

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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HOLDING FAST

Alastair McKay

1 Corinthians 15: 1, 2

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I would like to speak of this matter of holding fast. We are constantly reminded of the attacks of the enemy on Christianity; the attacks that are coming upon the truth, the attacks upon the Scriptures. This is not something that is going to diminish, I think, but is going to become ever more prevalent. A brother recently reminded us in Sunbury of the need not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, 1 Tim 1: 8. That involves nailing our colours to the mast so that there should be no surrender. I seek the Lord's grace to say a word as to this matter of holding fast to things. There are things in Scripture that we are encouraged to put off, there are things that we are encouraged and commanded even not to do, but I wondered if I might speak of some things that are positive and some of the things that we are encouraged to hold fast, to lay hold of and to not let go.

I read in Revelation because that seems to give the goal. The Lord says to the assembly in Philadelphia, "hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown". It is my simple desire that there might be that spirit among us; let "no one take thy crown". Let "no one take thy crown" individually but also let no one take that crown collectively: let us hold fast to what we have in view of that coming day. That is a wonderful, glorious word, "behold, I come quickly" (Rev 22: 7); it is what is to be before us.

In thinking about holding fast it would be right to start with the Lord Himself as the perfect example of One who held fast. Holding fast would suggest that things are securely constrained. If you moor up a boat you have to make sure it is secure; it has to be held fast, moored properly, otherwise it will drift. The Lord, in every step of His life and every step of His pathway, held fast to what was given to Him. Think of that word in Psalm 40: 8, "thy law is within my heart": absolute and total committal to what had been given to Him. That law was indivisible from His heart. It became Him. He held it fast, He was not going to be diverted, and He was not going to be moved away from the tiniest element of that law. He came and He fulfilled everything. Not one thing was left unfulfilled, but every element of that law fulfilled in Him. Think

of Him on His pathway as He was here amongst men; there comes a point in Luke's gospel where it says of the Lord, "he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem", chap 9: 51. There was no shying away from that pathway, no diverting. Knowing who He was, how could there be a diverting from that pathway of the Lord Jesus, because the law was in His heart, because He held it fast? There was no diversion. He set His face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem. He knew what awaited Him there and He had told His disciples, and He had spoken to them about it. He spoke to them almost at every opportunity He could about what was to come, and we have noticed that, as He progresses, the descriptions that He gives the disciples get deeper and deeper, and yet still it seems that they failed to grasp the meaning of what He said to them. Even that did not divert the Lord from that pathway; He held fast to it. He was utterly and totally committed to that pathway. Then you get that wonderful reference in the Lord's prayer, "When I was with them I kept them in thy name", John 17: 12. How affecting that the Lord was caring and dealing with those whom the Father had given Him, those who were intensely precious to Him; He says, "I kept them". Nothing was going to divert Him from that. You think of the feelings of Jesus even as to Judas. The psalmist says, "it was thou, a man mine equal, mine intimate, my familiar friend ...", Ps 55: 13. What that meant to Jesus, but He had kept the disciples. He had kept them and He had preserved them; He had held fast to them. Then, ultimately, as the Lord Jesus comes to that moment in Gethsemane He says, "not my will, but thine be done", Luke 22: 42. His will was perfect, there was no deficiency in His will, but He says, "not my will, but thine be done". He held absolutely fast to the will of Another; and in doing so He went to Calvary's cross and He died for you and for me; He gave Himself. Scripture says, "who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God", Heb 9: 14. He was the perfect Offering; I think that the fruit of everything that the Lord Jesus Himself held fast was so that at the end, He was able to offer Himself spotless to God. What about us? I can only speak simply of these things; I feel the edge of them myself.

Paul in Corinthians says, "if ye hold fast the word which I announced to you as the glad tidings". Let us hold fast the glad tidings; we have such an intense privilege in coming under the sound of the gospel every week. There are those who say that, if you have heard the gospel and you have answered to it, you no longer need it. I think those who are in this room are the evidence that that is wrong. We do need it, we need the gospel every week, we need it for practical salvation, we need it to forge stronger and stronger links with our Lord Jesus. We

need it to remind us of the greatness of the sacrifice that has been made, and we need it to bring us into the fulness of the blessing that God has in mind for us. There should be no deficiency with us. Paul says to hold fast to it. He had announced the word to them and it seems that they believed, but then this question comes up among them as to resurrection, and he says, "unless indeed ye have believed in vain". If you think there is no resurrection, "if Christ be not raised ... ye are yet in your sins", 1 Cor 15: 17. He is saying, 'Hold fast to the word which I announced to you'. Every week, every moment, let us hold fast to the gospel and that will give us the enjoyment of our salvation. There are few things more sad than knowing a believer and seeing that believer not in the enjoyment of his salvation. Knowing you are saved is wonderful; it is a great thing and, young people, I would like to encourage you all to *know* that you are saved, commit your heart to Jesus, know what it is to put your faith in that glorious finished work. Do we then carry on with our lives as they were before? No; we are to continue in the full enjoyment of our salvation as proving it, as conscious of our deliverance, conscious also of all we have been brought into; not what we have been delivered from, but what God would have in mind for us. I believe that is involved in holding fast to the word of the glad tidings; let us be encouraged. The preaching goes on in our rooms - or our homes if we meet in homes. God is good to us and He speaks to us through the gospel; let us hold fast to the glad tidings, and hold fast to that word. Dear friend, it will be an anchor point for you, it will be one of those things that keeps you stable, it will help you when you go to school, to college or university, when you go out to work; the conviction that you can hold fast and go back to the glad tidings, that is an anchor point and it is something that will deliver us.

I refer to this verse in Proverbs. The writer says, "Take fast hold of instruction, let her not go: keep her, for she is thy life". How much instruction do we receive? There are those who have gone before who have instructed us. There is instruction in the ministry books that we have. Hold it fast; man's mind would question the truth. There was a scientist just this past week who made some assertion about creation, that it did not need God. Well, hold fast the instruction we have received. It says, "let her not go: keep her, for she is thy life". It is interesting to me that this is not commandment, it is instruction; it is more than just rules and regulations, this involves understanding. There are many of our young people at the moment doing exams. What is needed for that is instruction, not just to know what is the answer, but you need to understand it. You need to understand how to

find the answer; that is instruction, and we receive instruction from one another. We receive instruction when we are together; we receive instruction from the Lord. He could say "one is your instructor, and all ye are brethren", Matt 23: 8. The Lord Himself is our great Instructor and as He has instructed us, as He has taught us, and as He has guided us, we need to hold on to that. I believe it is vital and critical at the present moment. Man's mind is an inventive mind and it would seek to bring doubts, queries, questions as to the truth, and as to the Scriptures. That was the first challenge of Satan, "Is it even so, that God has said", Gen 3: 1. A question was raised as to what had been said and what had been given. Beloved brethren, let us hold fast the instruction that we are given. We are intensely privileged in having so much light as to the Scriptures, so much light as to the truth, but that brings responsibility; a huge responsibility, that we have to hold it fast and keep it. That instruction will preserve us. If you receive anything, if you have received a nugget, if you have received something of the truth, that is an instruction: hold it fast and it will be an anchor point for you. It will hold you; it will keep you in the area of the truth.

