

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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REFUSING, CHOOSING AND ESTEEMING

Paul W Burton

Hebrews 11: 23-28

As you will see from the scripture read, I wish to speak a little about Moses' experience. There are three things that I want particularly to speak about in relation to this scripture: he refused, he chose and he esteemed. I would like you to think about those three deliberate actions of Moses.

Just before I do that, I want to speak briefly about the first verse that we read; the first recorded act in faith in the history of Moses. We speak, indeed Scripture speaks, about the three periods of forty years of the life of Moses. There were forty years in Pharaoh's household, the forty years as a shepherd tending the sheep in Midian, and the forty years when he led the children of Israel through the wilderness. These are three periods of great instruction but, during the first period of forty years, there was another period that we must not overlook. The first years of the life of Moses were perhaps the most important years in the whole one hundred and twenty years of his life. If those years had not happened as they did, beginning with the first three months of his life that are recorded here, then perhaps Scripture would have had very little to say about the rest of the years of the life of Moses. "By faith Moses, being born, was hid three months by his parents". These three months leading up to him being put in that ark in the river, and then the subsequent period of him being nursed by his mother, were a vital period in the development of Moses. I do not know how old he was when he was brought to Pharaoh's daughter - the scripture says, "when the child was grown" (Exod 2: 10) - but during that time he was in an environment in which he was hidden, cared for, treasured, and held in relation to the claims of God. It says, "they saw the child beautiful", or, as Stephen says, "exceedingly lovely", Acts 7: 20, or 'fair to God' in the note. Is that not a big exercise for those of us who have families - how do we hold our children? Do we hide them? Do we hide them from the world, hide them from the influences that are all around us, preserve them in relation to their preciousness and value to God? I do not think Moses would have been the man he was had he not been so cared for by his parents.

We baptise our children, and it is right that we do. I do not know why only the three months are spoken of here. The act of putting him in

that ark in the bank of the river is not explicitly referred to in Hebrews, although it would appear that it would follow that, these three months. It is typical of baptism. We baptise our children, and to do so goes against every instinct of nature. Which mother would willingly and with any natural consideration allow a small babe to be put under the water? From a natural perspective, which mother here has not had a slight concern when the time of baptism comes, and the little babe is committed into the hands of a brother and is going to go under the water? What we do is not according to nature at all; it goes right against any natural inclination. Here is a little babe in whom is the potential of life and, I suppose to any mother, the most beautiful babe that has ever been, being committed to the waters of baptism. What are you saying? You are acknowledging that if you only hold this child in regard to life here there is nothing for it but death. No matter how beautiful, precious and attractive that babe is, no matter that it has never yet done a wilful act, as born of Adam's race its future is death as far as this world is concerned. Now that is a solemn, solemn thing but it is not the only thing. You also hold what that child potentially is for God; what is precious, beautiful and fair to God. It is not fair to this world but fair to God, and you would recognise in faith that this world would spoil and destroy that which is fair to God. You commit a little one to the waters of baptism to take it out of sight of this world, to accept that death is upon everything here, but you take it out of the water in relation to the claims of God and in view of another world and life according to God in relation to that world. It says later on in this chapter, "of whom the world was not worthy" (v 38), and that is what you say of this child: the world is not worthy of it; it belongs to God. What is there in potential you hold in faith for God and hide it from the world. Baptism is not something we just do once and then forget about. We do it in faith and then we have to be consistent to the act of faith and what we have committed to God. As you grow up as a baptised person there comes a time when you face the claims of God and, as a responsible person, you have to answer and be true to what has been done in faith for you. You make a committal not to live in relation to this world and its claims but in relation to the world that your parents in faith preserved and hid you for - in relation to Christ in another world. It is not something that happens once in your life and then it is past; our baptism is something that should affect us every day of our lives. Moses's parents acted like that. They hid and preserved him, they nurtured him in the household in an environment that was hidden from the ways of Egypt and its opposition

and destruction of that which was 'fair to God'. May our households be such that would hide what is precious to God from the influences and effect of this world.

