

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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THE CHILDREN OF GOD, AND HIS WORKS

John 9: 1-38; 10: 1-16

DJW I think it would be good, beloved brethren, if in this reading we bear in mind John 1: 12, 13 which we had yesterday, as to receiving Christ and the right to be children of God. The experiences referred to with the blind man in this chapter are part of what God would intend for His children to come in to enjoy, and be in the gain of.

The Lord points out in verse 3, when the disciples had asked, “who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?”, that “Neither has this man sinned nor his parents, but that the works of God may be manifested in him”. It is not ‘work of God’ but “works” in the plural. So it is an ongoing thing; there is a development with him and that would be normal in those who are truly the children of God. And something unmistakable was wrought out in him, to be taken account of; that he was blind, but the Lord “spat on the ground and made mud of the spittle, and put mud, as ointment, on his eyes. And He said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam”. You might say that would make his condition worse: what a spectacle it must have been to see this blind man making his way to Siloam. “Mud of the spittle” speaks to us of the humanity of Christ but what we see here is the obedience of faith. Now, I suppose in a certain sense that is one of the first steps in soul history; the obedience of faith. If you answer to the gospel, that is the obedience of faith and there is no progress apart from that.

The knowledge that the blind man had of the Lord grows as we go through the chapter and he has to encounter opposition from the Pharisees, the religious element. They were the leaders of a system of things in which Christ had no place. Firstly, the neighbours enquire of him as to how his eyes were opened. He says, “a man called Jesus made mud and anointed mine eyes”, a man called Jesus. Later, he is asked what he thought of Him and he said, “He is a prophet”. It is the same conclusion that the woman in chapter 4 came to: He is a prophet, v 19. That is another step. I think the Lord manifestly knew what was going on in this man, and He allows him to have a rough ride from these Pharisees. The stronger the opposition becomes, the more he is strengthened in his faith to be faithful to the light he had. That is an important thing. Receiving his sight was, no doubt, a landmark in his history. He says, “One thing I know, that, being blind before, now I see”. And nothing could shake him from that because he had experienced it.

I think we are at the strongest in our testimony when we are speaking from our own experience. And all the power of the Pharisees could not move him from it. He knew more than one thing, of course, by the end of the chapter. And that is normal in the children of God, that there is progress. The greatness of the Person, who Jesus was, grew in this man's soul. He says in verse 30, "in this a wonderful thing, that ye do not know whence he is, and he has opened mine eyes". A Man who opened his eyes must have been somebody unique. That was the case with the blind man, and yet there was such blindness in the Pharisees. Unbelief is a blinding thing. "Since time was, it has not been heard that anyone open the eyes of one born blind." It brings out the distinctive character of the Person of Jesus in the eyes of the man.

Well, they cast him out: so he was in the same position as the Lord Himself. He had already been cast out. The Lord finds him; if he was cast out of one order of things there was another order of things opening up to him. The Lord presents fresh light to him. He asks, "Thou, dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, And who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?". He was not just content with what he had in the way of a meeting of his need but he was ready for fresh light. The Son of God is another Man in another world. He was ready for it, and he did Him homage; as if the greatness of who He was filled his soul: "and he did him homage". That is another link with the woman in chapter 4: she became a worshipper.

Now the Son of God becomes the Shepherd; the experience of the man in John 9 therefore goes into chapter 10. That brings us to a sphere of salvation and liberty and where there is food. I think that is brought out in verse 9: "I am the door: if anyone enter in by me, he shall be saved". It is an area of salvation: not only a question of eternal salvation but practical salvation in the one flock, coming under the one Shepherd. He "shall go in and shall go out", which is liberty, "and shall find pasture", which is food. So it is an area of safety: these things are open to us to enter into and enjoy. It is what God in His goodness has provided for us while we are still here; "one flock, one shepherd". It is parallel with Paul's ministry as to the one body, the Head in heaven, the body here. I wondered if we might get help together on that.

AKL It is wonderful to see how what is born of God shines in this man in all these different answers and how he is able to stand on his own feet. He goes through in victory and reaches Christ as the Son of God.

DJW Yes, I am glad you bring us back to that: nothing can be affected apart from that. But what is normal as being born of God is progress in the soul, an increase in the knowledge of the Person, knowledge of Christ. I think we see that in this man.

MJK I wondered if you could say something in relation to the thought, “anointed mine eyes”?

DJW I cannot say I had a thought about that, but perhaps you will give us the benefit of what you think.

MJK Well, it is interesting that it says “and put the mud, as ointment”. Then it seems the man recognises something: “anointed mine eyes”. He does not say that the second time but, “He put mud upon mine eyes, and I washed”. But I wondered if it could be connected with the growth in his soul.

DJW I think that is a good observation, so that there is a certain dignity that develops in this man as a result of a sense of his eyes being anointed. The Lord Jesus was the anointed Man, the anointed vessel. There was a dignity attached to that, and this man, as following in the same path of being cast out, has a certain dignity in his answers to the Pharisees.

MJK I think that is helpful because we see in relation to priesthood, or in relation to the kings, that there was an anointing. Here is a man that could properly bring in the principle of anointing.

DJW Well, there is to be a distinctive character attaching to the Christian. “The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch”, Acts 11: 26. They did not call themselves that, but they were called that. That simply means persons like Christ and I think the thought of the anointing is involved in that.

KAK As to the obedience of faith, do we see the steps of the gospel in the way this man confesses the Lord Jesus and believes?

DJW Yes; I wondered that and that is why I quoted “the works of God should be manifested in him”. There is some development, and that development goes on as long as we are here. As we are under the hand of the Lord, and we have the knowledge of Him as the Son of God, we are attracted into another world in which He is the Centre. We know a sphere of practical salvation. All these things are very precious to us and the more we experience them the more precious they become.

WSC Do you think it would be important for us to seek a touch from the Lord like this? It should be an active concern, or interest, of ours. I am wondering if it would not help us to look for that in our own lives.

DJW Well, the touch of the Lord is a distinctive thing in our experience, and it becomes a landmark. So that as you develop you can look back on it and it is a point of reference; it keeps us steady, do you think, in the Christian way? The touch of the Lord is distinct, it is unique; and if you go to the next chapter the Shepherd knows the sheep by name. There is something very personal about it.

AKL Is it significant that the chapter starts “as he passed on, he saw a man”? Would the Lord move on in the testimony today and see where there is receptiveness for what He desires to bring out and work out from there, whatever the situation?