In Hebrews it says, "Having therefore a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession". I think this links with what we had in Sunbury: "be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord", 2 Tim 1: 8. This is the confession; this is everything. I think this is more than just confessing the name of Jesus, although that is a very great thing to do. This is more than that; it is not just what we say but who we are. This is what we do, where we go: let us hold fast the confession. Hold fast to what we know to be true, hold fast to what has been given, everything in relation to the Lord Himself and proving His presence; let us hold fast to that.

We often speak of Peter's denial of the Lord Jesus. We speak of it as Peter failing and he did fail; he knew what was right but he got himself into a place that he was not able for. He ended up in the palace court and it says, "Peter was standing with them and warming himself", John 18: 18. How many times have we done that; how many times have I done that? How many times have I found myself seeking the resource that I need, but not in the right place? The world would seek to give its warmth, seek to reach out to you. Satan would do that and seek to draw you in. Peter found himself in that circumstance, found himself in a condition and a place that he was not able for and he denied the Lord three times.

It is interesting to me that those passages in the gospels are all very slightly different, but read them together. Peter is ultimately questioned as to where he had been: "Did I not see thee in the garden with him?", John 18: 26. Where do we go? Are the places to which we go consistent with the confession, are they consistent with the stand that we take, are they consistent with the position that we know to be right? It is quite humiliating if any of us have ever experienced this, to be questioned by an unbeliever. 'This is a surprise; I did not think you would go there or did not think you would do that'. That is very humiliating. Let us be true to our confession.

They also questioned Peter as to who he was: "Art thou also of his disciples?", John 18: 25. What company are we part of; who do we identify ourselves with? Are we true to our confession? Peter denied that; he denied his place as being of those who companied with the Lord Jesus. Then there is a question as to his speech, "Truly *thou* too art of them, for also thy speech makes thee manifest", Matt 26: 73. He was challenged on that point as well, what he said and how he sounded, and Peter denies. Then he is beautifully recovered; when Peter denies the Lord those three times, the cock crows and immediately it says, "he went forth without, and wept bitterly", Matt 26: 75. There was the look that he received from Jesus, Luke 22: 61. Jesus had besought for him, He had already besought for him. He knew he was going to fail and the Lord says, "I have besought for thee", Luke 22: 32. How wonderful! He has besought for you, dear friend.

This scripture in Hebrews speaks of "Having therefore a great high priest who has passed through the heavens". We do not have to do this in our own strength and in our own power. The Lord would look for committal from us and He would look for definiteness from us to hold fast what we know to be right in the light of the One who has interceded for us, "always living to intercede", Heb 7: 25. We had a word about that in this room three or four months ago, as to the Lord's present activities. He is "always living to intercede". He has interceded on your behalf as this great high Priest who has passed through the heavens. "For we have not a high priest not able to sympathise with our infirmities, but tempted in all things in like manner, sin apart". How comforting that is, how encouraging it should be for us that we are not on our own in this but we have One who is our great high Priest who intercedes for us and will help us and strengthen us and sustain us if we are committed to holding fast that confession.

I want to finish with the reference in Revelation. It is to

Philadelphia: it speaks to us of assembly conditions and of an area to which the Lord can come. He says, "I have set before thee an opened door, which no one can shut, because thou hast a little power". Perhaps that links with what we said as to the glad tidings. "Thou hast a little power"; there is a company, a body here upon the earth, that can be credited with having a little power. In contrast to the power in the scene that is around us, the emptiness of the world, the emptiness of everything that is of man, there is a scene that has a little power. Then it says, "and hast kept my word". That is the instruction that has come from heaven, that is what has come from the Lord Himself, and the Lord credits the assembly here as having kept that word, having held it fast, having held it to this day. Then, "and hast not denied my name": kept that confession, the confession of the name of Jesus. There is a company where that is proved; let us hold fast as the Lord says at the end, "hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown". I think we could include all the things we have spoken of in the crown. I think we could include the proving and presence of Jesus in the crown. Paul speaks of the Philippians as "my joy and crown", Phil 4: 1. The crown is everything that has been given by God, given to us here that is for our enjoyment and for His eternal pleasure. We have these wonderful words in verse 11, "I come quickly": He is soon coming. That is the great prospect that we have before us, He is soon coming. Think of the great moment, the great effect that this moment will have when every saint, every believer without exception (not one will be forgotten) will move in answer to that call. Think of the greatness of that movement when the assembly will move to be with Him. That is the great prospect that we have and, dear brethren, dear friend, it is very soon. The Lord *might* leave us here for another night, He *might* leave us here for another day, He might leave us here for another Lord's day. We have the Lord's day before us. If the Lord leaves us here He will come to us; let us be exercised to discern His presence that we might be ready for that time, when He will come for us, come for everything that delights Him, everything that has been secured on the basis of holding things fast, not letting anything slip. That crown then will be for Him.

May we be encouraged by these things; may they be for our encouragement and for our help and our sustaining in this present time. For His Name's sake.

Birmingham

11th May 2013

GREAT VIEWS

David H Marshall

Exodus 15: 17-18

Nehemiah 6: 3 from “I am doing”

Acts 7:54-56

Christianity is a system that is full of great things. I was thinking as our brother was speaking that we have three settings here where a great view is taken first of all.

In the Book of Exodus, the children of Israel had just crossed the Red Sea, and there was a song, a song of great deliverance. They had been delivered spectacularly out of the hands of the Egyptians and they were there in safety, to an extent; but a way was going to lie ahead, a way of trial, a way of tribulation, a way of much suffering. Many things were going to come in, but that is not what is spoken of here. What we have here is a great view that Moses takes in this song, a great view looking right on to some of the greatest things in Christianity:

Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain
of thine inheritance,
The place that thou, Jehovah, has made thy dwelling,
The Sanctuary, Lord, that thy hands have prepared.
Jehovah shall reign for ever and ever!

He had a view himself as to the greatness of all that God had in mind for His people. It is a wonderful thing to have that view. He probably knew that there would be tests ahead; he probably knew some of them. He probably had no idea as to how much they would be tested and little did he think, perhaps, how grave some of these tests would actually be, but at this point he had that view, that forward view; and I think it is a fine thing, as we find ourselves here, to have that great view of what lies ahead, of what God has in mind, great things: and we have a part in it. We have been called to have a part in it, and Moses here was setting that out from his affections, from his heart, that there were those wonderful things that God had in mind for His people. It is still so.