I think the time that Moses spent in his mother's house, young formative years, were the most important of his life in relation to forming him and preparing him for the decisions and reckoning that he came to later - decisions that also went quite against any natural reckoning or estimation. He refused, he chose and he esteemed; and I think he was able to do that because of what had been formed during those early years. It says he "refused". I struggled with this; I do not know how others get on but sometimes you have a real struggle with the Lord as to the message that you have. I wanted to speak of the choosing first, of the positive side, but I feel constrained to speak of these things in the order in which the scripture gives them. The first thing it speaks of is he "refused". I do not know if I have understood Mr Darby's note correctly, but I think it suggests that these three decisions were made at the same time, so while we might speak of them sequentially, they really were one exercise. Moses reached these decisions in his soul as he went through exercise before God. I want you to think about this for a minute, perhaps especially the younger ones. These were not things that Moses just drifted into. No matter how precious, positive, helpful and formative the years in his parents' house were, it was not his parents that brought him to this. It was not something he just came into as following the normal course of life. This was a point that Moses reached when he very deliberately thought about his life, where it was leading, what was of value, what was important and what the true claims upon his life were. If he had drifted along, I suppose he would just have carried on in Pharaoh's house being called son of Pharaoh's daughter. That is where, in the providence of God, he had been placed those forty years. Had he not had exercise he would have just carried on there. In the providence of God you have been placed somewhere. Many of us have been brought up in a Christian household; that is a great blessing and a great advantage and we should value it; but do not just rely on that as though that in itself is all you need to do. If you are to be here truly for the Lord there has to come a time when you make a very definite committal in regard to what your life really is to be and to whom it belongs. Moses came to this point when he said, 'I am going to refuse certain things'; and there comes a point when there are things, and I trust I say this feelingly and not in a hard or legal way, that we have to refuse in a very definite way. It is not just, 'Well, maybe I will not do

that or go on that way so much, and try and come to a few more meetings' or whatever it might be; but a very definite committal before the Lord and in relation to His claims and a refusal of things that are detrimental or hinder your walk with the Lord and your ability to love and to serve Him. Do not allow these things to get in the way of the claims of the Lord Jesus. Let the claims of the One who has given His all for you go deep into your heart and soul. Accept that He has bought you, that you belong to Him, and refuse with a purpose of heart anything that steps in the way of those claims or that would divert you away from the Lord Jesus and from His people. There *are* things we have to refuse. Moses did it though he had every advantage as far as the world was concerned. I suppose there would have been many that would have given anything to swap places with Moses and "be called son of Pharaoh's daughter". He had every privilege, every opening in this world, every opportunity in the most powerful and wealthiest kingdom of the earth at that time and he said, 'No'. There was a greater claim on Moses, and there is a greater claim on us. There is a claim before God that our parents acknowledged when we did not even know about it, but that now you are going to honour and answer to by the refusal of this world and all that it is in it. Moses set himself, he "refused", he was definite; he purposed, as it were, in his heart, like Daniel. "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not pollute himself with the king's delicate food", Dan 1: 8. When he was carried away out of Israel and into the captivity, Daniel set himself, as a very definite action, not to do something that would pollute him, that would defile him, that would draw him away. He made a definite stand right at the beginning. Many of the young people will have just gone back to school; maybe you have started a new class or perhaps you have changed schools; perhaps you have just started work. It is difficult to go into a new environment where people do not know you perhaps, and you want to fit in and make friends, yet there are influences, temptations and activities that are incompatible with your committal to the Lord Jesus. I would say to you, with all feeling and compassion: seek to stand straight away in that new environment for what you know to be right, like Daniel did. It will become far harder if you go part way down the road of seeking to fit in than if you stand true to the Lord Jesus at the beginning. Seek the help of the Lord Jesus and the help of the Spirit to stand true to what you know and to whom you belong. It does not mean you have to say much, and you may not feel equal to it, but pray about it before you go out to school in the morning; just ask the Lord Jesus to help you to be

