

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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"THE FATHER HIMSELF HAS AFFECTION FOR YOU"

John 16: 23, 26-27; 17: 9-11, 19-26

Ephesians 1: 5-6

1 Chronicles 17: 16-17, 21-24

RT In thinking on these verses my mind was directed to Joseph bringing his two sons to Jacob. It says he "brought them out from his knees" (Gen 48: 12): a place of great affection, it conveys to me. He speaks about these two sons as those "whom God has given me here", v 9. It is like what we are thinking about in this reading.

Thou gav'st us, Father, in Thy love,
To Christ to bring us home to Thee (Hymn 88).

The name of the first son was Manasseh, "For God has made me forget": that is the Lord in this section. For Him the cross was a settled matter; the agony, His pathway of suffering, were forever over. He looked on these few men and He says, "God has made me forget". Joseph looked at the other son and said, 'double fruitfulness', Gen 41: 51, 52 and note. These disciples were something to Him that far surpassed the sufferings; He saw the glory of it all, and that is the Lord in this section. He is coming to the Father, but, dear brethren, He is carrying us with Him, and what He is speaking to the Father about is you and me.

So in the verse we began with He says, "And in that day ye shall demand nothing of me: verily, verily, I say to you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give you". Then He says, "In that day ye shall ask in my name; and I say not to you that I will demand of the Father for you, for the Father himself has affection for you, because ye have had affection for me". I would just like to linger on that word for a moment dear brethren; "the Father himself has affection for you, because ...". It brings just a little touch of responsibility into the matter. The Father is attracted because we are lovers of Jesus.

I would like to speak to you young people for a moment. The Father rejoices when you confess the name of Jesus. He rejoices when He hears you testifying to your friends that you love the Lord Jesus; that draws out the Father's affections. God has affection for us because of His sovereign love and grace and mercy, but there is an added touch in that verse; "the Father himself has affection for you,

because ye have had affection for me". Has Jesus drawn our hearts enough, dear brethren, that the Father takes account of it? He says, 'They are loving my Son, and I am going to open my house with all the wealth and favour that is inside it', and He is saying, 'Come in, come in in Christ's name'.

I read verse 16 just to introduce us: I hardly know what verses to read, and the brethren will be free to bring in other verses, but it is very wonderful that the Lord does not say this privately; He must have prayed a lot privately, but He says this in the hearing of the disciples. It is read today, dear brethren, in our hearing, that we may be attracted to hear how the Lord would speak to the Father about you and me. You could go back and think about Peter and his failures, about how they had all let the Lord down, but He does not say that. He speaks about them and He says, "They were thine, and thou gavest them me", chap 17: 6. He says they had continued with Him in His temptations. Where were they in John 4, where were they in those testings that the Lord passed through, where were they? Well, the Lord says, 'They have continued with me'. It reminded me of that verse, "I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land not sown", Jer 2: 2. Could you find that verse in Numbers? No, Numbers brings out their history after the flesh in responsibility. But, "I remember for thee, the kindness of thy youth": let me tell you this in all reality, that the Lord Jesus and the Father have great respect for young people turning to Him and being faithful to Him. I can tell you that with all assurance. The Lord will remember for you the simple prayer you made in the time of need, the way you turned to Jesus. I remember turning to Jesus when somebody told me they could not help me; I fell on my knees and found Jesus helped me. These are just simple things. The Father remembers for us 'the kindness of our youth'. Dear young people, do not spoil it, do not let the allure of the world draw you away; "the Father himself has affection for you": there is nobody that loves you more. It is fine to be loved by your parents and know you are in a home where you are loved, a local meeting where you are loved, but get to know "the Father himself has affection for you". It is a wonderful place of favour and, especially, I say again, He is very ready to convey to young people that they may get an impression of Jesus in their early years that will never leave them. They may depart from it, and they may touch much sorrow, but the Lord Jesus and the Father will remember for you the simple

confessions you have made, and the simple trust and the prayers you have made to Jesus and to the Father. I say that for our encouragement, but there is a responsibility, "because ye have had affection for me".

But then He goes on in chapter 17 to speak about these men, and He is concerned that they might get to know something of the Father Himself. He says, "I do not demand concerning the world"; then He says, "I am no longer in the world", but "I come to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me". That is what the Father does, He keeps you in the name of Jesus: the preciousness of Jesus to the Father shining out in His affection for you in the very circumstances you may be facing today. Then the Lord goes on, and you can just imagine Peter and the apostles hearing these words, and they would say, 'What *me*?'. "They are not of the world"; that is how He views you! Maybe you have tampered with the world, maybe you are still tampering with the world; the world is very near, it is in us all and we all touch it, but the Lord Jesus says of them: "they are not of the world". Now it is not all abstract, dear brethren. The Lord saw in those few disciples a character that was not of the world, and He gives full credit to it. He magnifies our expressions of loyalty, touches of faithfulness. He appreciates it far more perhaps than the brethren will. I would encourage our hearts to be simple in your links with the Father. That is why He takes that name; there is nobody that loves you more; so He takes that name. And the Lord says, "And now I come to thee", and now He says, 'I will leave them in your hands'. What better hands could you be in? "Sanctify them by the truth; thy word is truth." Let us keep in the area where sanctification is enjoyed. It is a simple word that means that if you are a believer in Him, the Lord Jesus has set you apart. That is not all, He has set Himself apart, to serve you until you come into the fulness of the Father's house; what a place of favour! The Scriptures are the truth, we will get the truth in the meetings, but we come to this that we are pilgrims here waiting to be in the Father's house. The more of the blessedness of the Father's house we know, the better pilgrims we will be. That is what He is saying here: "I sanctify myself for them". And then He says, "the glory which thou hast given me I have given them", and then He says, 'Thou hast given me a glory', and He speaks about them.

I only refer to Ephesians, and then I thought we might just close

with a man that went in and sat before God. He heard unspeakable things. I just want to touch on that word in that passage: “thou ... hast regarded me according to the rank of a man of high degree”. O what favour! Cloudless favour rests upon us here.

DBR I was thinking back to what you said about “the Father himself has affection for you, because ye have had affection for me”. I was thinking how Mr Stoney loved to speak about the Christian circle. I thought we are really brought into a circle of things; the Father is in it, the Son is in it, and the Holy Spirit is in it; it is an economy as you were saying, but we are in it too! It is affecting, is it not?

RT O circle of affections all divine (Hymn 207)

Well, it should not be hard for us to have affection for Jesus should it? He makes it very simple; children are taught it in their youth, but then, how is it displayed in our lives? The Father is looking on us in our wilderness path and the temptations that come in, which will maybe grow, but we will only get through them as we have a sense of this favour. 'Because you have affection for Jesus', the Father says, 'I am opening the whole doors of my house'. The whole economy is there active to bring us in and to be at home in it.

DBR As you say, the Father is vigilant in taking account of every expression of affection for Christ. I like how you bring it in not only for the young, but for the old too: we need it. We need to be revived in our affections for the Lord Jesus daily, and I think that what you say is very precious, that the Father takes account of any expression of affection; it is “because ye have had affection for me”.