Nehemiah had an appreciation of what he had been called to: a great work. You could have said he was only re-building a wall, stone upon stone, brick upon brick. It might not have seemed the grandest proposition, especially since it had been in ruin when he discovered it,

and he went over his feelings and the right desires that he had, and how he was moved to become engaged in this; but he had an appreciation that he was called to a great work. We all have part in this great work. You might think your contribution and my contribution is very small, and that would be true in some sense, but what we have been called to is a great work. We are part and have a part in that which is pleasing to the Lord Jesus in His absence. As an individual Christian you have that; as a Christian in a company where there are others you have been given the privilege to walk with in happy fellowship you have that in an even greater sense of it. As set together in local assemblies in various parts throughout the world, you can have a part in what is truly great, and be formed both in yourself and in a collective sense in that which is pleasurable, and seeking to be more pleasurable, to our absent Lord. Typically Nehemiah had an appreciation of that. I think it is a good thing to have an appreciation as to the greatness of what we have been called to. Sometimes we occupy ourselves with failure, sorrow, weakness, to little profit, if any profit at all, but here Nehemiah had an appreciation that not only was it a great work, but he should not leave it, he should not set it aside in any way. His appreciation was like that of Moses. He had a respect for the recompense, he had some appreciation in his heart as to what he had been called to, and what he was engaged in, and what he was occupied with, and he was not going to set that aside in any way. He was going to continue with it. That is a commendable feature, and yet it is there for us all. We can all have our part in this great work, even though our part is small. There is much to be done: we know that. In our local assemblies there is much to be done. There is much to be done in the furtherance of the testimony, there is much to be done in terms of what is pleasing to the Lord Jesus in His absence. We have the gift of the Holy Spirit to help us, and to attune our desires and to guide us into these things, and to stimulate and strengthen us, but my thought here is that Nehemiah had some appreciation as to the greatness of what he was involved in, not just building a wall, much more than that.

When you come to Acts of the Apostles - we read this last night in Port Seton -, we find it is a wonderful chapter because it is a great sight you have here, a really wonderful sight. Stephen gives a very broad but concise account of the history of things, and then it comes to this section, "And hearing these things they were cut to the heart, and gnashed their teeth against him. But being full of the Holy Spirit, having fixed his eyes on heaven, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing

at the right hand of God, and said, Lo, I behold the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God". It was a great sight he saw here, a wonderful sight!

O the sight in heav'n is glorious!

it tells us in that hymn that we sing (Hymn 212), but what a sight this man had in these closing moments of his life. He had a wonderful sight, a Man in heaven; Jesus, the very same Jesus, was there. What a sight he saw, a special sight, a great sight, a portion that would compensate for the terrible death that he was about to face but even more than that, as we know, the gentle word of Scripture tells us he fell asleep having said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge", no doubt influenced by that great sight he had seen. Soon he would be taking up his place with the Lord Jesus. What a matter! A sight that was not for this world but a sight that was there for a committed believer who was laying down his life for his Saviour and Master, seen in that very act when he was about to be martyred, and he was given that wonderful sight that he could see; what we can only see by faith, he saw. What a matter! What a portion! These things are wonderful. We are truly in a system of great things and I think it behoves us to have a greater appreciation of them.

May we be encouraged! For His Name's sake.

Edinburgh

10th September 2013

LOOKING ON JESUS

Tim D Ellis

Isaiah 53: 2-3

John 1: 35-37

Hebrews 12: 1-2; 2: 8 from “But now” -9

2 Corinthians 3: 17-18

1 John 3: 2-3

I did not come with any thought to speak tonight but I was reflecting on the hymn that we sang (Hymn 151), which speaks of the beauties of the Lord Jesus and what we see as looking upon Him. There are others who could speak much more eloquently of that and bring in other scriptures too, but these were ones that were going through my mind as reflecting on the hymn that we sang, scriptures that speak about looking on Jesus and, to some extent, the change that happens to us as we do that. I do not want to do much more than let these scriptures speak for themselves (they are beautiful in their own way), but just to comment briefly on them by way of seeking to encourage myself and others to fix our look more stedfastly on Jesus.

The scripture in Isaiah 53 shows that it is not something that we do naturally, not something that we do instinctively, not something that we desire to do with the natural mind: “there is no beauty that we should desire him”. That would be the natural view of Jesus. I suppose people would not give Him a second glance if we passed Him on the street. Even worse, perhaps, they would view Him as “despised and left alone of men ... like one from whom men hide their faces; - despised, and we esteemed him not”. That is the natural man’s view of Jesus. That was the view of Him when He was here. It is our natural, instinctive view of Jesus, but He is the One who “hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows”, v 4. He was such a One, disregarded by men, disregarded at one time perhaps even by us, but yet, “we being still sinners, Christ has died for us”, Rom 5: 8.

When He was here, though, there were some who saw His beauty, and in John’s gospel we see that. It says, “looking at Jesus as he walked, he says, Behold the Lamb of God”. John did not have the Spirit in the way that we do, and that is something to reflect on but, as he looked on Him, he says, “Behold the Lamb of God”. I suppose he had God’s view of Jesus at that time, the One upon whom the Spirit had descended and upon whom He was abiding, the One who was the

beloved Son of God, the One in whom God had found His delight, and such a One could be observed, could be seen by those who had the spirituality, the sensitivity, to see it. John looked on Jesus as He walked and, as he does that, we have this exclamation drawn forth, "Behold the Lamb of God". He was ready to share that view with others, to draw attention to Him, not just to hold his appreciation to himself, but to draw others to Him. Then it says, "And the two disciples heard him speaking, and followed Jesus". What a thing it would be if we could not only get God's view of Jesus but be able to speak about Him in such a way that others would follow Him.

In Hebrews 12 there is a whole cloud of witnesses, and we have that cloud of witnesses surrounding us. But it is not exactly that we look at the witnesses themselves but we draw strength from them, we draw challenge from them, and that would help us in our faith. So the witnesses are surrounding us but what we do is look "stedfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith", the One who is the perfect One, the One who went through with everything. And, in doing so, we would lay aside "every weight, and sin which so easily entangles us". It is not about looking inside ourselves, not even about looking at what is around us, but "looking stedfastly", 'looking away from other things and fixing the eye exclusively on one', as the note says; "looking stedfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith". He had a prospect before Him when He was here. It says, "who, in view of the joy lying before him, endured the cross, having despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God". Well, I suppose the question is whether we are looking stedfastly enough, sufficiently stedfastly on Jesus. It speaks about "laying aside every weight, and sin which so easily entangles us". How easily we find ourselves weighed down or entangled, but the intention is that we should "run with endurance the race that lies before us". It is not exactly to look at the race or to see the obstacles ahead, but to look stedfastly on the One who has Himself completed it: "looking stedfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith".