DJW Yes, I think that is right. So with the woman in chapter 4 and with this man, it is an individual. There is a certain quality about them, the children of God as presented by John. They were believers who became real believers; so there is a certain quality about them.

NJH After his eyes were anointed, he got no assistance to find the pool of Siloam. Why was that?

DJW That is a difficult question to answer, but I suppose the obedience of faith involves dependence. It would have been a spectacle to see this blind man with mud on his eyes making his way to the pool of Siloam. I do not know that I can say much more on that point but you have been thinking about it.

NJH There was temporary blindness with Saul of Tarsus, as he was led by the hand; but here it seems to bring out that, when the Lord starts to work the works of God, there is reliability. He was left to function, you might say, in the power that was transmitted in the anointing.

DJW I think that is right. Therefore the Lord left him to the opposition of the Pharisees because he knew that there was something wrought in his soul that was reliable and would stand the test.

HJK It says there in verse 5, “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world”. Does that help answer the question?

DJW I think it does bear on it. I was thinking of what it says at the beginning of the gospel, “The true light is that which, coming into the world, lightens every man”, John 1: 9. Mr Darby's note says; “or 'is light

to every man'. Not 'enlightens' but sheds its light upon". So the light of the world in Christ was universal, in that it could be seen. But it was necessary to have a transaction with Christ as this man did to be enlightened. And as being enlightened we enter into this path of being children of God.

DTH Is this "obedience of faith", Rom 1: 5; 16: 26?

DJW That is what I was thinking. Do you think that is right?

DTH It was so of Abraham. It says he "obeyed to go out ... not knowing where he was going", Heb 11: 8. This man did not know the direction; it was a step in faith.

DJW The steps of our father Abraham were steps of faith, Rom 4: 12. We cannot take more than one step at a time. But as having taken one step we are ready to take another step. So in effect this man ends up by going "forth to him without the camp", Heb 13: 13.

JRB As to this thought of the works of God becoming manifest in him, it is an interesting link with what we have in Ephesians 2: 10, where it says, "we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before prepared that we should walk in them". It is obvious that this is a normal feature of God taking up a believer and God's work in him coming into expression.

DJW Yes, "we are his workmanship". What comes into expression in divine workmanship is Christ. The children of God bear the image of Christ, do they not? That is the end of God's thoughts for us, that we will eternally bear the image of Christ. That is to come into expression in an adverse scene as we see here.

JRB You referred earlier to the work of God coming into expression in the saints in Antioch in Acts, when they called them Christians; there was something there coming into expression.

DJW Yes, and that is what Saul of Tarsus saw in those who were of the Christian way. That is why it has such a prominent place in his ministry.

KRO Would it be right to say the thought of testimony comes in there? You have referred to the spectacle. I was thinking of how he is marked out as distinct from what he was before. I suppose it comes out in a fuller way when the others refer to him after he sees - "It is he". Is it the thought that as soon as we have had this interaction with the Lord the

testimony for Him begins?

DJW We had yesterday, and I think it is worth repeating, that we are here for two things, one is the service of God and the other is the testimony. Part of the royal priesthood that Peter speaks of is that, we are to “set forth the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness to his wonderful light”, 1 Pet 2: 19. There is a certain dignity attached to it.

APD Would you link the thought of spittle with essence, JT vol 46 p 481? It is the Person, is it not? I suppose it suggests humanity but the essence of the Person is involved, is it not?

DJW Yes, it is. Jesus was a real Man, as having come into flesh and blood condition. But He did not cease to be what He is in coming into manhood, He remains God. It seems to me that the man here in chapter 9, the blind man, perceives the greatness of the Person.

TWL Is the Lord allowing these circumstances part of what He says about the works of God? He is separating this man to Himself, is He not? He gives him the revelation of who He is after He separated him from everything that was around, and He did that by the contrariety?

DJW As was just said, there was what was reliable in him. In the gospels you get the man called Legion, from whom the demons were cast out and went into the herd of swine, Luke 8: 26-39. He wanted to go away to be with Jesus. But Jesus sent him back into the city to tell them how great things God had done for him. Now He had full confidence in what was in that man, that he could go back into a scene of evil and remain faithful. That is the same character of the work of God that is wrought out in this man.

TWL Yes; the man becomes powerful for the testimony, but he becomes precious to Christ. And subsequently Christ will have him for Himself according to Himself on His own ground. Subsequently he must be separated from everything that is around him. That is how it works; that is what it is to be one of the children of God.

DJW Yes, I think so. So that he comes out of one order of things, and then the Lord says, as it were, 'I have got something else in mind'. He becomes one of the sheep in the next chapter. That is a wonderful collective thing and the provision God has made for us in this provisional time.

SWS As to that, “that the works of God may be manifested in him”, it is remarkable when you consider the progress that is seen in this man’s soul in the portion we read. “A man called Jesus”, “One thing I know”, and then he comes to the point where he is a worshipper, as you point out. It is wonderful to contemplate that and see the progress that is seen in this man, but what I was wondering about is, that “the works of God may be manifest *in* him”. It is not *by* him but *in* him. I wondered if you could add to that because we spoke about it a little bit in the home as to testimony and I think this relates to that.

DJW Do you think that it is what he was, “manifested in him”? It was his manner of life; it was the bent of his interest. That could be taken account of, manifested *in* him. It is not only what he was to say when he answered to the Pharisees but what he is himself.

SWS It is encouraging when you consider that it begins with the obedience of faith but it continues by being faithful to the light that he had, and he grows in that.

DJW Yes. I think that is an essential point, that he is faithful to the light that he has. We read in chapter 6 yesterday and that showed that at that time there was a drift away from Christ. We can be affected by that. The love of the most has grown cold. But if we have had this landmark experience in our souls, let us hold to it, be faithful to the light we have; and as we are faithful to the light we have we will get further light.

KM You referred to Abraham earlier on. It says, “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness”, Rom 4: 3. Do you think that, with every step a believer makes in faith, God reckons that as a matter of righteousness, and it is very precious?

DJW I think so, and “he is a rewarder of them who seek him out”, Heb 11: 6. There is no evidence initially that this man sought out Christ. But He approached him and anointed his eyes. But if, further down the road, we have exercise in our souls, and it draws us to Christ, He is a rewarder to those who seek Him out.

DTH Is there something of the sense this man had as to the dignity of the anointing?