RT I think we have proved it in our youth. Some things came up, and who could we turn to? Turn to the Father and He makes it very real. Some things that men could not help me about, the Father just put His hand on the whole thing. We are not speaking about abstract things, dear brethren; we are speaking about experience - “the Father himself has affection for you” - just in that simple thing. Not because you have been good, but He loves you because you “have had affection for me”; a rejected Christ, Someone whom the world has despised. He rejoices to see His name, the name of Jesus, being confessed and maintained in simple believers.

JDG It is a wonderful thing to ask in His Name. I was thinking it would

be new to them; they had not done this before. We are used to it, but it is a real thing to be experienced and to realise that the Father takes account of that precious Name that we mention, if we ask anything in it.

RT He sees the traits and features of Christ coming out in the saints in simple dependence and simple appreciation of Jesus, does He not?

JDG It is not a formula; it is meant to affect our own souls when we ask in the name of the Lord Jesus.

DBR It is not only the power of the Name, but the fragrance of the Name. That is the kind of prayer that is of value to the Father, do you think? Something that is asked in the power of the Name, but also the fragrance of that Name to the Father.

RT Well, that is the burnt offering going up; the fragrance of that offering: Someone there in the full delight of the Father's affections, and He is in ours and we are asking in His Name.

RFW That is like when Paul writes to the Thessalonians, "to the assembly of Thessalonians in God the Father", 1 Thess 1: 1. Is that why He writes to them in that way? I was just thinking of what it was to belong to such a company of persons who love Jesus and are loved by the Father on that account.

RT Yes, and what credit He gives to them, does He not? He is almost attracting the Father to them. He writes of their love and hope, 'They are worthy of all your blessings because they have had affection for the Lord Jesus'.

NJH So that supreme affection marks each divine Person; it is unlimited. But it is "have had affection"; does that show that the Father remembers every sincere expression of affection for Christ?

RT Yes; the credits are full, are they not? Just simple loyalties to Jesus, and we see here how the Lord appreciated it. He is looking at them, Peter, John, Andrew, these simple disciples, and He says, 'They have left all and followed me. They have come through amidst all the Pharisees and the traditions of the Jews, they have endeared themselves to me and now I am endearing them to the Father'. What a commendation!

QAP The name is an ointment poured forth Song of Songs 1:3.
He has drawn us to Himself, has he not?

RT Yes. He has drawn us to Himself by experience; experience is what has made Jesus precious to us, experience of meeting our need: that is one thing here He is saying to the Father about us. Just put ourselves in this: what could the Lord say to the Father about us? Beyond what we could think! He is viewing us from His own thoughts; He bypasses so much, but He appreciates every little spark of loyalty and faithfulness to Him in His absence and He says, 'I want them at home in the Father's presence'.

RGr Mr Darby says in one of his hymns;

Yet deeper, if a calmer, joy
The Father's love shall raise (Hymn 178).

Do you think there is some sense in which the Lord would teach us the distinctiveness that belongs to divine Persons? I am thinking again of this word "Himself". What would you say about it?

RT Well, it is to identify that it is a Person. It is not just abstract, but it is a Person who has been seen in the pathway and ways of Jesus, is it not? What would you say?

RGr Well, we get the thought in regard of all divine Persons; it comes eventually to God Himself, Rev 21: 3. Do you think there is some sense in which we would take account of the Persons in their own glory and majesty apart from any question of need or want or failure? We would see the Person as He wishes to be known, would that be right?

RT Yes indeed, and as the Lord would wish us to know Him as well. "Nor does any one know the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son may be pleased to reveal him", Matt 11: 27. It would encourage us in these practical things we have spoken of to be faithful so that the Son may be pleased to speak to us about the Father.

PAG The expression is used in John's first epistle that "he who confesses the Son has the Father also", chap 2: 23. Could you help us as to what it would mean to have the Father? We might understand what it means to know the Father but what does John mean when he says, "he ... has the Father"?

RT He has everything! What do you think?

PAG So you could not have more than that, could you?

RT You could not! Would you want it?

PAG Well what else is there?

RT Nothing! Yes, that is just the whole thing put in a few words. If we come to the Father; what a Father He is! It is He that sought us out as sons of Adam's race. In fact, it says the Father gave them to Christ.

Thou gav'st us, Father, in Thy love,
To Christ to bring us home to Thee (Hymn 88).

That is part of these glories; that is the glory that Christ has given us, the glory of sonship, that we may be at home in all the blessed liberty and intelligence of being brought to the Father.

JSp The revelation comes from One who is in the bosom of the Father. Does He draw us into that kind of intimacy?

RT That is everything; that is very sweet. I do not think there are many verses more precious than this section that we have been reading from: it is the Lord, the Spirit, and the Father. And the Lord is bringing us into this great economy of love, a dispensation of blessing, and here He is bringing us to the height of it. The Father links with purpose in Ephesians: "he has taken us into favour in the Beloved", chap 1: 6. He has sanctified Himself for us: that means that it is the Lord's whole occupation today. This is the pearl seen in these few disciples, something that man had no hand in at all, and here He is; He is taking that pearl into the Father's presence and we do not hear any more about it, but we will see it at the gates of Jerusalem; the Holy City, a pearl at every gate. That is the great result of the Lord's sanctifying Himself for us. So it says "I sanctify myself for them, that they also may be sanctified by truth". Now "the truth" does not just mean reading all the ministry, but you have an impression that you have been brought into a great system of resource. The truth is resource, it meets difficulties, but the great point in the truth is to bring us into the glory and blessedness and preciousness of the presence of the Father. That is what He says, "thy word is truth". "I do not demand for these only"; He is speaking about you and me here in that verse 20, demanding for us: "also for those who believe on me through their word; that they may be all one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me".

Well, they will know that in a day to come. It may be that there is a lot of ruin round about us, but there will be a day to come when the saints of this dispensation will be displayed to a wondering universe

because Christ has sanctified Himself for them and they have been sanctified by the truth. The Lord will bring them all out; He will bring them all out into display, the joy of His own workmanship, and all the efforts and expenditure of His love shining in that heavenly company. And then He says, “the glory which thou hast given me I have given them”; it is to be enjoyed now, dear brethren: a glory that is given us. It is not to make anything of us, but it is to make us settled in our affections in the Father's house, sonship. That is what is referred to if you put a name on it, but I could hardly put a name on it. It is sonship, I am sure of that, but it is a glory, “the glory thou hast given me”. It is a reflected glory; it has been given to Christ, but He did not keep it all to Himself; but He makes Himself an object to our hearts. “The glory which thou hast given me I have given them”; oh what favour has been conferred upon us by Jesus to bring us in!

JAB How does truth sanctify us?

RT Well, by practising it.

JAB The note says 'in the power of truth'. Say more about it from your experience.

RT Well, you believe it! We are not talking about theories today; it is beyond what I can possibly put over very well, but it is an experience that the truth sanctifies you. If sonship lays hold of me the truth will sanctify me. What would you say?

JAB Is the Spirit's service, that we were speaking of earlier, to guide us into it? There is gentle regulation in the guidance of the Spirit into all the truth, is there not?