In chapter 2 of Hebrews, Jesus being "set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (as chapter 12 puts it), we do not see everything subjected to Him. "But we see Jesus", we see the One who has been that way, who has completed the race, the One "who was made some little inferior to angels", but He is "crowned with glory and honour", and we see that glory and honour. We sometimes sing -

and I suppose that is where we view Him now. We can read about Him in the gospels, we can appreciate the Man who was here, but we look on Him as in the glory, “crowned with glory and honour”. What a place He has been given! We do not see everything taking its place in subjection to Him even in our own hearts and in our own circle. Even with one another, we do not see everything subjected to Him in actuality, but that is not really the point here. The point is that we see Jesus, the One who did go this way, “who was made some little inferior to angels on account of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour”. Well, that is something that we can do.

In Corinthians it says, “But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face”. There is what we do not see, we do not see all things subjected to Him, but there is what we can see, and we can see it with unveiled face. There is to be nothing to hinder, we might say, the view of the glory of the Lord, “But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed ...”. It has an effect on us. Any views that we have of Jesus, any views of the glory of the Lord, are not intended to leave us unaffected, but they are to have a transformative effect. And that transformation is not from suffering to glory, but from glory to glory. What a thought that is! The divine intention is not that we should be dragged down by every weight and sin which so easily entangles us, but that we should be “transformed according to the same image from glory to glory”, and we have the Spirit's power to do that. It is not simply the ability to look on Him in reality, as John had it here, but we have the power of the Spirit to help us to look exclusively on Jesus and to be transformed as we do so.

Well, I just read that last scripture in John's epistle because it is such an attractive one. If we see Jesus now, we see Him with the eyes of faith. We do not see Him in actuality, “and what we shall be has not yet been manifested”, but, “we know that if it is manifested we shall be like him”, we shall be like the One on whom we look because “we shall see Him as He is”. Not as He was, not as men saw Him, not as One to be despised and to be turned away from, not as One where we do not see all things subjected to Him, but “we shall see him”, “see him as he is”. And as a consequence of that, “every one that has this hope in him purifies himself”. And that purifying is not according to men's standards, or even according to the standards of the brethren, but “every one that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as *he* is

pure”.

Well these things are very simply said. Reflecting on them from the lines of the hymn that we sang, I would draw attention to them that we might be encouraged to have our eyes fixed and gazing on Jesus.

For His Name's sake.

Edinburgh

10th September 2013

GOD'S SURE FOUNDATION

Alistair M Brown

Isaiah 28: 16

Luke 6: 46-49

Philippians 1: 6

I have before me the matter of the “foundation” that God has laid, which is spoken of by the prophet. Isaiah was a prophet. The prophets bring in God's mind. The prophet Isaiah is speaking here of a very great matter in God's mind, that He was going to lay a “foundation” - God's “foundation”. He was going to lay it in Zion; that is in the hill, the elevated place, of God's holiness (Ps 2: 6) where God dwelt among His people of old time, the Israelites. The prophet then expands on the words: “I lay for foundation in Zion” by adding four things - “a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation”. Who was Isaiah referring to when he says that God was going to lay a Foundation in Zion? We know, because the apostle Peter quotes this scripture in speaking about the Lord Jesus. The prophet here refers to Jesus. The prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus came in. Every prophecy has been, or will be, fulfilled through the Lord Jesus. He is a wonderful Person. He is the subject of all the Word of God in the Scriptures. In the Old Testament and the New Testament you can find Jesus from beginning to end. God starts with Jesus and He will end with Him. Everything for God's pleasure is contained in what begins with Jesus and ends with Him. The matter of the Foundation is the beginning. God begins with Jesus. He loves to have Jesus spoken of. He loves it when people listen when Jesus is spoken of. God spoke through the prophet, probably 2,700 years ago, or thereabouts. You can work that out for yourself. All these years ago, Isaiah spoke about this Person. The Lord Jesus had not yet come, but we know who the prophet was speaking about. We know who the Foundation is that God was going to lay in Zion. There has been no reason for God to change in any detail, or in any respect at all, the Foundation that He has laid.

Jesus is God's Foundation. The prophet speaks of Him first of all as a stone. That is what is dependable. You can put weight and pressure on a stone and it does not move. It is strong; it is reliable; it is dependable. God has made Christ the Foundation, the Stone. He is the One upon whom God relies. There is no other man, no other person, that God can rely upon entirely. There have been very great

people throughout the history of the world. In the Scriptures we learn about men like Noah, Abraham, Joseph and Daniel. Many of them are spoken about in the faith chapter in Hebrews 11, which speaks of many of the greatest people morally in the Scriptures. Nevertheless, God could not entirely depend on them, though He used them for great things. But in Christ, there is the Stone - what is entirely and absolutely reliable for God. God relies upon Christ. There could never be any suggestion of failure in that blessed One. We have been speaking about the perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is complete reliability, strength and dependability in the Stone.

The prophet goes on to say "a tried stone". The perfection of Christ was not fair-weather perfection. It was not just when times were good. How blessed were the times that Christ knew. He rejoiced in spirit and He praised the Father (Luke 10: 21), and the lines fell unto Him in pleasant places, Ps 16: 6. There were other times when there was great pressure upon Him. He was "a tried stone". The extent of pressure brought out the strength of God's Foundation, the moral perfection in one blessed Man. Christ pleased God in every step of His pathway here and every circumstance, in every private moment, in every thought, every word and every deed. Think of divine perfection in a Man! One on whom God can entirely rely, God's Foundation. Then the prophet speaks of Him as "a precious corner-stone". There is something else added. You have the "stone", and the "tried stone", and then the prophet adds to that the "precious corner-stone". The thought of preciousness involves the affections. There was something in this One - indeed everything about this One - that drew out the affections of God as laying in Zion the "precious corner-stone". He was of infinite value to God. The corner-stone has in view the shape and dimensions of the building. What is in mind is God's building. It is precious: the Lord Jesus, as precious to God, is going to give the dimensions and the characteristics of all that is to be for God's pleasure. Everything for God is to be founded on God's Foundation, God's precious Corner-stone. The "corner-stone" is also referred to as the "head of the corner", see 1 Pet 2: 7. That is, He is both the Foundation and the Topstone of what is for God. He is the One from whom the whole construction takes its character and dimensions. This scripture gives us some impression of what Christ means to God.