DJW Yes, that is what we have been saying, but you have got something further in your mind?

DTH I am thinking of how Paul addressed the saints in Corinth in his second epistle where he says, “Now he that establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God, who also has sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts”, chap 2: 22. These things are not successive.

DJW He starts by reminding them that they were the assembly of God in Corinth and his ministry brought in the truth of the cross in order to adjust the state that was among them to bring them up to the dignity of their calling, 1 Cor 1. We have been saying here in relation to this man in chapter 9, that there is a certain dignity about him in the way that he answered those Pharisees. He was steadfast, he was reliable.

PMcF I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about the thought of “Sent”? “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, which is interpreted, Sent.” This man had nothing, sitting as a beggar. He came to an end of himself, and that would be a challenge for us as we are in this world?

DJW Yes; you are emphasising the word 'sent', “which is interpreted, Sent”. Well, that is all involved in the obedience of faith. There was a divine Person there, the Lord Jesus who sent him. The Lord Jesus Himself is the sent One; that is another thing that John's gospel emphasises. That He came here as the sent One in order to carry out the will of God. This man answers, and obeys what the Lord said to him. Therefore he was sent in that way.

DJK He says that in verse 4, “I must work the works of Him that has sent me”. Could you say something as to that? I know he is referring to the day of grace but would there be a sense of urgency in that too?

DJW I think so, yes. “I must work the works of Him that has sent me while it is day. The night is coming when no one can work”. In chapter 4: 35, you get the reference to “the fields, for they are already white to harvest”. That is the present time. The fields are white to harvest; therefore there is an urgency in relation to the work but it is all under the hand of the Lord, who would send.

DJK There may be a certain complacency as children of God, recognising that we are among them, but the work continued on in this man, did it not?

DJW Yes it did. That is something sobering for us to take account of. We are here for the service of God and the testimony. I find it a searching thing as to how much I have my part in that; as among the

children of God. And yet a desire for it would come out of affection for Christ.

APD Why does something so beneficial have to be washed off? I think it is well said in ministry that the Lord had in mind another order of things altogether; what is beyond the flesh and blood condition.

DJW Well I think it is good to keep that in mind, because John in his ministry emphasised what is spiritual. It is entirely another world of things; faith and the Spirit is necessary for us to enter into that.

ASP How does this link with wisdom's children, Matt 11: 19?

DJW I think it does have a link; there is that which can be taken account of in wisdom's children, just as there is what can be taken account of in this man. But you have something in your own mind?

ASP It says that "wisdom has been justified by her children"; so the man was able to be resilient to the Pharisees; his faith was unshakable. He is marked by dignity and he was obedient as well. So there was perfect justification: the Lord's choice was perfect.

DJW In that sense the man justifies the Lord. The Lord in His goodness gave him that touch to give him his sight and then his behaviour and his faithfulness in the chapter justify what the Lord has done.

DC It has been remarked that a new order has been brought in. Do you think we get that in what it says that his parents really reject him? So from then on he does not take anything from them; he is not dependent on them at all. What comes out of him cannot come from anybody else but from the Lord Himself.

DJW Yes, I think that is right. It is confirmed in verse 22, "His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if any one confessed him to be the Christ, he should be excommunicated from the synagogue". It shows how absolute the rejection was of Christ. The parents, as not having this touch, were not prepared to leave that system of things so that it says, "On this account his parents said; He is of age: ask him". They put the responsibility back on him.

RG He immediately leaves the individual side and becomes collective in his thinking in verse 31: "we know" - who told him to say that? "We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone be God-

fearing and do his will, him he hears". He is actually ready for the next chapter. He was collective in his thinking now. Then the Lord takes him up to open up the great truth of His Person, that He was the Son of God.

DJW I would like the young people to grasp this, that you are not left to work out for yourself the things here just on your own. It is essential to maintain a link with Christ but He has provided, in His love, in this time scene, the one flock and the one Shepherd. There is a sphere of practical salvation where there is safety and where there is attachment to the Shepherd, the One who loved us enough to die for us. The Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep; and there is salvation, first to be brought into it and then to be maintained in it.

KDD When he speaks about this transaction, he says, "Now in this is a wonderful thing". It is a great thing to recognise what has been worked out in each one of us through the Lord's dealings, is it not? It was mentioned that this man is ready for the next chapter; he could see beyond what the Pharisees could see, could he not? It is a wonderful matter to deal with the Lord Jesus individually, and come into the blessing as being brought into the area of the flock that the Shepherd cares for.

DJW So His unique touch also brings with it a sense of the greatness of the Person, and the blind man perceived that. The Pharisees had no idea of the greatness of the Personage that was there, and that was through rejection of Christ, and unbelief.

JRB When he raises the question with them in verse 27, it is an interesting touch - an evangelical touch - as though this was the normal outcome of something which was coming into expression. He says to them "do ye also wish to become his disciples?". It was the confession that he had taken up this position of discipleship, but he was suggesting laying it on their conscience that the work of God coming into expression in this way should have this result in them.

DJW Yes, indeed. Unfortunately, it had the reverse effect with them because self-will was operating. So the next verse goes on to say they railed at him and said, "Thou art his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses"; they claimed to be from Moses. The railing comes as a result of that challenge he presented to them.

GDR It is clear from the outset that there was spiritual growth in this man. We would be exercised about that, that there is consistency and

spiritual growth. It is a wonderful result but then there is a process. You would see evidence of growth.

DJW The present time is the time of growth. When we are translated to be with Christ this time of growth will be over. But the present time is a time of growth. Think of the infinitude there is in the Person of Christ. Whatever fresh knowledge you have of Christ, there is always still something else, and that will be the case while we are here.

GDR It is that we may “grow up to him in all things” (Eph 4: 15); that is important is it not? That is what you look for and desire to see in individuals and local companies too, building up.

DJW Yes. It involves looking to the Person, “grow up to him in all things”. Flowers open out to the sun: it has that effect. The flowers come out, and as we look to Him, turn to Him, in every circumstance and exercise, that is how growth in the knowledge of the Person takes place.

NJP Can you say something about the importance of the recognition of His voice? Both of these chapters really are concerned with that are they not: hearing His voice? That was really the blind man's impression of Christ in the first place, His voice.