RT It is through companionship with Jesus, I would say, companionship with Him. He is the truth.

JAB Is what you are bringing before us a motivation to want to do this?

RT Yes, because there is nothing better. Some of us would know that better than others from our experiences, but we would like to convey it to the young people that there is nothing better. The brethren may look a motley crew to the world, but this is how they are viewed in divine affections and that alone is what is going to matter. Let the world say what it will about His brethren, let them despise them as they might, they despised the Lord of glory, but He says, “They are not of the world”.

The truth, believing it, taking it home, praying: that is sanctifying us by the truth.

JCG The Lord taught in the sermon on the mount “that ye may be the sons of your Father”, Matt 5: 45. Would that be the exhibition of it?

RT Yes, very good; that is sonship laying hold of us, is it not? There are a lot of things which you may not do because the brethren do not like them; that is all right, but do you do things because you want to be pleasing to the Father? You do not want to offend the Father by taking worldly things in to your house, or living in worldly habits, because you love the Father. If we loved Him more we would not want to grieve Him, would we? And that is what the Lord is encouraging them about: “the glory thou has given me I have given them”. It is encouraging us that the Lord has put something upon us that is precious to the Father.

JCG Have we to learn something as we go along like Peter? When he recounts the experience on the mount of transfiguration he speaks about “such a voice being uttered”, (2 Pet 1: 17); that was the Father's voice. He had learned something additional of the Father.

RT Yes, indeed, and the Lord is saying here, 'This is my Father'. He could not put them into better hands; He puts them in a place of complete satisfaction. Then He says, “Father, as to those whom thou hast given me, I desire that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me”; that is a wonderful glory, resting upon a worthy Person, “my beloved Son”! The Father has put everything into the hands of Jesus, and He is attracting us here that “they also may be with me”. We have some fresh touches of it in our pathways, and especially at the Supper, some fresh impression of the glory that has been given to Jesus. Where is breakdown if you are looking on that? It is a glory that He has in all the worthiness of His Person, and He will bear it for all eternity; that “they may be with me, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me”. I think that is the blessed assurance that things will finish in triumph. We know breakdown only too well, but all will finish in triumph because of the glory that Christ has been given; and He is: it is shining out today in Him to carry us through this wilderness journey for God's eternal praise and glory.

NJH Do we come in some sense experimentally to what is meant by “Holy Father” and “Righteous Father”? He says “my Father”; that is, He

stood in a particular relationship which He had along with the Father, and then He says, “your Father”, John 20: 17. I just wondered if something is worked out in experience so that you come to the Father as “Holy Father” and “Righteous Father”; what do you think?

RT Well, we never forget that, do we? He has come very near to us, but He is God. I enjoyed reading somewhere: 'My Father is God, that gives me wonderful resources, all that God is, is shining out to me as Father, but that my Father is *God*, brings me to a sense of responsibility'. His Father is a conveyance of love in its fulness, but He is God, He is over all blessed forever. He remains in His majesty, but all that He is, is shining out towards me in fatherly grace. But if that lays hold of me I will want to be a son to my Father. It says that.

JDG Would subjection work out in us on account of that? I was thinking of 1 Corinthians 15 where it says “the Son also himself shall be placed in subjection”, verse 28. That must shine out in all the saints: 'my Father is God' - subjection is the answer to that.

RT Very good. I think that is something to guide us. We have got all the resources of majesty and divinity available to us, but in the enjoyment of it, we ever remember that we do not want to offend Him; we want to walk as sons in the grace and enjoyment of His love, do we not?

NMcK Is that the last scripture you read in Chronicles, “Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, is God to Israel”. Is that the two sides? He is the God *to* Israel, He is everything they need as God should be, but He is the God *of* Israel too.

RT Yes, He has the ability to bring them through the wilderness, but as they come into the land He is God to Israel. What resources are His, available to us.

DBR I was thinking we could reverse what you said. My Father is God, but God is my Father. Both are precious, are they? The Father is God, the supremacy of the Father, and yet that Person is my Father.

RT We approach in reverence; the reverence is never forgotten. We are brought to enjoy divine favour but there is to be no familiarity, we are ever to remember the majesty. “To us there is one God” (1 Cor 8: 6), but then He is “the Father”.

PAG Does the Lord insist on that in what He says to the woman in

John 4, “the Father seeks such as his worshippers”, verse 23? There is the seeking of grace, looking for an answer, but “God is a spirit; and they who worship must worship in spirit and truth”, v 24. The worship must be in accord with who God is.

RT Yes, and the Spirit has come to that end. The Lord speaks about the Spirit there, does He not, to worship “in spirit and truth”? He is able to accomplish all that He purposed, He is able to accomplish it all, and the glory that Christ has been given is something distinctive: that God will effectuate all His purposes in the Man of His counsels.

DBR You said in the beginning that He said this in the presence of these men. They must have had the impression that they were on holy ground. And we are on holy ground today.

RT They showed it in the beginning of the Acts. You see these same persons standing up, turning Jerusalem upside down. There they are in the power of divine affections. Something of John 17 was in Peter's heart when He stood up with the eleven; what power was in that preaching! The whole of Jerusalem was set aside and Peter was shining out there, “neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved”, Acts 4: 12. What power there was in that testimony at the beginning of Acts. I think they were enjoying the Father's favour. They were receiving the glory that Christ had been given and they were standing up with something of the glory that they had been given shining in them.

JCG What you quoted from Deuteronomy 33 as to Naphtali, “satisfied with favour”, bears on it very much, that this was God's purpose that we should enjoy it. I was thinking of part of Mr Darby's hymn;

Free, our peaceful feet may venture
In the paradise of God. (Hymn 206)

RT Very good; that is washed feet! That is where it leads you. Feet being washed, washing one another's feet, leads you to the paradise of God. That is very sweet!

So what I was thinking about in Ephesians was “he has taken us into favour in the Beloved”. That is John 17; you get the Beloved there, speaking to the Father. This is like the Father's answer to that speaking, “he has taken us into favour in the Beloved”. We need to get

an impression of this on Lord's day morning, and I think we do. I have spoken already about through Christ, and that "by one Spirit we have access to the Father", chap 2: 18. Here is the access, we are home, and we get some sense of divine favour. I would encourage the brethren to think more about impressions we get at the Supper. It is a stay in the wilderness, the Lord's day. And the Lord will impart something to us if we make room for it. Write it down, try and write a little about it. Try and just let it work into your system a little bit, that the Lord has left something. The Lord comes in and brings everything with Him and He always leaves something. Well, He leaves something for you, different from me perhaps, but whatever He leaves with you, think about it. Think it over; Paul says, "the Lord will give thee understanding in all things" (2 Tim 2: 7), if you think it over a bit. Now, think of what it is, "he has taken us into favour in the Beloved".

TCM The scripture that you refer to as to Naphtali goes on to say, "And full of the blessing of Jehovah"; is that Ephesians?