To God, He is the Stone, the tried Stone, the precious Corner-stone, and then the sure Foundation. The footnote to that is 'a foundation well-founded'. We have been speaking about Christ's

perfection and His reliability and His trustworthiness, the fact that He never did or said or thought anything that was outside the pleasure and the will of the Father. Then there is a further thought suggested in coming back to the sure Foundation. God has this One as His Foundation, but He wants Him to be your Foundation and mine. What grace there is in that! God has provided Himself with a Foundation, One who is perfect and in whom He found His delight. He pleased God in every step of His pathway. But God's heart of love desired that people like you and me might come into blessing. To come into blessing, we have got to be founded on Christ. Christ is to be our Foundation. He is God's Foundation, the Foundation that God has provided, established there in Zion; and He is to be our Foundation also.

God's desire is that the One whom He has laid as Foundation in Zion should be your sure Foundation and mine. To bring that to pass, something else was needed. The perfection of His life here was essential, but something else was needed. If He was to be the sure Foundation for sinners like you and me, if we were to come into blessing, then He had to die. The gospel tells us about the love of God for us. It also tells us that He is a holy and a righteous God, and we in our sins are at a distance from Him. But God is not frustrated by that. God's love is not turned aside by the fact that sin has come in. My sins and yours are a result of the intrusion of sin into God's universe through the pride of Satan. "I will ascend", he said, Isa 14: 13. That principle of sin came in and it has infected the human race. Man, made upright in the image and likeness of God, was affected by sin coming in right at the beginning. God had the answer in one Man, this blessed Person, Christ. But it required the Lord Jesus to die, so that God's answer might be available for you and for me. He had to give up that precious and perfect life of His. It required the death of that precious One for Him to be the sure Foundation for you and for me. What a matter that God gave up His beloved Son, the One whom He loved, the One who had given Him infinite cause to love Him in His pathway here. He was His only-begotten Son, who drew out the affections of the Father; drew out, you might say, the feelings of heaven. "*This* is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight", Matt 17: 5. Think of the feelings of the Father towards this One. He has laid Him in Zion as a Stone, a sure, a trusted Stone; and a precious Corner-stone. This involved God giving Him up in death, so that He might be the sure Foundation for guilty sinners like you and me to trust in Him, and come to salvation.

Wonderful matter! The suffering of the Lord Jesus in taking and drinking that cup meant that He who was flawless and perfect, sinless, upon whom sin and death had no claim whatsoever, had to go into death. There was no reason in Himself that He should die. But in order to provide a sure Foundation for you and me, He had to go that way. He had to take on Himself the matter of sin. Indeed He was made sin. Paul tells us that in his epistle to the Corinthians: "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us", 2 Cor 5: 21. The One who was entirely without sin, was made what He hated most. And the result was to bring in that awful forsaking, the awful suffering at the hands of God. For it was God who made Him sin. Christ bore that and in His perfection He exhausted God's judgment upon sin. Only one who was this Stone, this tried Stone, could have exhausted God's judgment. And He did! He said at the end of these three hours of darkness, "It is finished", John 19: 30. The fire of God's judgment upon sin was completed and the offering was alive through it; and then He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. The Lord Jesus actually died. And then He shed His blood, because "one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water", v 34. The Lamb was foreknown. Peter in his epistle tells us that we have been redeemed "by precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot ...of Christ, foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world", 1 Pet 1: 19. That is that God had in mind that He would provide this sure Foundation for your salvation and mine before even the physical creation had its existence. That is what the Scripture says, and the Scripture cannot be broken. God had us in mind for blessing, and He had in mind to give His only beloved Son. It came into actuality when the Lord Jesus came here. It was when He came here that the word was fulfilled: "*Thou* art my Son: this day have I begotten thee" (Heb. 1: 5); it was a matter of divine counsel. That precious Lamb was in the mind of God before the foundation of the world. What a sure Foundation! Friend, God relies upon Christ as the Foundation. He is the Stone, the tried Stone, the precious Corner-stone, and God can rely upon Him and His precious work absolutely. The blood that He shed gives God a righteous and eternal basis to forgive us and to bless us forever. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin", 1 John 1: 7. God looks upon that blood and He is satisfied. He has a righteous, immovable basis for forgiving you and me now and forever, and every single person on the face of the earth who accepts Christ. God is able to save to the uttermost, to save absolutely, all those who

approach to God by that blessed One, the sure Foundation. He is God's Foundation. Will you make Him yours? He becomes my Foundation by my believing in Him, by my taking God at His word and accepting that God has provided this precious One as Saviour. He has made Him available through death, so that the effectiveness of that work of His, in suffering and dying and shedding His blood, might be available for every one who believes on Him.

I appeal to everyone here to take God at His word, to place your trust in Jesus as the One who is able to save. As you trust in Him, He does save. He saves you absolutely and He saves you forever. Then you find that you have for your sure Foundation the same One that God has laid as His Foundation. God holds Him forth to you as the blessed attractive Object for your trust, for your belief and for your affections. I would appeal to all of us to place our trust in Christ. I sincerely hope that all have done so, but the preacher cannot assume things. And so I say again to all of us: put your trust in this blessed One. He is the sure Foundation. He is a living Person. He died once - He shed his blood. He is living now, in the presence of God, giving Him delight. God would hold Him forth to us, and to the entire race of mankind, as the object of faith for the forgiveness of sins and so that we might know blessing. The matter from our side starts through faith, through repentance, through acknowledging that we are sinners. Then in Him we have the forgiveness of sins. I know that that blessed One bore my sins in His body on the tree. He took away sin that so offended God. He took that away from God's sight. He exhausted God's judgment against it. Sin had to be judged. But your sins are forgiven if you believe in Christ, because He bore them. For those that believe in Him, he bore our sins. Not the sins of all - the scripture does not say that - but *our* sins, those who believe in Him. He bore our sins in His precious body on the tree. When He was suffering there under God's judgment, He bore our sins.

What a matter! The work has been done. Christ's work is completed, and God would beseech us - as the scripture says: "God, as it were, beseeching by us... be reconciled to God", 2 Cor 5: 20. That is, we are to accept what He says, accept God at His word and make Jesus our Saviour. We are to make Him our Foundation, our sure Foundation. We are talking about things that are eternal in their effect. Trust in Jesus in time, and the effect of that is eternal: it never loses its value. The work of Christ in the eye of God is of eternal and incomparable value and worth. You can plead it forever. You can have

it as your title forever. There is a hymn that says,

The sinner who believes is free,
Can say, The Saviour died for me;
Can point to the atoning blood
And say, This made my peace with God. (Hymn 357)

That is somebody who appreciates the blood of Christ. May we all appreciate the blood of Christ. We will never appreciate it as much as God does. The hymn writer wrote these lines, and God delights in the feelings expressed. He delights in a repenting sinner who is able to point to the blood and say, 'I appreciate this. I have placed my trust in the One who shed his blood because He gives me peace with God'. What a matter. Your portion can be joy and peace in believing in the One who is the sure Foundation.