DJW Yes, hearing His voice. You are thinking of the shepherd's voice in the next chapter? It is recognised through intimacy with the Person. One illustration I think that would help is that if someone who you know very well phones you they do not have to announce who they are; you know who they are because it is their voice, something distinctive. There are many voices today. We are not called upon to distinguish all the different voices around us, but acquaintance with the Person would involve that we recognise the Shepherd's voice. The Shepherd's voice will never lead you into the world. It would lead you into this “one flock, one shepherd”.

NJP That is good, and we are to respond to that voice, are we not? It is coming to us with a view to a response.

DJW Yes, indeed.

NJH Linking on to what our brother has said it says, “Thou hast both seen him, and he that speaks with thee is he”. What is He referring to there?

DJW “Thou hast both seen him, and he that speaks with thee is he”. I

suppose the Lord is referring to what He had just presented to him as being Son of God, the greatness of who that One is, the very One who was in his presence, the One he had an intimate contact with. "Thou hast both seen him, and he that speaks with thee is he". It is not 'to thee' but "with thee"; it brings about a certain communion, does it not?

NJH I suppose we see the Lord in circumstances, do we not? Then we receive directly from Him as part of true Christian experience.

DJW So that whatever the circumstance is, the thing is to draw near to Him.

NJH His parents in refusing to support him, and the Pharisees casting him out, really served that man, for him to arrive at the Son of God. I suppose we can hear the Lord's voice in every circumstance, and then you have to know Him directly.

DJW When he was cast out the Lord found him, "God maketh the solitary into families", Ps 68: 6.

AKL When Jesus says to him, "Thou, dost thou ..."; is the Lord referring to the work of God and recognising what was already formed in his soul? "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?": it is really pointing on to the work of God in his soul.

DJW The Lord had perfect knowledge of His work in him. He has a perfect knowledge of His work in each one of us. His work in each one of us is perfect, and therefore there is something to appeal to, and there is something that will respond as this man did here.

MN Do we grow more attuned? You mentioned experience, and as we grow in experience do we grow more attuned to His voice? There were some here who did not understand that which He spoke but those who gain the experience increase in knowledge and reliability, and so would be more attuned to what flows in chapter 10. Would that be right?

DJW There is a certain sensitivity therefore, is there not, in being 'tuned in', if that is not too common an expression? But to be attuned requires a state on our part. Being attuned, there is a response immediately to further light as this man shows. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? ... Who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?"

MJK Can you help us a little in chapter 10; you spoke of the one flock and one voice?

DJW One flock and the one Shepherd. I think one thing is that, as the Shepherd's voice is heard, it brings about unity. The Lord loves each one of us intensely, He loves all the sheep, all that are His, His love for them is intense. He knows their names: He knows our names. He knows our circumstances, He knows our exercises; and as we are in earnestness in relation to Him, in relation to every circumstance and exercise, He would gather us and therefore there would be unity. Do you have some thought?

MJK I think that is very helpful. There was a thief and a robber, and then the thief and the wolf. But in each case the snare is that he would get one aside for the purpose of killing, stealing or destroying; but the principle that there was with the true Shepherd is that He would bring in unity, and bring the flock together.

DJW Yes: the preservation of life over against the destruction. That is good.

DCD At the end of verse 3, it says "he calls His own sheep by name, and leads them out". I was wondering if you could say something as to the thought of being led, "leads them out". We are talking about our circumstances; in each circumstance we would want to have the Shepherd in front of us, not the other way around. It might be our will to go first but we would want the Shepherd in front of us so that we can be led by Him.

DJW The Lord Jesus had been cast out; He was outside. He would find every one of His sheep who were in that position in faithfulness to Him, like the blind man. It is essential for the Lord to go in front. The Shepherd's voice would involve that we follow Him. He would draw us out of one order of things into another. There is what you are delivered from in the world, but then there is what you have been brought into in the one flock with the one Shepherd.

MTH Is the work of the porter necessary for that? It is the first thing mentioned in that verse. Then it says the sheep hear His voice. I was wondering if you could say something as to that. It is essential for all of us.

DJW Do you have some impression as to who the porter is?

MTH I think from what we have been taught it might be applied to the Spirit of God, but I would like to understand better how His work is essential to hearing His voice? Sensitivities were mentioned, and how

that increases; and that is really the work of the Spirit, is it not?

DJW It is. I think it is a reference to the Spirit. Therefore it is important for us to take account of the place that the Spirit may have with us. On the one hand it would help us in the judgment of the flesh, which would hamper us in hearing His voice; but then it would also open up something to us in a positive way: "To him the porter opens; and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name". It opens up a sphere of things in which intimacy with the Shepherd is known and enjoyed.

NJH As to the question raised, while the link with Israel had not yet been terminated, in the three and a half years He was actually gathering for the assembly.

DJW Yes; in verse 16 it says, "I have other sheep which are not of this fold: those also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice: and there shall be one flock, one shepherd". The fold refers to what is Jewish, but then there are others He must bring, which would bring the Gentiles in. Jew and Gentile become reconciled in the one body, or the one flock.

NJH Our brother has referred to the porter and then, "he ... leads them out". It is the assembly in mind; it is a wonderful thought. I think this man in chapter 9 must have found his place among the one hundred and twenty in Acts 1: 15.

DJW Well, I hope we can all grasp that, each one of us, that in receiving Christ and having a right to be children of God the assembly is in view. That is the fulness of the gospel message. It is not just a matter of meeting our need; that is very true, but persons who sit under the gospel with that limitation presented to them have a limited vision of what God has in mind for them. But the gospel message has in view that we are saved from this world; and it has in view a part in the assembly, which is a very precious thing.

AKL Would that be involved in the reference, "I am come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly"? Would that be a reference to the wealth of Christ and the assembly? I am just thinking of what is collective leading up to the worship of God.

DJW We sometimes sing,

Life is found alone in Jesus (Hymn 266)

but this scripture says, "and might have it abundantly". I wondered if

that might have reference to gift of the Holy Spirit? God “has not spared His own Son, but delivered him up for us all”, Rom 8: 32. He has also given us the unspeakable free gift in the Holy Spirit; “and might have it abundantly” is known and enjoyed in a sphere of practical salvation in the assembly.

JRB There is an interesting reference in relation to what you are saying now as to the Spirit's place in these things in Isaiah 30: 21; it says, “And when ye turn to the right hand or when ye turn to the left, thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it”. Our links with the Spirit are critical to our not going off on a tangent.