RT This is Jacob enfolding the two sons of Joseph: they came out between Joseph's knees, and Jacob says "let my name be named upon them", Gen 48: 16; there they are brought into favour, favour all divine! Neither really should have been one of the twelve, but Jacob brings them in: "let my name be named upon them". Jacob speaks about God's blessing; let it rest upon these two sons. What favour we have been brought into! It is a love term:

Father, Thou lovest! favour all divine,
A cloudless favour rests upon us here; (Hymn 73).

Well, there is more than we can say about that section, but the wealth of it should come into our souls, and I think it came into David's heart in Chronicles.

NJH Is it the lovability of Christ that is conveyed in "the Beloved"?

RT Yes; well, it is the Father's appreciation of Christ, is it not? It is not only mine, but we are taken into favour not on what I have done, or what I have thought about Christ, but He says, 'You are taken into my favour in what I think about Christ': "taken us into favour in the Beloved". What an impress that should make upon us. I think as the Lord comes in at the Supper what He leaves there is more than we can take in at the time, but just think about a simple thing. It may be even a hymn that has been given out on Lord's day morning - we have some very precious

hymns - and maybe something strikes you: think about it. That is being taken into favour. These persons would not just go out and walk away as they had done before; if we are taken into favour, we will walk here very, very differently, we will look at things very differently, and that is what David does here.

David had met with the biggest disappointment of his life; he might have said, 'Well, if that is how it is turning out I am finished with it'. Some of us have said that, you know; looking at things in the breakdown we have thought, 'Well, I do not want any more to do with that'. But that is not what David does; in the face of his biggest disappointment it says he "went in and sat". I do not know what he had in mind when he was going in, he maybe did not know what he was going to say, he might have said, 'Lord, everything has broken down, all that I expected has not turned out that way'. No, he just sat. Moses did the same thing; it says God spoke to him when Moses went in, Num 7: 89. Make room for that in your prayers, in your closet: make room for that, let God speak to you. He will give you something more. Maybe David intended to say a lot more, and God just put His hand upon him and said, 'That is enough David, listen to Me'; he "went in and sat", and he said, 'You have spoken about me' "according to the rank of a man of high degree". I love that verse. David says, 'It is far more than I could ever have thought about myself or ever done'. He says, "O God; and thou hast spoken of thy servant's house for a great while to come, and hast regarded me according to the rank of a man of high degree". What could the world confer on a man like that? The world can do nothing for you if you have some sense of that, that God has thought about you "according to the rank of a man of high degree"; that is "taken us into favour in the Beloved", enfolded in unchanging love.

Then he goes on to speak about the brethren, Israel; well, what had they been! It says, they are "the one nation in the earth that God went to redeem". Those brethren that you may look down on, maybe even despised, they are "the one nation in all the earth", and you are part of that company "that God went to redeem"; what an elevation to think that you belong to such a company "the one nation in the earth"! Were there not better nations, in a sense? God had every right to give them up, but David says that He went to redeem them. What for? To free them from their sins, yes, but to bring them to Himself. What a journey that was! "God went to redeem them to be a people to himself";

Then he finishes by saying, "Let it even be established, and let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, is God to Israel; and let the house of David thy servant be established before thee". What resources, "the God of Israel is God to Israel"! And then, "For thou, my God, hast revealed to thy servant that thou wilt build him a house; therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray before thee. And now, Jehovah, thou art that God, and hast promised this goodness unto thy servant".

DBR Wonderful language!

RT Beyond what we could ever make up. It brings us to His purpose; what He has purposed, He has effectuated.

JCG Do you think it is because David listened and understood what God was saying to him in relation to the building of the house that he is able when he brings in the wealth to the house? In 1 Chronicles 29: 10 he says, "Blessed be thou, Jehovah, the God of our father Israel, for ever and ever. Thine, Jehovah, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the splendour, and the majesty"; then he says, "thou art exalted as Head above all", v 11. He has that appreciation of the supremacy of God in that sense, and that would be what we reach in the service of God as led by Christ, do you think?

RT I am glad you referred to that. The effect upon David is that he went out and started to prepare out of his affection, and out of his affliction, for that house of God. That was the effect of it; I do not know how he felt when he went in, what he expected, but he comes out and he says, "thou art that God" and he commits himself wholeheartedly out of his affection and out of his affliction; his whole occupation was the house of God.

DBR This is possibly one of the finest moments in David's history, do you think?

RT Well, you come out better than you go in!

DBR I was thinking practically; I value what you said about it. We have our own individual times with God; I think sometimes it is good just to be quiet before Him. What do you say about that?

RT That is it, David went in and sat. I am sure he had much on his heart, but I think God stopped him, He does not want to listen to our shortcomings. That is what it said about Moses: he went in and God

spoke to him from off the mercy seat. God has Christ before Him when He is speaking to us. His eye is on Jesus, the Beloved, on Christ, and He is speaking to us according to “a man of high degree”. Well, may it rest on our spirits, dear brethren, that we belong to such a family, we have been brought into such an economy of love that we are able to tread our path here in simple faith, dependence, and obedience to the One who has so loved us that we ought to spend the rest of the time pleasing to the Father.

Glasgow

5th October 2013

Key to initials:

G A Brown, Grangemouth; J A Brown, Grangemouth; J D Gray, Edinburgh; J C Gray, Grangemouth; P A Gray, Grangemouth; R Gray, Grangemouth; N J Henry, Glasgow; N McKay, Glasgow; T C Munro, Grangemouth; Q A Poore, Swanage; D B Robertson, Cumnock; J Spinks, Grangemouth; R Taylor, Kirkcaldy; R F White, Londonderry

PRAYER

Charles C D Remmington

Luke 22: 39-46

Acts 2: 42-43

James 5: 16-18

Genesis 24: 10-15; 26-27

Ephesians 6: 14-18

I would like, dear brethren, to say a few words as to the matter of prayer. It is a very fundamental and basic Christian experience that is open to every one of us, to know what it is to get into the presence of God. It is absolutely vital that every believer knows what it is to be truly in communion through prayer. I take it, if I may just ask the question at the beginning, dear brother or sister, that you do pray. Do you? Did you pray today? Did you take the time in your busy life just to pray? I search myself as to that. I say again, for your soul prosperity and for your well-being, it is essential that you frequent the presence of divine Persons; and not just when you are in trouble, not when you have a problem or something is going wrong. Of course, it has been well said that there is a time when every man prays. It may be when the boat is going down, or the bullets are going over the head, or you are sitting beside someone who is lying at the end of their life; I believe there is a time when every man prays.

What I would like to do is to encourage you to go into the presence of God, not because you have to, but because you have a sense that divine Persons delight to have your company; and to hear you in simplicity, not only in expressing your sense of need, but also the sense of gratefulness that you have such a One to turn to. Is it not wonderful, that we can speak to God in this way? I use the expression, 'speak to God', because I have in mind the revelation of God as known to us, and that each divine Person, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, can be spoken to. We have just spoken in prayer to the Lord and the Father, but it is wonderful that we can actually be at liberty with each divine Person. Perhaps when you are younger you wonder which divine Person to speak to. I am not going to put this too much as it were into boxes, because I do not think we need to, but speak to the Father about your circumstantial needs. Speak to Him as to your family needs; speak to Him as the Lord Jesus could speak to Him, as "heavenly Father", the One who can provide everything for you. You can speak to

the Lord Jesus, too. You can thank Him for what He has done. Speak to Him about the Scriptures. Speak to Him about spiritual things. Speak to Him about the things we have had today in the reading, for example; perhaps the things you do not quite understand. Speak to the Spirit too. He would love to unfold things to you, and that is where I am tested. How much do we really know what it is to frequent the Spirit's presence? These things are for each one of us to enter into. The intelligent believer, without being too bound, is at liberty to speak to each divine Person, as recognising that each divine Person is working together, each one God, yet each in their own individual working. That is wonderful. It gives us confidence. It gives us boldness, as we had in the reading, to go into the presence of God, Heb 4: 16.