In Luke's gospel where we read there is another reference to the foundation. It speaks about those that hear the word and do it. I do not want to say very much about the second man who heard the word and did not do it, because the normal outcome of hearing the Word of God, and hearing the Lord speaking, is that we believe and we 'do'. That would be normal; but there is a certain responsibility placed on the hearer - to hear and to do. That is carried forward in the parable here of the builder of the house. There is a Foundation being laid. The apostle Paul says, "For other foundation can no man lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ", 1 Cor 3: 11. But then the question is, 'How do we build upon it?'. Do we make the Foundation ours by belief, by believing in the Lord Jesus? How are we going to build? This man, who heard and did, dug and went deep until he found Christ; he found the Foundation. And he founded his house on the rock. In digging and going deep, you have got to dig through whatever material lies on top of the Foundation, the Rock, until you come to it. And then you can base yourself on that Rock. I am presenting the Lord Jesus as the Rock, as the sure Foundation and the precious Corner-stone. We have got to displace things to reach Him. And what we have to displace is clay and earthy material that really represents what we are naturally. It has to be dug through until we come to the Rock, to Christ. There is no point in relying on ourselves, on our own merit or worthiness, or whatever it may be. God is not interested in that. That has got to be dug out until we get to the Rock. There is no other Foundation - no other Foundation can man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ, 1 Cor 3: 11. So we have to be prepared to displace ourselves, and that is a very testing

thing. What we are naturally, the clay and earth, gets in the way of placing our faith and our reliance on Christ Himself. We might have our own ideas, and we might think that they are as good as anybody else's, but if they come from our minds naturally, without reference to God's mind and God's word, they must be dug out and discarded. We have to displace them. That is a testing matter, but how worthwhile it is when we get through to the Rock. It is totally dependable in its character. Men's ideas change. Many people in the West nowadays are caustic, sceptical and cynical about Christianity, about God's word in the Scriptures and about the Lord Jesus. The world will not have the One whom God has laid in Zion as the Stone, the tried Stone, the precious Corner-stone and sure Foundation. The world's system would not rest on such a Foundation. It could have no contact and no congruence with the moral Foundation that God has laid. If you went back centuries you would come across the same infidel thoughts of man expressed as to Christ. It is no different now. The believer digs through all of that and gets to the Rock. It is a wonderful thing to reach through to the Man upon whom we can absolutely depend.

There is the side of displacement as we have been speaking of it. And then there is the side of building. This man built his house; he built his house on the rock. When we speak about building, we speak about basing our lives on Christ. God desires, and Christ desires, that the life of the believer should be based on that One. So that our relationships, our experiences, the responsibilities that we take on, and the things that we do are all to be based on that blessed Corner-stone, that sure Foundation. This man built his house upon the rock. He built his house so that it had the shape given to it by the corner-stone. So much of our lives can be spent on what is going to be taken away. In that Scripture in 1 Corinthians 3, Paul speaks about building with gold and silver and precious stones. That is the same idea as this man building on the rock. Paul adds a warning about building with wood and grass and stubble. There are houses that fall down when the testing comes, as here when the rains came. The house is worth nothing then. Paul speaks of the person as saved, as though through fire, but their work is burnt up and destroyed. But the work of the believer, in the sense of our lives here in fulfilling our responsibilities, is not to be burnt up. If it is built on the Rock it has lasting value. It bears a testimony. There is a testimony in the work, life, activities and bearing of the believer to the value and worth of that. And it stands the test. The great feature of what is based on the Rock is that it stands the test. The Scripture

speaks about 'a great cloud of witnesses' who have placed their faith in Christ and whose work was tried but stands on the Rock. In these cases that are spoken of in Hebrews 11, some were tried by fire, literally - they were tried by the sufferings of death. The works, the lives of these people of faith, persisted and stood fast. And in more modern times there have been those whose work in that sense stood fast in the face of suffering and death. Even now there are believers in other countries who stand fast in the face of threat and persecution. They give their lives because their faith and their lives are founded on the Rock. Well, we are not called upon, at this time anyway, to give our lives, but we are challenged as to what our lives are founded upon. May we be among those who hear the word and do it. Then our lives will be founded on the Rock. We will take our character from that One who is the Foundation. We will be pleasing to God. There will be blessing and divine approval.

In Philippians, we see that as we build our house on the Rock, we are building along with God. He has begun and He is going to complete His work. We spoke about what He started, how He begins with Christ. Here we see that He will complete things to Jesus Christ's day. That is, He will bring about the fulness and perfection of His work in myriads of believers. God is doing that. He has finished it in many, those who have gone before, believers who have already died; God has finished His work in them. But in those of us who are here today, as believers, God is still working, and He will complete that work unto Jesus Christ's day. The question I would leave with us in closing is whether I am with God in that building. Am I conscious that God is doing a work in me? Am I with Him in it? It is possible that I might not be. I might be indifferent to it, or I might be doing different things, perhaps building to a plan that is different from God's divine plan. That would be a sad matter. But how blessed to be with God in what He is doing, completing His work in each one of us, to Jesus Christ's day. Another scripture in Peter speaks about believers as living stones. He speaks of Christ as *the* Living Stone, and then it says "yourselves also, as living stones", 1 Pet 2: 5. We are to come to Him and as doing so we are built up together into a living habitation for God. "To whom coming, a living stone", 1 Pet 2: 4. God is building something glorious. He needs material for His building and He finds it in believers who hear the word and do it. They are on the line of building what is for God and of Him, on that sound and sure Foundation.

As I said, God begins with Christ. He wants us to begin with Christ too. God also ends with Christ. He is “the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end”. You can read about that in Revelation 22: 13. God will have everything for His pleasure and His glory and His praise for ever in Christ. The results will go on eternally, but in the present scene of time, God is securing people for His pleasure forever. And every one that He is securing is secured on the basis of the work of Christ, that Foundation that He has laid. God wants us to be building with Him. You might say He is the great Master Builder, ineffably wise and discerning and loving, too. He is putting things together according to His plan, all founded on Christ. He wants you and me to be with Him in that building. He is building what is of eternal value for His glory and testimony now and for our blessing now, too, because God has blessing in mind.

May these things be for our comfort and encouragement and stirring up, for that is needed. We all need stirring up for His glory. For His Name's sake.