DJW I am sure that is very important. Therefore I come back to the point of the importance of giving Him His place in our hearts. We will miss out on so much unless we do give place to the Spirit. He is the Spirit of life. It introduces us to a sphere where life, and eternal life, are known and enjoyed.

WSC I was interested in your comments about obedience of faith, which encase the book of Romans, as we know. But in the midst of that is that “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death”, Rom 8: 2. That is a real experience, and we should look for that.

DJW So there is a certain process you can take account of in Romans which really runs parallel to this. We recognise that we cannot please God in the flesh; it is impossible to do so. Then you find you have a desire to do what is right, which is a sign that there is a work of God in you, but you have no power to do it. Then the Spirit comes in, to join His help to our weakness so that we have the power to overcome the flesh and walk in the Spirit of life. Now Romans does not give us the assembly but those exercises produce assembly material.

APD Do you think that leading them out involves liberty?

DJW I wondered that. In verse 9 you get the reference, “he ... shall go in and shall go out”; that is liberty, is it not?

APD It is not liberty to do as we please. But it is really holy liberty in functioning in the assembly.

DJW Yes; the Spirit would set us free for that.

MJK It is liberty for the new man to do as he pleases. He has no

desire but that which is of Christ. Is that right?

DJW Yes, that is right.

MTH Would you comment on the quality of the title “the good shepherd”? There are many characteristics attached to that Shepherd title, for example, “the great shepherd” (Heb 13: 20); but here “the good shepherd” is drawn attention to. It is “the good shepherd” who lays down His life for the sheep.

DJW We just commented on the difference between the activities of “the good shepherd” in preserving the sheep over against the destruction of those that serve for wages. I think this is something we can remind ourselves of constantly. When was the last time we thanked the Lord for dying for us? “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep”: “No one has greater love than this, that one should lay down his life for his friends”, John 15: 13. It was for the sheep. We owe everything to the Shepherd. I think that, if given a right place in our affections, would govern our life. He has distinct love for us personally, and He has love for His own collectively.

GDR The reduction of self in these matters is so essential, proving that He alone is the one that is in control. It eliminates all natural reasonings which come in all the time. It must be Him alone.

DJW That is right. So that His Shepherd service is what we are to prove at the present time. We will not need it when we are there with Him. There will be no enemy activity there; there will be nothing to destroy up there. We need it now. It is provided for us here.

TWL So is this thought of life - “I am come that they might have life” - really what we are as quickened with Christ?

DJW Yes, I think so. Then to have it abundantly relates to the Holy Spirit. So that it is the fulness of life in that verse.

Aberdeen ID

5th July 2014

Key to initials:-

J R Bellamy, Vancouver; W S Chellberg, Wheaton; D Crozier, Warrenpoint; AP Devenish, Edmonton; D C Drever, Calgary; K K Drever, Calgary; R Gray, Calgary; N J Henry, Glasgow; M T Holland, Calgary; D T Howie, Edmonton; Doug J Klassen, Aberdeen ID; H J Klassen, Aberdeen ID; M J Klassen, Aberdeen ID; K A Knauss, Indianapolis; A K Lidbeck, Aberdeen ID; T W Lock, Edinburgh; K Marshall, Colchester; Paul McFarlane, New York; M Noel, Ormond Beach; K R Oliver, Denton; AS Pittman, Grangemouth; N J Plant, Toronto; G D Rosenberry, Edmonton; S W Selman, Aberdeen ID; D J Wright, Havering

THE FIRST MAN ADAM, AND THE LAST ADAM

Jim D Gray

1 Corinthians 15: 44 (from “if there is”) - 50

This section deals with two races, the first man, Adam, and the last Adam, that is, Christ. It says that if there is a natural body then there is going to be a spiritual one. We all know there is a natural body, because we are in a natural body, in a condition that cannot inherit God's kingdom. But what do we derive from these two, for I speak in respect of them both, particularly of Christ as the last Adam?

God brought in man and He tested him; He tested the first man Adam. We do not inherit what Adam was in innocence; we do not inherit that; that was finished before any children were born. We inherit what he was after God tested him. He failed the test, and he ate of the fruit that was forbidden; he disobeyed God. So we have inherited a lawless nature; thus there was a need of change. There may be, for example, natural love which is of God, but we inherit from Adam, as fallen, everything that is seen in this world; the Roman epistle tells us of all the awful development of sin in man, and we belong to that race.

But God had in mind that men should be saved. God had in mind to change us, that there should be change in persons; and the last Adam comes in and that is Christ. He was tested too. We have inherited from Him, as coming to Christ, the benefits of His trial. In Him sin is not (1 John 3: 5); there was no point of attack. He is the sinless Man, “the second man, out of heaven”; that is the last Adam. The work of God in us begins in new birth as set out in John's gospel chapter 3. That is where it starts and it has its culmination upon the confession of Christ as Saviour and Lord, and on that account it says in Acts 2: 38, “repent ... for remission of sins, and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”. Both those things are necessary for the believer to come into this lineage after Christ. Adam has his race and, as fallen men, we belong to that race, but as God works in our souls through new birth and brings us to an acknowledgment of the Lord as our Lord and Saviour we can look on ourselves as born of God, a wholly new matter. It is an entering in of a new source, and it has its culmination and expression when a person trusts Christ as Saviour and he receives the righteousness which is given to him of God which fits him for heaven.

But God has in mind to develop that work in the believer

normally through life. He uses life to develop what is after Christ. So that what we have to begin with - forgiveness and the gift of the Spirit - forms a moral and spiritual foundation on which it is all built. It is not built on Adam's race, after the flesh; it is built on persons who have been quickened by the last Adam. Thus God has given us through the glad tidings the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit, a basic moral and spiritual foundation, and He is going to build on it. So that the first thing was the natural body; that which was natural was first, not that which was spiritual. But the spiritual is to continue, so that when you come into blessing you can take account of yourself as "such as the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones". Now it says before that, "Such as he made of dust, such also those made of dust"; we know about that: it is what we are by natural descent. "Such as the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones"; when you come to Christ you can take account of yourself as a "heavenly one", the moral question being cleared, as I have said. There is a spiritual foundation in your soul to build what is heavenly. It says in Peter's epistle, "in brotherly love love", 2 Pet 1: 7. That is greater than brotherly love - love. It derives from the divine nature in the believer, and the Holy Spirit is the power in the believer to give expression to it. That is how it is developed. God uses our lives to form us after this heavenly One.