Now, I want to speak about four things as to prayer. We have read first of all in Acts, and there it is to persevere in prayer - keep at it. We then read in James. He speaks about Elijah, or as it is translated, Elias, and what I want to speak about there is power in prayer, power with God and power with man. We then read the well-known Scripture in Genesis and I want to speak about patience and the product of prayer. Finally in Ephesians you have protection in prayer. Just remember those four things: perseverance, power, patience and the product, and protection - all found in the presence of God.

Now before I speak of these things, I want to speak about our wonderful Model in the Person of the Lord Jesus Himself. His was a life that was given over, I may say carefully, to prayer. How wonderful that such a One could come from glory's heights, could descend into manhood, and speak to His heavenly Father in dependence. What wonderful intimate terms the Lord had with His heavenly Father. You can have those terms too. He supremely knew what it was, for with Him there was never anything that came between to spoil communion, but the Lord Jesus, as having come into manhood, was always dependent, day by day. It was more than that: hour by hour, moment by moment, He resorted to the presence of the Father. He would speak to the Father early on in His public history, at the time of his baptism, when the dove descended upon Him, Luke 3: 21. He then speaks to the Father before the choosing of the disciples, chap 6: 12. As He stood at the grave of Lazarus, having wept as He felt the inroads of the awfulness of death and sickness, He could know, as having spoken to the Father, that His Father had heard Him, John 11: 42. No doubt He had spoken to Him as to all the works of power that He had done. What a wonderful

Model. What a wonderful One who set the whole matter on for us. Our minds would then go to those prayers that were upon the cross. He could speak to the Father at the very end; He could say, "Father", and commit His spirit into His hands, Luke 23: 46. But let us not forget the one prayer that went unanswered: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me"?, Matt 27: 46. No answer was heard to that prayer. If your prayers were to be answered today, this prayer had to be unanswered then. And so, by His finished work, He has made a way into the presence of that Father of whom He spoke. His Father is now our Father.

So we have read this scripture here in Luke 22 when He was anticipating the awfulness of that which I have referred to on the cross. He came here as was His custom to the mount of Olives, to a spiritual realm to which He was able to have recourse as was His custom. Is it your custom to pray? It is a good custom, a good habit, perhaps one that we learnt when we were young, when we remember our mother kneeling down with us just before you went to bed at night. These things are practical things. It was a custom which He was known for, and He went there with the disciples following. I would love to have heard the Lord pray, would you not? I would love to have heard the words that He used, the way in which He prayed, the dignity, the reverence, yet deep affection for His heavenly Father. And here we have an extremity, "being in conflict"; "And being in conflict he prayed more intently." He could speak to the Father and He prayed that the Father would remove this cup. Oh what pressure! It was seen in His sweat as great drops of blood, falling to the ground. Do you know what it is to get into the presence of God and pray and to be in conflict? What does it say here: "And his sweat became as great drops of blood, falling down upon the earth. And rising up from his prayer, coming to the disciples, he found them sleeping from grief." What would He say? The disciples were not equal for it. What wonderful grace: "Sleep on now and take your rest", Matt 26: 45. There is a scripture in Hebrews that I will just refer to in passing. It says that He was heard on account of his piety, Heb. 5: 7. I just have to wonder at that. He was heard. He was not answered upon the cross, but He was heard on account of His piety. That cup was His to take, and He took it and drank the last drop.

Now, I want to go to Acts 2 - perseverance in prayer. I come back to what I said as to the Lord Jesus praying. It is wonderful that we have recorded for us in the gospels the actual words He used. On one

occasion, we have even the language He used. But the time came, after He had been crucified, when He was placed in the grave. He arose and was seen and handled by men for forty days, but then He took the disciples out upon that mountain and was lifted up, He ascended into the presence of the Father. That is where He is now. In Luke's account, it speaks about His hands being lifted up, chap 24: 50. Those hands are still lifted up, are they not? They are still there for you, but then, what of the disciples? I often think about them in that period of time after the Lord had ascended. The Lord was in heaven. The Spirit had not yet come. The apostles had not yet been established publicly in their authority or their power. There was not yet any Christian teaching from the Holy Spirit given. What had they got? What we find if we just turn to Acts 1: 13 is: "And when they were come into the city, they went up to the upper chamber, where were staying both Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphæus, and Simon the zealot, and Jude the brother of James. These gave themselves all with one accord to continual prayer, with several women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren". They had the upper room, that spiritual realm. We may say that all that they had depended upon up to that point was no longer with them. But they had this recourse to the upper room. And they gave themselves continually to prayer.

I have read from Acts 2 because I just feel the need of it - persevering. I believe that the testimony, if it is to continue - and it has continued - will be in persons who persevere in prayer. You look back over the history of things, with the scattering, even within Paul's lifetime, then the Dark Ages and the Middle Ages, and you just wonder where things were, but I believe there has been this thread, as it were, this golden thread, that has been preserved by persons who have persevered in prayer against all odds. You can trace it throughout the Acts of the Apostles, with hardly a chapter in the book in which there is not a reference to prayer, piety, or the hour of prayer, or something relating to prayer. I think you can see the way that if the testimony is to be continued, it is in persons who are in communion with divine Persons. Think of Paul and Silas, singing, and praising God in the jail, chap 16: 25. They were not at a loss because they were incarcerated! The brethren earlier had resorted to prayer, and when they had prayed the whole place in which they were assembled shook, Acts 4: 31. Wonderful answer, is it not? Would you not like to know something of the shaking of the house as you know the presence of God? At the end

of the Acts of the Apostles, Paul is standing upon that ship, undoubtedly in communion with divine Persons, and as the ship was about to be broken up he can say, 'Listen to me'. He was a man in communion with God, who knew Him through prayer. There is much against us. I do not know if you find it, as I do sometimes: you think you ought to pray about something and other things come into your mind. The apostles experienced that too, as they were going to prayer in Acts 16. They were followed by a female slave, who would seek to disturb them. There is a certain power that is against you, but persevere at it. Do not give up.