Glasgow

3rd November 2013

STABILITY

John A Brown

Isaiah 33: 5, 6

2 Peter 1: 10-12

Hebrews 12: 22-24, 28

1 Peter 5: 10, 11

I would like to speak to you about stability, which is something that I feel the need of very much for myself. As believers with our faith in the Lord Jesus, we have “an anchor of the soul, both secure and firm” (Heb 6: 19), but the enemy of our souls never gives up trying to shake us. The scripture that we read in 1 Peter conveys what I want to speak about, with the Lord's help: “the God of all grace”. That grace is the source of strength and stability; we have our faith in Him. He has called us to “his eternal glory”. I want to give you a phrase of Mr Raven's because these phrases help us to understand the truth. He said that there is no stability on the ground of responsibility, vol 2 p189. The stability that we have in Christianity is on the ground of God's purpose for us. I hope you can understand why Mr Raven said that. If you read something in ministry and you remember it, that is good; but if you read it and you understand why it was said, that is even better. Have you found from your experience why that is true, that there is no stability on the ground of responsibility? We walk here as responsible believers but our stability, our foundation, is based firmly on what God has in mind for us and in His purpose for us. He has given us the Spirit so that we should be true to that and hold onto it.

That is why I read in Isaiah 33: “he shall be the stability of thy times”, and as we hold on to Him, He is our stability. We cannot find it in ourselves. If you have not found that yet, then you will. For us, the “He” who is our stability is particularly the Lord Jesus, in all that He has done; in His death and resurrection and in the place where He is now. I remember seeing the Kings James version of this scripture in Isaiah on the front of the Rockefeller building in New York. It is an enormous building, an American skyscraper, and over the door this scripture from Isaiah is inscribed. Perhaps the person who designed or built the skyscraper thought, ‘This is a stable building; I have built it stable’. Well, we know what happened in New York several years ago now; man's strength, even the best of his intentions, cannot bring stability. The best of your intentions or mine cannot bring stability; it is entirely in the Lord Jesus.

The scripture that we ended with says, “the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, when ye have suffered for a little while, himself shall make perfect, stablish, strengthen, ground”. These words are all linked in their meaning. I think it is wonderful that the God of all grace will do this; He shall “make perfect, stablish, strengthen, ground”. Then Peter's soul breaks forth in worship even as he writes these words.

I wanted to speak about what Peter wrote as to our “calling and election”. It is very interesting to think of the man who wrote these two letters. Peter wrote them, and remember who Peter was. He was an impulsive man; he said that he would follow the Lord, even to death, and then a few hours later he was denying him. That is what Mr Raven meant when he said that there is no stability on the grounds of responsibility. Peter thought that, in the strength of his love for the Lord, he could go with Him all the way. He did love the Lord, and there is no doubting the love of the Lord for Peter; He said, “I have besought for thee that thy faith fail not”, Luke 22: 32. He did not pray for Peter that he would not fail; He prayed that his faith would not fail.

So it is Peter who wrote these words, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, use diligence to make your calling and election sure”. What did he mean by that? If what I am saying is true, and that our calling and election is secure in the purpose of God, what did Peter mean by saying that we have to make them sure? Surely it is sure if it is God's purpose for us? It is! This is not a question of making it sure in the heart of God. God does not change His mind; there is stability in the purpose of God, because once God has purposed to do something, He will never, ever change His mind. He is God and He cannot change His mind; once He purposes to do something, He will do it. So Peter did not mean that their calling and election needed to be made sure in the heart of God, but he is writing to these believers to make the “calling and election sure” in *their* hearts. That is what is in my mind today. I feel the need of this, to make our “calling and election sure, for doing these things ye will never fail”. What a wonderful thing it is to come into the blessedness of God's purpose for us and to get hold of it in our hearts. That helps us not to fall, because when Mr Raven spoke about there being no stability on the ground of responsibility, he was not advocating that we should be irresponsible. He was not advocating that we should think that, because of the purpose of God, and that we are saved for all eternity, it does not matter what we do. It would be irresponsible even to think in that way. But God has in mind that we should be preserved by making our calling and election sure in our own hearts, in our own lives, in our

own links with Him, “for doing these things ye will never fall”. Again, you might say that Peter certainly knew what it was to fall. We need to get a view of the purpose of God for us first of all, so as to hold on to it. Then it will be that “the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ be richly furnished to you”. That is what we were speaking about in the reading, this movement of soul into the purpose of God and into the thoughts of God, “the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour”.

Peter writes further, “I will be careful to put you always in mind of these things, although knowing them and established in the present truth”. That is the word that came to me as I was thinking about this address, “established in the present truth”. I desire, dear brethren, that I might be more established in this way, to be aware of the purpose of God and to be established in the present truth.

In Hebrews 12, the writer speaks of what we have come to, “but ye have come to mount Zion; and to the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem”. Sometimes in the ordinary use of English, we say that we have 'come' to something, and what we mean is that we have thought something through and have arrived at a conclusion. That is not what this means. What mount Zion speaks of is something that was there already in the purpose of God. Mount Zion is spoken of in the psalms, the place of God's purpose, the place of God's dwelling. There is a reference in the psalms to God establishing mount Zion forever, Ps 48: 8. That refers in its literality to the thoughts of God for Israel, and He brought them to that. Israel came into the land and eventually David took Jerusalem, and what was there in mount Zion was established under David and Solomon. But in the thoughts of God, it is even greater than that, and there is something very secure and firm in this idea of Zion. So it says “ye have come to”. These Hebrew believers had known what it was to think of things from a Jewish point of view, but now the writer to the Hebrews, who we assume was the apostle Paul, was telling them that they had to come to this. He was crediting them with coming to it, “ye have come to mount Zion; and to the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem”. This is what faith would have in mind. Abraham “waited for the city which has foundations, of which God is the artificer and constructor”, Heb 11: 10. What a wonderful thing it is to see that God's purpose never changes! He has built something, and He is building something; He is doing it now in a meeting like this. What God is doing, He is doing forever. If you get an impression in this meeting of the purpose of God, it will stand you in good stead for ever.

You can come into the appreciation of something today which you can carry with you into eternity. Think of the stability which that would give you. These impressions of Christ that you gather up in the service of God, these thoughts that you might gain in a meeting like this as to the greatness of what God has in mind for you, they are not things just for time: they go all the way through into eternity. They will be what we will enjoy eternally, for there will be an answer to God eternally because of what He has formed in us now. I was thinking especially of the first two; I did not mean to go through all of these wonderful things that are spoken of here. Mount Zion relates to the purpose of God, and then, "the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem". There is something established in the thoughts of God that can never change.