God has in mind not only that we have a spiritual base, but we become characterised by what is spiritual as being led and being guided by the Holy Spirit. The Corinthian saints were carnal; that means they were going back to act like an unbeliever, that is, after the flesh, as if they had not been converted. Paul says that to them, "ye are yet carnal", 1 Cor 3: 3. So they needed good food to build themselves up again, and he sought to build them up, and secured it to some degree. But God has not in mind that we should be carnal. Do not go back to what we were after Adam with all the fickleness and hatred and other features. As coming to Christ we belong to Him; so God is building us in relation to this heavenly One. So we radiate the features of the heavenly One. It does not have to wait until eternity, until the race of life is done, it is developed now: "Such also the heavenly ones"; that is present. No doubt there will be a fuller expression of it when we bear the image of the heavenly One; that would be a fuller expression of it. Conformed to the image of God's Son involves as I understand it the actuality of having a body of glory in its fulness. We have to look forward to that, but be encouraged now to develop in these features of the heavenly One. So what is in testimony is the Man of the gospels;

what a thing to see persons here amongst men, testifying amongst one and another the features of that Man of the gospels. What shone out in Him was what was heavenly; “the second man, out of heaven”, shone out in Christ while here. Now in glory He is active, and by the Holy Spirit has in mind to produce a race after Himself that will radiate Him now and in the future, in eternity, the glories of that blessed, heavenly One.

So that we who believe are destined for heaven, and may we be encouraged to seek the Holy Spirit's help to develop what is laid in our souls as a basic spiritual foundation, so that we pay attention to the truth and relations with divine Persons, and communion with the Holy Spirit. Then we will be helped to develop now in the face of everything, through tests - for you will be tested. God tests His work; that is the divine prerogative: He tests His work. I say this with respect, He tested it in Christ, and that was great, to show that here was a blessed Man who was impervious to sin and Satan's wiles, and now He is going to have a race after Him. We have to be dependent because of the present condition of sinful flesh still remaining with us; we have got to overcome that. The Lord Jesus says, “In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good courage: I have overcome the world”, John 16: 33. We have to overcome, but He has given us the power to do so, so that what shines out in testing and trials in the way, are the features of the heavenly One.

May we be encouraged for His Name's sake.

Edinburgh

6th November 2013

WALKING WITH GOD

Robert Gardiner

Genesis 5: 21-24

Hebrews 11: 5-6

John 3: 13-15

Romans 8: 15

I just have an impression to say a word about walking with God. There is a scripture that has been on our lips many times in our gatherings together recently - "Shall two walk together except they be agreed", Amos 3: 3. That is verily true. But in Genesis this is not two persons. This is the Creator God and His creature man. If it is true of persons, how much more so when it comes to God and His creature - man. I do not think we ever read about Enoch but a certain admiration comes into your heart. You admire a man of whom it says he "walked with God". It was always God's desire to walk with man. When God came down to the garden of Eden His thought was to walk with Adam. But sin had come in and Adam and his wife hid themselves. "Where art thou?", God says, Gen 3: 9. He was looking for companionship but it was not there. But that did not thwart His desires; thank God for that. He knew the end from the beginning.

So we come to chapter 5. Here is a man of whom it says he "walked with God". God had designed in His wisdom and in His love a way whereby He could walk with man; and man could walk with God. We remember how Abel offered his offering, a firstling of his flock offered by death, in type Christ Himself. This had to be the way for God to accomplish His desire. One had to die as the propitiation for sins. It is interesting that it was after Methushelah was born that it says that Enoch walked with God. Methushelah lived until he was nine hundred and sixty-nine years old; an extraordinary age. Enoch was sixty-five when he began to walk with God. If you translate that into our time, he would have been a relatively young man. I think this applies to all of us. But before God can walk with man and man with God, there has to be severe exercise with us.

That is why I read in John 3 because it takes us back to the children of Israel who had come out of Egypt. They had traversed the Red Sea, and had been thirty-eight years in the wilderness; and the land was before them. God's desire was that they might come into the land and enjoy His company. But at this point which we read of in John

3 it is just a short time before they went over Jordan. Their sins had been dealt with. The blood had been on the door-posts and on the lintel in Egypt. The Red Sea had been gone through. They had many exercises in the thirty-eight years in the wilderness that had showed how great sinners they were. But now we come to another point. Again they are complaining against God in the history referred to here. What comes to light is that God has to point out that it is not just sins, but it is *sin* in the flesh and it has to be dealt with and dealt with severely. They had been bitten by the serpents. So Jehovah told Moses to take a serpent of brass, and he was to lift it up. And then it was those who looked, and the footnote in Numbers 21: 8, 9 says, 'looked intently', who lived. It was not a casual glance; but it suggests entering into what Christ suffered: "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him", 2 Cor 5: 21. Now I would suggest, dear brethren, that Enoch went through this exercise. It does not say anything about that, but if he was going to walk with God then there had to be the exercise gone through that would make him suitable to walk with the Person who had provided what was necessary to make him suitable.

What a God we have to do with, dear brethren; how considerate He is, what love He has, down-stooping love. Christ is the Man that came down out of heaven, as it says in John 3: 13, "no one has gone up into heaven, save he who came down out of heaven". He was the One who was lifted up, the serpent of brass in the wilderness. And He is the One that removes all the calamity of sin in the flesh so that we might be persons that can lift up our eyes and say we are done with all that belongs to this world, and all that attaches to it.

We sang that hymn -

The heart is satisfied, can ask no more;
All thought of self is now for ever o'er! (Hymn 247).

Dear brethren, can we come to it in any measure?

Christ, its unmingled Object, fills the heart
In blest adoring love - its endless part

That is Enoch, "Christ, its unmingled Object, fills the heart." That is the kind of man that can walk with God. But then after the brazen serpent, you remember, there was the springing well.

And that is why I read in Romans, because there we are

introduced, you might say, to the Spirit of God. In Romans we have the perfect work of Christ. Paul says, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, having sent his own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit", v 3, 4. That is like Enoch. He is no longer walking according to flesh. He is walking according to Spirit, and therefore, walking with God. It says further down, "For ye have not received a spirit of bondage again for fear, but ye have received a spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father", v 15. We have eternal life in John 3, crying "Abba, Father" in Romans 8. We are able to enter into the blessedness of what God has ever had in His heart for His creature. And Enoch was translated with the testimony that he had pleased God: "for before his translation he has the testimony that he had pleased God", Heb 11: 5.