We come to James. I find this scripture in James interesting because there is a lot of detail here which you do not get in the actual account which I am going to refer to in a minute, which is in 1 Kings 17. "The fervent supplication of the righteous man has much power": much power; remember that. Power with God, I believe, works power with man. What power have you with divine Persons? It speaks about Elias who was a man of like passions to us. You might say Elias was a great prophet, who knew what it was to be on the mount with the Lord Jesus, along with Moses, completely at home in those spiritual realms. He was a spiritual man, and a man who God could use, and he had power because he was righteous; but he was a man of like passions to us, just like you and me. Now could we just turn to 1 Kings 17 because this has the historical detail of it. The day in which Elijah lived was a dark day, very much as ours. Ahab the king had provoked God to more anger than any other king before, and his wife Jezebel killed the prophets of God. She was anti-Christian in principle. Then there was Hiel, the Bethelite, who built Jericho and raised up what God had said was not to be (chap 16: 34); and yet in the midst of all this comes Elijah. Is that not wonderful? In chapter 17 it says, "And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab" and so on, "And the word of Jehovah came to him saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the torrent", v 1-3. But before that he had said, "As Jehovah ... liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except by my word." "Except by my word": that is the word of Elijah. He had power with God so that, by the word of Elijah, the rain was stopped, and rain was to come. What power with God! Now, Elijah, a man of like passions to ourselves, knew what it was to pray fervently, and to be maintained by God. He experienced the ravens who brought him bread and flesh and so on, but then the torrent dried up, v 7. God tested him, did He not? Perhaps all that you relied on

before has dried up, but God is able for it. He provided a widow woman, v 9. But then comes another test, for the son of that widow woman became ill and he died. Elijah says, "Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into the upper chamber where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried to Jehovah and said, Jehovah, my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried to Jehovah and said, Jehovah, my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again! And Jehovah heard the voice of Elijah." Sometimes you have a situation where you might think the child is dead. What can you do? Elijah, in a true fatherly, shepherd spirit, a man who had power with God, could stretch himself upon the child and Jehovah heard his voice, and He brought life again into this young child. You see, I am going over these things just to show us how much the prayers of a man with God can effect. Turn over the page and you find all these prophets of Baal, and the question is, 'Whose God are you going to worship?'. There they were, leaping around, cutting themselves, and crying to their god: just silence. But God hears Elijah. And Elijah said, "Answer me, Jehovah". And He did, and down came the fire and "licked up the water that was in the trench. And all the people saw it, and they fell on their faces and said, Jehovah, he is God! Jehovah, he is God!", 1 Kings 18: 38-39. That is a man with God, power.

Now, we will just read verse 41. "And Elijah said to Ahab, Go up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain": an abundance of rain by his word. Elijah knew that he had power with God, and he had asked Him for rain to come. And he said to his servant, 'What do you see?'. He said, "it came to pass at the seventh time that he said, Behold there is a cloud, small as a man's hand, arising out of the sea", v 44. God begins to answer. The rain is coming. Does it not give you strength in your soul? You can hear the rain coming, and soon it did come. What a time of blessing it was. So is it with Elijah - a man of like passions to ourselves. He knew God and he experienced God. He knew what it was to be up, and he knew what it was to be down. He was just like you or me, I guess. Turn over the page and you will find him sitting in a cave. And God said to him, 'What are doing there, Elijah, what are you doing sitting in that cave?'. Perhaps God would say that to us sometimes. We are in our caves, we cannot see out. 'What are you doing there?' And before that Elijah had dared, as he sat under that broom bush, to request of God that he should die. A man of like

passions to ourselves. I say that for the practical comfort of each one of us, how Elijah, a man of like passions, would learn what it is to prove God. These things are very real in our Christian experience, but be encouraged, for God is for us.

Now, a word on Genesis 24. The servant had travelled all the way across that desert, and in his heart was that Isaac should have a suitable wife. She had to be of the same family. He gets there, and makes the camels kneel down. And the young maidens come out. Perhaps he was thinking, 'I just wonder how this is all going to work out.. Sometimes we have experiences like that, do we not? And then he prays this wonderful prayer. "Jehovah, God of my master Abraham, meet me, I pray thee, with thy blessing this day, and deal kindly ... Behold, I stand here by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw ...And it came to pass before he ended speaking that behold, Rebecca came out, who was born to Bethuel". What a wonderful answer. What patience he had, had he not? After all those years, Rebecca is now a product of prayer. The servant was completely in tune, you may say, with the divine mind, for he appreciated that Abraham was concerned that Isaac should have a suitable wife. Now I just want to say one thing, beloved. We have spoken about many circumstances about which we can pray. I do want to say one thing, if I may, to you younger persons. Maybe you are considering marriage. That is right, it is proper, and it is natural that you should do so. Make it a matter of prayer. Because, if you do, as we see here, the Lord *will* direct your pathway. *He* will direct your pathway. Pray that you might not only have a natural link. You *must* have a natural link with a person whom you love and whom you marry. That is perfectly right and normal. But make sure, dear young person, that you have a spiritual link with the person with whom you intend to spend the rest of your life together. It is vital. Those of us who have been on the pathway a little realise that what is natural is very precious, and that it becomes very, very precious, but what is spiritual becomes even more so. It is vital to have a spiritual link. Make sure that he or she has the same outlook as yours, and that their path is the same path as yours. The Lord will come in and will bless you. I know there are all sorts of problems and difficulties in the day in which we live; make them a matter of prayer. Because what do you see here? He says, "And the man stooped, and bowed down before Jehovah, and said, Blessed be Jehovah, God of my master Abraham, who has not withdrawn his loving-kindness and his faithfulness". You can trust God. You can

count upon Him for guidance even for natural provision of a suitable husband or wife. It says, "I being in the way, Jehovah has led me to the house". Sometimes we go on in unbelief and just wonder how things are going to work out. But when you look back, you see the way in which God has led you. As you go through these things with Him, you can see the way past things all fit together, and you can turn to God in thankfulness for the way in which he has gone before. Even before you had any realisation of what you were doing, things were in place for your blessing.

Ephesians gives us protection. The armour here that Paul is describing to us would be a familiar sight, that of a Roman soldier. But we can rightly give it a spiritual application: "Girt about your loins with truth". You have some appreciation of the truth. You have got the breastplate of righteousness on. You have shod your feet with the preparation of the glad tidings of peace. You have got the shield of faith with which to quench the inflamed darts of the wicked one. You have on the helmet of salvation. You have got the sword in your hand, which is God's word. And then what does he say? "Praying at all seasons." It is part of the armour. You may have everything on, but are you praying? If you are not praying you are out of communion, miserable and vulnerable. You see, there is a fiery dart coming your way. You might have all the armour on, but that fiery dart will find that chink. Pray, pray; persevere in it. "Praying at all seasons, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching unto this very thing with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints". How wide your view can be. Sometimes we become very selfish. But we can think about all the saints. We can look around a room like this and we can think of many that we do not know personally in detail, but nevertheless, what a wonderful pleasure it is. Just think of the fact that persons like you or me can have power with God, and we can name persons. Name young persons, perhaps experiencing difficulty as to employment or seeking suitable employment, or other matters of life, and older persons who are going through infirmities and weakness. We can actually name those persons in the presence of divine Persons. That is a wonderful privilege and I believe as we frequent it, the Lord would help us to have the power and influence with God and with men. Wonderful system that is set on by Christ, our perfect Model.

