but Ananias had been quickly adjusted in accepting this one as a brother.

I feel tested by this because we need to apply it practically. We are entitled to view one another in this way, as "great", "costly", and "hewn". May we value one another more, seeing the way that God views the saints, as chosen by the Father, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and as those in whom the Holy Spirit works in perfect skilfulness.

May the Lord bless the word.

Grangemouth

14th October 2014