How wonderful to think of God, not only our Creator but our Redeemer, in Christ. What a thing it is that we are able to please God. This is the way to it, beloved brethren. How attractive. If we admire it in Enoch how wonderful it would be if somebody could admire it in you and me. And there are such persons -

The heart is satisfied, can ask no more.

How wonderful, beloved brethren, that to walk with God is a possibility. Not an 'if' or a 'but'. It is a possibility because faith has been granted to us. What a gift of God! And then with faith there is the Spirit of God. What a gift of God! "He who by the eternal Spirit offered Himself spotless to God" (Heb 9: 14) - that same Spirit by whom He offered Himself spotless to God, now filling our hearts. So that as sons of God we are heirs with Christ, heirs of God, led to enjoy the blessedness of what one day we will enjoy in actuality as over Jordan (translated as Enoch). But we can enjoy it now, and we can walk here in testimony as persons who are enjoying it because we are walking with God.

I say again, dear brethren, how can two walk together unless they be agreed? How could we ever walk with God and God with us unless we are agreed. The agreement is based on the work and death of our Lord Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. May we be attracted more to it. May we seek to walk more in accordance with it. May we be persons whose -

... heart is satisfied, can ask not more;
All thought of self is now for ever o'er.

In the words of Mr Darby, "Absolute consecration to Jesus is the strongest bond between human hearts", Synopsis vol 3 p402. "I believe Enoch is a type of a person that was absolutely consecrated to Christ, and therefore could walk with God.

May it be so with us for His Name's sake.

Kirkcaldy

19th August 2014

THE FATHER'S ACTIVITIES

Robert Taylor

Colossians 1: 12-13

Romans 8: 31-32

Ephesians 3: 14-17

1 John 2: mid 14-15

I felt on Lord's day, dear brethren, some impression as to the Father's activities in the dispensation. These scriptures have come to me since. You get Paul bowing his knees to the Father. How his heart must have been full; and there is a need for us to be increasingly affected, I think, by what the Father has done. Perhaps especially in our thanksgiving to the Father, there is a danger of formality, and of repetition. We all feel that. That is because we do not know Him well enough if that is the case. If you know a person there will always be freshness in your conversation.

And Paul here writing to the Colossians is "giving thanks to the Father". How dear the Father had made Himself to him by His activities. He is the great final Operator in the economy. Operations are in the hand of Christ as Lord, but the Father is over all; you see that in these scriptures that we have read. And Paul is saying here, 'He has delivered us'. That is where He started. That was not where we were first in His mind, but it is where He started. He delivered us, found us where we were, and delivered us from the authority of darkness. What it must have cost the Father to do that.

Romans tells us that: He "has not spared his own Son". Scripture is very touching. He could just have said, He 'has not spared his Son', but He "has not spared his own Son". What Christ was to the Father, we read in the gospels. He opened the heavens upon Him. But what He was in those early thirty years, too, what it must have been. The Lord says, "did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?", Luke 2: 49. I think I have said before that Mr J Bellett quotes,

There has one object been disclosed on earth
That might commend the place; but now 'tis gone:
Jesus is with the Father.

What those years must have been. I often think of that, reading about Palestine today. What a favoured land it was. The footsteps of Jesus

left their own impress; lepers were cleansed, dead were raised. What a time it must have been. There was a Man on this earth in whom heaven found its infinite delight. But God delivered us by giving His own Son. What that must have meant to the Father, seeing His Son ridiculed by Pilate. All forsook Him and fled: how the Father must have felt it. But He did not come in in judgment. He might well have done so, but that is not the Father. God is the judge of all, but the Father judges no one; the name of love and grace in its fulness is "the Father". As I said, there was not a voice of sympathy or pity from men. The disciples fled - Jesus was alone. There He was. But the Father was there active in it. Then, those hours of darkness on the cross, what they must have been to heaven. He "has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all" that He might bring us into a place of favour. Think of the Father's feelings and activities in that He "has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him grant us all things?" You see why He did it: that He might grant us all things.

Romans is full of the "all things" - forgiveness of sins, justification, reconciliation, sonship. All these things, they would never have been known had He spared His own Son. But He says, "how shall he not also with him...". What a matter it was. He raised Christ by His glory - the Father's activities in doing that. Mr A J Gardiner used to speak so often about it. He said that God passed over every other man that was dead, Alexander the Great, and all the heroes, He passed by them all; and 'He raised up *Jesus* from among the dead and left all the rest in the grave'. He raised Him up, the only One that was worthy to be raised, but He raised Him up that He might grant us all things. They are worthwhile going in for, dear brethren. Know what it is to be justified; it settles a great lot of questions. Mr James Taylor suggests you will never try to vindicate yourself if you are enjoying justification in your heart, see vol 37 p327. And a great many sorrows are through trying to justify ourselves, putting our opinion, what we think: you are not able to vindicate yourself. God has done it. If you are enjoying that God has justified you who can condemn? The Father has done it; granted us justification, reconciliation - He has brought us into the house to enjoy the merriment and the dancing. The Father has done it that He might grant us all things. Oh, it would be fine to write them down. Just spend time writing down the "all things". We used to be told to do that:

Count your blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

It is very true; what the Lord has done. He has justified us, reconciled us, He has brought us into sonship and He has given us the Spirit to enjoy it.

That is what Ephesians tells us, that the Father chose us in Christ before the world's foundation, chap 1: 4. That was before there was ever anything in us. Chapter 1, and chapter 3, are full of the blessings of the Father, and Paul bows his knees in worship. It is fine to hear some touches like that in our response to "the Father ... of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named". That is another thing that the Father is doing. He is going to put His own impress upon every family. And there will be the impress of sonship in all its glory upon the saints of this dispensation. Every family will be in sonship; but there is a special touch, I believe, of the saints in this dispensation enjoying sonship now. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family is named, wants to give you the riches of His glory, and He is doing it by strengthening us with power by His Spirit in the inner man. Think of the Father doing that, dear brethren. Strengthening us "with power by his spirit in the inner man; that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts". See the objective that the Father has in mind for us: "rooted and founded in love", not easily moved, not blown about by every wind of doctrine, but it says here what He may give you, "strengthened with power by his Spirit." That is another thing that the Father has done. He has sent the Spirit, sent Him in the name of Christ. I said already the world must have been attractive when Christ was here; now, today, the Spirit is here. The whole economy is active. But "strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man ... being rooted and founded in love" brings you to stability. Amid all the winds that are blowing, the roots are tested, but the tree remains rooted and founded in love.