Well, these are my simple thoughts. As we have had in our reading, we are to have a "strong encouragement". There is that which

is from the divine side towards us: so go in, go into the divine presence; have boldness; speak to divine Persons about everything. They will listen in infinite grace and compassion, and in due time, as you pray according to His will, you will find that your prayers will be answered: it is a wonderful experience. May it be the portion of each one of us.

Birmingham

12th January 2013

FEATURES OF CHRIST FORMED IN THE BELIEVER

John Speirs

Matthew 11: 28-30

Colossians 3: 12-14

Ephesians 6: 11-15

1 Peter 5: 5-7

God's delight is, and was, and ever will be, in Jesus. When the Lord Jesus was on this earth, God's delight was in Him. We know that because God Himself says so; He declares that this is the One "in whom I have found my delight" (Matt 3: 17), marking out the Lord Jesus in all His uniqueness, in all His glory and in His perfection. God's delight was in that One, and every day and every moment of that life gave fresh delight to God as He looked on. It says prophetically, "For he shall grow up before him as a tender sapling", Isa 53: 2. It was as if God's eye was exclusively on Him, growing up "before him". In the scriptures we read, we see some of the features that were seen in Christ whilst here that God would have found so attractive and would have found His pleasure in; they were features that were so different to every other man that had ever walked the earth before. The Lord Jesus expressed these features because of who He was in all His perfection, and in the greatness of His Person, God Himself here in manhood's form, the Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Son of God. Think of God's delight in Him!

The Lord Jesus is no longer here; He is in glory and we rejoice in that; we rejoice in His present position but it is a wonderful thing to see that there remains something on this earth for God's delight at present, and it cannot be in anything other than what is of and like Christ. And where is it seen beloved brother and sister, dear young one, dear older one? Where is it seen? It is seen in believers in the Lord Jesus like you and me, or I should say, it ought to be seen. The Lord Jesus was perfect in everything that He did, in everything that He said, in every thought, every footstep, was absolute perfection. These features were true of Him, we might say, intrinsically, but we have to be formed in these features. They do not come naturally to us, and even once we have put our trust in the Lord Jesus, we need to learn, we need to make progress, so that these same features might become evident in our life; so that there may be something for God's pleasure now in the waiting time until Christ shall come again, because He is coming soon.

So I read here first of all in Matthew 11 because we see the

attractive features of meekness and lowliness in Jesus. It is the Lord Jesus Himself speaking, and He says, "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest". That emphatic "I" is very attractive, is it not? It is as if to say, 'You will not find rest anywhere else'. It is not possible. You may be burdened, maybe by your sins, maybe the guilt of them burdens you, or there may be something else that burdens you. Dear friend, no matter what it is, the answer to finding rest is to come to Jesus. Have you done that? I trust you know what it is to have been burdened by your sins first of all, to realise you are a sinner, and to come to Jesus and find that He is able to give you rest. How can He do that? He can do it because of the way that His love took Him. He can do it because He died for you. He can do it because He laid down His life and shed His precious blood. Believing that is the only way by which you can have rest, relief from the burden of your sins. That is a rest given but there is something else. That is an essential starting point, but progress is envisaged. What does it say? "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me". If we are going to make progress, if we are going to display the features that marked Christ perfectly, if they are going to be seen in us in any measure, how are we going to accomplish that? Are we going to try and improve ourselves by some human means, or educate ourselves in some way that the world can offer? No, that will not produce these features. The only thing that will produce the features that were seen in Christ is to learn from Him because He is the perfect Model. He is absolutely perfect in every way, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me". Think of this, the Lord Jesus speaks of "my yoke". What was that? A yoke is something put on an animal so that it can pull a load, and the animal is no longer able to go the way that it wants to. It has to submit itself to the will of another; it is directed by another. Think of the Lord Jesus in perfect obedience, in subjection to the will of His Father. I feel limited as to what I can say about it other than that He was perfect. He could say of the Father, "I do always the things that are pleasing to him", John 8: 29. Let us be occupied with such a One as that, One who says, "I am meek and lowly in heart": what an attractive One. Coming to the Lord Jesus, and learning from Him, and His helping us, is an attractive matter. Sometimes learning according to this world can be a difficult, trying, troubling matter, but I think learning from the Lord Jesus is a wonderfully attractive matter because it is all embraced in the glorious Person, the glorious Man: "I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls". I think it has been pointed out that that is a different kind of rest to the verse before, CAC vol 28 p193. The rest in

verse 28 is what Christ gives in His Person as showing God's disposition, God as Father being disposed to bless, not to judge, so that we realise that our sins can be removed from His sight. But there is something further. You might have peace with God, you might be able to rest in that way, knowing that your sins are forgiven and your eternal salvation is secure, but this is a found rest: have you got rest in your life from day to day? You might say, 'I find things difficult. Things are confusing me, they are disturbing me. I do not have rest'; well, here is the answer, "learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls". It is as doing this, as taking His yoke upon us and learning from Him, that we will find rest to our souls. Satan has worked a wonderful deception with man. He has made man believe that the only way that he can be happy and find rest is by doing his own will, and we are often taken in by that. We think, 'If I could only just do what I wanted to do, then I will be happy, then I will be able to get some rest'. Dear friend, nothing could be further from the truth. The only way that you will find rest in your soul, the only way you will find happiness in your life, is to take on and be subject to the will of Another, the Lord's will. Have you realised what it is? Have you asked Him to tell you what it is? Ask the Lord what His will is for you. Ask Him every day. Think of the Lord Jesus; it speaks prophetically of His ear being awakened morning by morning "to hear as the instructed" (Isa 50: 4), to find out what the Father's will was. How I need to do that more, to be under a yoke in that way, Christ's yoke, to be under the will of another; only then will I find rest to my soul. Only then will I begin to learn, begin to be formed in these features that Christ showed. Meekness and lowliness are two things mentioned here; how many there are, but these things can be seen in us as we begin to learn from Him, meekness and lowliness. It has been said that meekness is largely in relation to one another, lowliness perhaps more in relation to God, JT vol 12 p238. Think of the beautiful way that these features marked the Lord Jesus. They should mark us. Think of God's delight in seeing us being meek towards one another, and being lowly before Him, going on in simple dependence on Him in humility. So that is what is to be *taken* on, "Take my yoke upon you".