The question for us is in verse 28, "Wherefore let us, receiving a kingdom not to be shaken". As I read that, it came as a challenge to me. It is not just that there is a kingdom that is not to be shaken. There is one, and it would consist of these things that the writer outlines in verses 22-24, which comprise a kingdom that can never be shaken. But the question for us is, 'Are we receiving it?'. The writer says, "Wherefore let us, receiving a kingdom". That is not passive; you do not receive anything passively. The things of Christianity are active, they are to be actively received by us. The Lord Jesus is on high interceding for us, appearing before the face of God for us; think of the activity of His service towards us. I had an impression recently of what we enjoy in our relationships with divine Persons as being in holy activity. The Lord Jesus ever lives to intercede for you - do you understand that? Every hour of every day, the Lord Jesus is interceding for you that you should not sin. He intercedes for you to keep you at the level at which God regards you. Jesus has died for you and if you are a believer in Him, He serves you as your great high Priest to keep you at that level. If we do sin, His service as Patron comes in, for John tells us in his epistle that "we have a patron with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous", 1 John 2: 1. Heaven is a wonderful realm of living divine activity. May we get a sense of what is going on in heaven all the time; the Lord Jesus is interceding for you and for me every moment. And if we do sin, He speaks to the Father about us as our Patron there. And then the Holy Spirit is here. How great are the blessed activities of the divine realm, and it is to stabilise us. We sang in our hymn:

Blest Saviour, keep our spirits stayed (Hymn 151).

That is an old fashioned word; some of you may not understand what it

means. A stay is a rope on a tent that holds it up, or you can have a flagpole with stays on it, the ropes that hold it steady. So what the writer here was meaning is that our spirits are kept steady:

Blest Saviour, keep our spirits stayed,
Hard following after Thee.

That is what I have in mind. It is not that we are static; we are following, we are growing, but there is stability and an establishment that we can possess as laying hold of the purpose of God, and understanding the way in which the divine realm is in movement, through the service of the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit. It is a wonderful thing that divine Persons serve us. The Lord Jesus is God in His Person, the Holy Spirit is God in His Person, and yet in all the lowly grace of divine purpose they have come near to us. What a God of grace we have, as we read of in the last scripture. Dear brethren, let us actively receive these things into our hearts. Let them not just be what other persons speak about. May we put our roots down in the purpose of God as we appreciate these wonderful truths, and see that as well as truths, they are wonderful divine activities. Let us grow in them; there are many analogies in scripture of trees putting their roots down - which brings stability - and bearing fruit upwards.

“The God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus” - what a God He is! Remember who Peter was writing to. If you look at the beginning of this epistle, he wrote as “Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ, to the sojourners of the dispersion”, 1 Pet 1: 1. These were Jews who had lived in Samaria and Judæa, and the Roman powers had expelled them all over much of the then known world: “Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia”. Peter was writing to them about, “the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, when ye have suffered for a little while ...”. The enemy would use suffering to shake us. These persons knew what suffering was. How would you like to be uprooted by the government and told that you had to go to Siberia or wherever? Some believers in Russia have had that happen to them in the past one hundred years. These Jewish believers had known what it was to be forcibly dispossessed of their houses, of their families, and sent to another country where they did not know the language or the customs. Peter says to them, “when ye have suffered for a little while”. These persons had in their hearts something of the glory of this, “himself shall make perfect, stablish, strengthen, ground”. Then there is this upwelling in Peter's heart.

Worship flows from a heart that is rooted in the love of God. That is where you get stability. You get it as you enjoy and absorb the love of God for you. As you answer to that, there is this upwelling of heart in which Peter breaks out here, “to him be the glory and the might for the ages of the ages, Amen”.

You might ask me, dear young friend, 'How do I know that these things are true *in* me?'. I trust that you believe that they are true *about* you. I trust that as having accepted the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, as having put your trust in Him and in His work, you understand and believe that the things that I have been speaking about are true about you. God regards you as justified. But how do you know that they are true in you? Have you ever had this experience, that when you have heard the Lord Jesus spoken about, something welled up in your heart in response? That is the Holy Spirit working in you. Have you ever felt that there was an answer in your affections when you spoke to another believer about the Lord Jesus? That is the Holy Spirit working in you. What happened here as Peter wrote of “the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus” was that something welled up in his heart and he expressed it in this note of worship, “to him be the glory and the might for the ages of the ages, Amen”. All of this has in mind a response to God. One thing which always impresses me about the doxologies - that means 'words of praise' in Greek - in Scripture is that they are very short. When we are engaged in the service of God, we might be concerned about how much we can say in response to God. But Peter, who was an apostle of the Lord Jesus, simply wrote, “to him be the glory and the might for the ages of the ages”. That is not more than about a dozen words, but they were the result of Peter's appreciation of what he was in the purpose of God, an answer to God in worship.

These have been a few simple thoughts about something that I believe is important. May we all be established in the present truth, established in the purpose of God, not only in believing what is true about us, but our roots going down into the love of God, resulting in an answer to Him in us.

May we all be encouraged, young and old, for His Name's sake.

Spaldwick

23rd November 2013

DIVINE SUPPLY IN CIRCUMSTANCES OF NEED

Brian E Surtees

2 Kings 4: 1-7

We know that all these Old Testament scriptures were written for our instruction, Rom 15: 4. Some of them have to be understood in a figurative way, and it is well known that very often in the Scripture, oil is a figure or type of the Holy Spirit. It is in that light that I have a few words to say about this passage.

This widow was one who said as to her husband as God's servant, and as one that feared Jehovah. We know that our sister's husband , who was taken to be with Christ a few months ago, was one who feared Jehovah. Both he and his wife, in the thirty years I have known them, were God-fearing, pious persons. The memory of that continues and the effects of it in the next generation are expected to continue.

A great need came in when the husband or this woman died: there was a debt, so that the creditor came and threatened to take away the two sons as slaves. We could not apply that in any literal sense today, but we can see that the loss first of our brother and then of our sister has left a spiritual need behind. The prophet shows how the need can be met. He draws attention to what is in the house, a pot of oil; he does not refer to what may *not* be found in the house, but draws positively on what there *is*. If we look at the local company we should expect to find the presence of the Holy Spirit - not only in every person, but also in the company, whether gathered together or not. The prophet draws attention to the oil and how its supply may be increased. We can say that our sister was one who knew how to use the oil. She knew the presence of the Holy Spirit and so did her husband. They knew how to depend upon the Spirit in conditions of great weakness, and that is a lesson for us all.

It says, "Go in, and shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons". We should expect to find that worked out in every local company, for in this scripture the house and the family - the widow and her sons - can be regarded as representing the local assembly. It is not exactly here what is worked out in believers generally; nor is it a purely individual matter, but it is what can be worked out with a few together in unity. We remember Psalm 133, how it speaks about God commanding the

blessing where the brethren are dwelling together in unity. That is the setting where eternal life can be enjoyed; as it says in verse 3 of that Psalm, “for **there** hath Jehovah commanded the blessing, life for evermore”.

So we have recently lost our brother and now our sister, but there is a supply *sufficient* for the saints to carry on together; and, as has often been pointed out, not only to meet the immediate need but to “live on the rest”.

May the Lord help us all on this line, in His Name.

Vevey

19th December 2013

(At the meeting for the burial of Mme Lydie Charèyre)