true to Him. Yes, you will be different and to some extent stand out; no, you might not have so many friends as others have, but you will have the Lord with you. You will know what it is to walk with Him; He will not let you down, nor leave you. You will prove His love in a way perhaps you have never experienced it before; know His tenderness and compassions, for He knows how difficult it might be for you. Then it says of Moses, "choosing rather to suffer affliction along with the people of God"; he refused in order that he might choose something. He could not have both worlds or both ways. If I want to enjoy things among the people of God then I have to refuse this world - you cannot have a foot in both worlds. So he refused and he chose. What did he choose? - "choosing rather to suffer affliction along with the people of God". You might say, 'Is that all you have got to offer; do you know how much it has cost me to refuse?'. Maybe it has cost you a career, maybe it has cost you promotion, maybe it has cost you education, maybe it has cost you a link in marriage, to be true to Christ and His people. And is all the compensation for that to suffer affliction with the people of God? Are you really asking me to refuse and choose that? It is not me that makes the appeal, or the brethren - it is Christ, the One who gave His life for you, that makes the appeal. It is the One who by the compassions of God asks you to present your body as a living sacrifice to God (Rom 12: 1) - the feelings and the heart of God lie behind it. You feel His great love for you, His tender feelings for you. He says, 'I want you for myself, for my service, I want you for my world and, by my compassions, I am going to ask you to give everything'. It is not me; it is not the brethren: it is Christ. The brethren will pray for you, will long to see such a committal, will encourage you; but the only One that could make such a demand is the Lord Jesus Himself. So Moses chose, "choosing rather to suffer affliction along with the people of God". Have you ever really thought about what Moses refused and what he chose? Naturally speaking, how could he do it? Are you prepared to be a fool for Christ's sake? It is what Paul speaks about, "We are fools for Christ's sake", 1 Cor 4: 10. This world would say you are a fool, giving up that career, refusing a path that will get you on in this world; giving it up for what? Well, it is in love for the Lord and faithfulness to those who love the Lord, that I may be identified in my walk with those that love the Lord Jesus and in a way that pleases the Lord. Do you love the people of God? They are the most dignified and precious people on earth, the people that belong to God; that are owned of God. Everything else is passing. All man's world, its commerce, its finance, its material things, its

education, its science and technology is all passing; it is all under judgment. Even the physical earth is going to pass away. What is going through on the earth at the present time is the people of God, and it is the most precious and wonderful company to find yourself amongst. To find those who love Christ, those who enjoy the things that Christ enjoys, to find an environment where heavenly things are known and a sphere touched that is beyond death. Have you sat in a meeting and felt something touch your heart, an experience that is unlike anything that you have ever known in this world before? Maybe it is through the singing of a hymn; maybe it is through an expression of thanksgiving to God; maybe it is just in the quietness of your soul and yet in the environment of hearts that are burning for Christ, where Christ is being honoured, where every heart is yielding to Christ what is due to Him. The brethren's faces are shining from the enjoyment of the precious things of God, enjoying what it is to take up their place in sonship before the Father, enjoying the greatest and most wonderful privileges that can be known while yet here on earth. You feel something of it, something touches your heart that you have never known before, something that is so different in character from everything else around us in this world; and you begin to realise that there is another world and it is real and precious and glorious and it brings a joy that nothing else can touch. Then, I trust, you begin to realise that choosing affliction along with the people of God is actually very well worthwhile. It is affliction. I do not think anyone comes into fellowship to advance or make their pathway easier here; being in fellowship is not going to enhance anyone's 'CV'. You are not there for any natural advantage, rather there may well be affliction, but there is the recompense of joy. It says at the end of this passage, "he had respect to the recompense". I do not exactly know what Moses' recompense was but, let me tell you, there *is* a recompense to the affliction and being part of a poor, despised people. I find the description at the end of this chapter so affecting when it speaks about these people of faith being "destitute, afflicted, evil treated", v 37. It speaks elsewhere of being "the offscouring of the world", 1 Cor 4: 13. The offscouring of the world - just rubbish. That is the way men think of believers: just nothing, worthless. But in God's estimation, "of whom the world was not worthy", v 38. In the coming day we will see the glory and the preciousness of what God has wrought in this very scene where Christ is rejected. The glory and beauty of His work will be displayed. And we see expressions of it now that touch your heart, something of true wealth and real value.

It makes you realise that what this world has is worthless, and so Moses esteemed "the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt". He esteemed, he weighed things, he valued things. We have to learn to esteem what the true value of things is. Moses esteemed the reproach of the Christ as greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Now, have you done that? You may say, 'I have refused; I know this world is detrimental to my spiritual prosperity, and I want to choose what honours God'. Now weigh it and see if you are a gainer or a loser. Have you lost more than you gained? No, the riches of Egypt - and you could give every minute of the day to this world and never have much of the riches of Egypt anyway - are worthless in the light of these riches of the Christ. Do you still not see the reproach of the Christ as riches? Reproach is all this world offered Christ: would you expect anything different? They valued Him and their valuation was to "set him at nought", Luke 23: 11. A brother referred to that a little while ago and it is most affecting. They set Him at nought. They did not just casually cast Him off; they did not *just* say we cannot be bothered with Him. They looked at Christ, they evaluated Him, they weighed Him, and they said He was valueless. That was the world's estimation, nothing. Can you expect anything different? You too will bear "the reproach of the Christ" - He is still the rejected Man here, but, oh, what riches! You think of the way God has esteemed Christ. He has granted Him a Name which is above every name, granted Him a place which is above every place, He has granted Him the highest glory and honour. He exalted Him; He is Lord of all. He has given Him every honour and glory. In Him are "the unsearchable riches of the Christ", Eph 3: 8. You will not be the loser. You will gain infinitely, in your soul, in the things of Christ. You will find riches that you never realised existed and a valuation of the precious things of God that will really begin to lay hold of your soul, and spur you on. That was what Paul came to in his reckoning in Philippians chapter 3.