The next two scriptures I read are about what we *put* on, or are to be in the state of having put on. Colossians 3 says, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness". There they are again, these two features, but there are others here: "bowels of compassion, kindness, ... long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another". These

things are to be put on. I do not have them on after nature, they have to be put on. The previous section says, "having put off the old man with his deeds, and having put on the new". As far as God is concerned, the old man is done with and the new man is the only man that is in view. The new man is down here in the place where the old man was. Then it says, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God ...". The features of new man have to be put on; therefore these things ought to be true of us as the elect of God. What a dignified title, "the elect of God". Believers here on the earth indwelt by the Holy Spirit are "the elect of God". It says in Isaiah 42, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth!", v 1. Think of the delight of the Father in Christ as being His Elect and the One in whom He delighted; and now Paul is using similar language here, "the elect of God". Dear brethren, we were reminded last weekend, when our brother brought before us the excellency and dignity of God's people, that we should view one another in that way, what we are for God, "the elect of God". Well, if you are such a person, if you have such a standing before God, there are certain things that are suited to you, and these are some of the features that I think are proper to such persons. They are holy and beloved too, these persons. Are you conscious of the Father's love? Then it says, "bowels of compassion". They have been likened to our feelings and affections towards one another, which might be expressed in an automatic way, JT vol 40 p200. We might not plan to think or act in a particular compassionate way towards a person but it may come out automatically, "bowels of compassion". Think of the times it was said of the Lord Jesus that He was moved with compassion. You sometimes feel that, just speaking simply. You see someone, perhaps a brother or a sister that you have not seen for some time, perhaps someone who is suffering, and you just feel your affections going out towards them as someone you love in Christ. Then we have "kindness", the willingness to give, "lowliness, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another", and so on. It has been said that these are not borrowed clothes, CAC vol 17 p130. These are the clothes that rightly belong to you, belong to a person that is elect of God. Let us be exercised to be marked by these features more as having learned them by occupation with Christ. It goes on to say at the end, "And to all these add love, which is the bond of perfectness". Everything that the Lord Jesus did was really marked by love. Think of the Hebrew bondman saying distinctly, "I love", Exod 21: 5. Love was the motive for everything that Jesus did, love for His Father, love for His own, love for the assembly. Let us be motivated by love in our relations with one another and towards God.

So I read in Ephesians because we have what is protective there that needs to be put on. In Colossians, it seems to be the promotion of these features between one another, these matters of compassion and kindness and so on. They are given opportunity to be seen in our relationships with one another, but then in Ephesians we see that we need to put on what is protective because there is what is opposed to the believer. I do not have to say that there is what is opposed to the believer at the present time; we are very conscious of it; and be in no doubt that the enemy that is opposed to the believer is the same enemy who was opposed to Christ when He was here. Think of Satan in his direct opposition to the Lord Jesus. How did He meet it? He met it in beautiful dependence and obedience as a Man, and we are to meet Satan in a similar way by dependence on God and obedience to Him, having learned from the Lord Jesus, having seen how He met Satan in that way. Of course there was what was in the Lord's Person which was supremely greater than Satan anyway, but for us, what an example He is. So there is this panoply of God that is to be put on, and again the note says, 'have it put on', the complete armour. You need to be protected in every part of your person, whether it is your mind or your feet or your loins, that which would relate to your thoughts or your walk or your affections, every part of your life needs to be protected; because, if not, Satan might find a weak point. You might not have on all the armour. Let us be exercised to put it all on. What does it say? "That ye may be able to withstand". You might say, 'Well, I would quite like to do something else, a bit more than that. I would like to go out and do this or that for God'. God is not really asking for a great deal more here than for us just to stand. Although there is what is opposed to the believer, we can stand, we can stand for what is right, we can stand for Christ; but we need armour because we are not able to protect ourselves and stand in our own strength; we need what God has provided. *He* has provided the full armour, it is the panoply of *God*. "Take to you the panoply of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having accomplished all things, to stand".

I was specially impressed by the word, "having girt about your loins with truth". We spoke about truth in the reading and the importance of it in our walk down here, to hold to the truth in love. Perhaps something has to be undertaken that requires much exercise. The loins are girded before something strenuous is done so that there might not be any damage. Let us protect ourselves with the truth in that way so that if something has to be undertaken, it is done in truth. That would be protective because I might try and do the right thing with good

motives but maybe leave out an aspect of the truth in doing so. There could be damage as a result; there might be harm. Let us have our loins girt about with truth.

Then it speaks about “the breastplate of righteousness”. Think of the protection there is if I am marked by practical righteousness. If I am only putting on a good appearance - and I feel the challenge of that - if I only put on an appearance of what is righteous, perhaps when I am amongst God's people, but I am not quite so righteous when I am in my responsible pathway, that would be dangerous. The breastplate is not on. Let us have on “the breastplate of righteousness”. God provides us with power in the Holy Spirit to be able to act righteously here.

Then our feet shod “with the preparation of the glad tidings of peace”. That should characterise the walk of a believer. In every footstep he takes there is to be something of the glad tidings of peace; there would be something in his walk that would be suggestive of the glad tidings of peace with every person he comes into contact with, whether they are opposed to him or whether they are with him. There would be a willingness to speak glad tidings. It speaks here about preparation, “shod your feet with the preparation of the glad tidings of peace”. If there is an opportunity in any part of my walk to say something as to the glad tidings concerning the Lord Jesus I should take it. My feet are to be shod. They are to be ready to move, ready to take that opportunity.

Then we have all these other provisions that God makes, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word. Satan was defeated by Jesus when he tempted Him by Jesus referring to the Scriptures as a dependent Man. The same Scriptures are available to you. Perhaps someone opposes you; are you able to bring out a scripture that defeats the attack? I feel tested because in order to do so I must have first read that scripture, and I too must have relied on the Holy Spirit to bring out the right scripture at the right time. So we see that the believer is fully provided for, he is to be fully fitted, like the man of God “fully fitted to every good work”, 2 Tim 3: 17.

God desires that we might take on Christ's yoke, that we might put on what is for the promotion of the features seen in Him in our relationships with one another, that we might put on what is protective so that there might not be inroads for Satan to spoil, because if an individual is spoiled there is a risk that a household will be spoiled, and if

the household is spoiled then the local assembly could be spoiled. It begins small but it may have a large effect. Let us see that we are fully protected by this armour that God provides.

I read in Peter because here we have something that is not only to be put on but it is to be *bound* on. It is to be by “all of you”, he says. Earlier he speaks about the elders and younger persons and the particular things that he exhorts each to do, but he says, “all of you bind on humility towards one another”. I feel the need of that myself. I feel tested by it. It makes me think again of Philippians 2, “For let this mind be in you”, and it goes on to speak of One who humbled Himself, v 5-8. Am I willing to humble myself in relation to my brother? It may mean that I lose face, it may mean that I might be lower in some way as I am looked upon by others. Am I willing to do that? Binding it on suggests to me that it is done with definiteness, and it is not something that is done lightly. It suggests too that if I do not bind it on there is a risk that it will slip off again, and I might not be just quite so humble the next time I act towards my brother. Let us bind it on. Think of the Lord Jesus, think of His humility, think of the way that He acted, the willingness to go down, the mind to go down.

Let us be found as having been occupied with Him to be marked by these features, to have taken on His yoke, to have known what it is to find out what the Lord's will is, to be given power by the Holy Spirit to do it in our measure, and then to put on these bowels of compassion and other features that are fitting to persons that are elect of God. I do not think this reference is exactly stressing election according to purpose, but the fact that they are precious and they are excellent in God's sight on the earth. Let us have an elevated view of one another, “each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves”, Phil 2: 3. What an elect company we have been privileged to gather with! It makes nothing of ourselves, of course, but makes everything of Christ, the One who is our common Object. Then we have to put on what is protective, and to bind on this feature of humility.

May we be encouraged by these things. For His Name's sake.

Buckie

14th September 2013