The Father's love, the source of all,
Sweeter than all it gives,
Shines on us now without recall,
And lasts while Jesus lives. (Spiritual Songs, p68)

- the Father's love.

Well, the verse in John is just to encourage us as to the love of the Father and how we come into it. John says, "I have written to you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. Love not the world." There is

the danger, dear brethren. You know, that was the prodigal: he loved the world. He did not go out expecting to finish up feeding on swine's meat. But he loved the world. He did not think what would happen, but that is what *does* happen. It says, "If anyone love the world." Let us be watchful, dear brethren, that we do not allow things that spoil us enjoying the love of the Father. It says here "the love of the Father is not in him." We would like to have the love of the Father in us, would we not? We would like to be in simple relationships with the Father - "the love of the Father." The prodigal came into it; he got the best robe. There is the love of the Father: he got that robe on. Do you think he would go back into the world? That robe could not go back into the world, dear brethren. If we are enjoying the robe and the ring and the sandals, they are not just for mentioning on Lord's day morning, you know. The robe, the ring and the sandals are for wearing through a wilderness path; and the triumph of an Enoch, 'walking with God', in happy relationships with Him.

May we be expanded and exercised in our thoughts, that the Father may have a greater response of wealth by the Spirit's grace and power working in us for His glory and praise. For His Name's sake.

Kirkcaldy

19th August 2014

DEATH WITH CHRIST AND DELIVERANCE

John N Darby

Romans 8

There is no cloud on God's side: what shall separate us from His love? We enjoy His favour without reserve on His part. We have the Spirit of adoption by which we cry "Abba Father!". There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus: Christ cannot be condemned.

Then in verse 3 comes the practical power: we are set free from the yoke of sin. Generally, one has more difficulty about sin in oneself than about sins; for this it needs deliverance and no longer pardon. But the power of this deliverance exists; if I am vigilant, the flesh has no right at all over me. There are these two things, sins and the flesh which produces them, and the death of Christ applies to one and the other. When sin is anticipated, it is agreeable to the flesh, when it has been committed, it produces bitterness in the conscience.

I have offended God, I am pardoned; I was guilty, I am justified; I was defiled, I am washed. It is important that I am really conscious of that. If somebody pays my debts, I take care to point them all out, so that none of them remains. Christ has borne all my sins; He is seated up there because all is done. All my sins were yet future when Christ bore them. God knew everything, and He has laid all upon Jesus.

Two passages in this epistle speak of the blessing of believing, in the fifth chapter and in the eighth. In the fifth, it is pardon for offences; in the eighth, "There is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus". It is not said, 'no condemnation for those for whose sins Christ has died', but for those who are in Christ. It is a new position. As I have often said, suppose a young man riddled with debts; his father delivers him from them. Then the father, who has a good business, associates himself with this son; from then on the young man says: our capital, our business, our clients, etc... when indeed he has not even contributed a cent. Thus Christ has united us to Him; what He has is ours: the believer knows that he is Christ's. "Ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you", John 14: 20. In going, He says: "My Father and your Father ... my God and your God", John 20: 17. He is there at the right hand of God, and I am in Him, and He has sent His Holy Spirit so that I might know it. It is necessary to have a perfect consciousness

of it for the heart to be free. God has come to seek me, when I was in my sins; He says, 'You cannot have confidence in me? Well, here I am.'

I have part in the death of Christ; He is become my life, but as being dead and already raised. "In me ... dwelleth no good thing" (Rom 7: 18 KJV): death is needed to rid me of this. This is why we have been crucified with Him. When I say: 'It is not me who does this, but the sin that dwells in me' (Rom 7: 20), that does not satisfy me; then I say: "I am crucified with Christ", Gal 2: 20. Everything changes: I am united to Him; death, life, these are our 'common capital'. I died on the cross: God says to me: 'You are dead': my faith grasps this thing - I am dead to sin and alive to God. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death." God has condemned sin in the flesh - *in the flesh*. This condemnation is accomplished, and the life of Christ is the power of it in me. What the law could not do, God has done. The law cursed me, but could not condemn sin in the flesh. In Colossians 3, God says: 'You are dead'. Faith says, 'Yes'. Then, bearing death in my body, life is produced; the flesh does not stir and the life of Jesus is manifest in my body. I take my place in the death of the Lord Jesus; I bear in my body the "dying" of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor 4: 10), so that the only thing which is manifest should be life. This is the Christian life. The Holy Spirit says, 'You are a son'; and from then on I no longer recognise the flesh. Our commonwealth is thereafter in the heavens.

But the Holy Spirit also takes knowledge of our infirmities; I groan according to God and the Spirit intercedes with groanings that cannot be uttered. In John 11, Christ wept on seeing the power of death act upon hearts. I do not know what to ask for as is fitting, but I know that God directs everything for my greatest good. He is for us; He will give all things with Jesus. He justifies me; who will condemn? Who will separate me from the love of Christ? He has passed through all the things enumerated in verse 35; He became Man to pass through them.

A perfect conscience is needed; it is a sin not to have it; but let us remember that the remedy which assures to us deliverance from the flesh is that we are dead with Christ. It is never said that we have to die. To put to death is not to die; it is to exercise a power. I reckon that I am dead, then I mortify, I put to death my members that are on the earth, Col 3: 5.

I repeat that there is generally, not to say always, more exercise

on the subject of the flesh then on the subject of sins. I say to a Christian: 'Your debts are all paid': He replies, 'What a good thing!'. But I add: 'You are dead', and he protests: 'Alas! No, I got angry this morning...'. One is not delivered from oneself so long as one has not despaired of oneself. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me ... ?" It is as a child who fell in a ditch, and who is stuck there in the sludge. He says to his father who is above: 'I have to get out of here'. His father says to him: 'Yes'. The child makes a first effort to climb the slope, but slips back into the sludge and gets a little dirtier. He looks to his father once again saying: 'I must get myself out of there'. The father answers: 'Certainly'. Then the child makes prodigious efforts several times over and always falls deeper into the quagmire again. Then he despairs of himself and says to his father: 'I can do nothing here, you must draw me out of here'; and the father answers: 'Ah! That is what I was waiting for'; and pulls him out. "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord", Rom 7: 25.

Vevey

14th September 1871