I would say again to the younger ones, 'Read Philippians'. If you want help to do what Moses did, read Philippians. Read Philippians 2 about the Man that went down and then was highly exalted, and then read Philippians 3. You read of a man, of like passions to ourselves, who had a great advantage as far as this world was concerned; religiously, politically, and even in regard to his citizenship. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, he had a great education, he was a Roman citizen - he had it all: "but what things were gain to me these I counted, on account of Christ, loss. But surely I

count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all, and count them to be filth, that I may gain Christ", v 7, 8. Here was a man that had reckoned all that he was according to this world's estimation and counted it to be loss, and not only loss, but filth - of a worthless character. The only thing that mattered to Paul was to gain Christ. That was what drew him on in his soul and, as he says a little later on, "to know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings", v 10. What was Paul's ambition here? It was to know Christ, and he never wavered from it. I expect each one of us would have to say he knew Christ a lot better than I do, but Paul did not stop there; he wanted to know Him more. He was so touched in his heart by the Man who had met him on the Damascus road, that Christ was his life and he longed to know more of that One.

You will find that if you set yourself in relation to the things of Christ and, in the simplicity of your own heart, you make a committal to the Lord, He will draw you on. He will show you the riches, the unsearchable riches, the unfathomable riches that are in Himself and that are in the heart of God for you. Moses refused, he chose, and he esteemed. I would lay it upon you gently to follow these exercises, and not just the young ones either, each one of us. Moses was forty years old when he came to this. I would address my own generation. We often speak to the younger generation, and we speak thankfully of the older generation, but what about my generation? Have you been maintained and kept in your committal? I say that to myself as much as anyone else here. Maybe you can look back and say there was a time when you made this definite choice, you set yourself for the Lord, He put a claim in, and you answered to it. Maybe it was when you committed yourself in fellowship, or whenever it was, you set yourself for the Lord and His people. Have you been maintained in it? I do not say that accusingly; I say it to stimulate exercise. Things come along in our lives: marriage, houses, children, career - or, at least, making ends meet. With these things come pressure, difficulties, busyness and hectic lives - are you kept in your committal, or has it got a bit submerged? Sometimes it does good to go back to your committal. Is it as bright as it was? Is Christ still what He was to me, when I first stepped out on a committed path, or have things become a little dull? It is not because you have given up but because, through the pressures of life, the enemy brings things that just cloud the real

fervency and desire, and perhaps things just drift a little. Well, what example are we to the younger ones? They see and know what is real. I would say to my own generation: how real are our committals now? Let us be fervent and in the light of the Lord's coming let there be a reality in our hearts regarding the claims of Christ that will be an example to the younger generation. Let our hearts breathe a little more deeply, like the apostle's, to know Him, and the power of His resurrection. May it be so for His Name's sake.

Glasgow

25th August 2012

LIFE AND FRESHNESS

Rodney Brown

Isaiah 53: 2

Genesis 8: 8-12

Psalms 1: 1-3; 52: 8; 92: 13, 14

I have been thinking of the matter of life and freshness. It comes into the scriptures that we have read, primarily, of course, in the Lord Jesus, but it is to be reproduced in the saints. The matter of what is “green” or in life comes into these references in the Psalms, and if the testimony is to continue there has to be growth and development in the saints so that they should be maintained, not merely in light, but in life. I believe fresh life is particularly pleasurable to God. It is interesting that what comes in at the incoming of the Lord Jesus is “good pleasure in men”, Luke 2: 14. We are assured of the pleasure that the Lord Jesus has afforded heaven, but there is to be that in the saints that comes into expression and affords delight and pleasure to heaven. It relates to our localities; it relates to every facet of our lives because, as we were reminded at the end of the reading, we are never out of the house of God, and so there is what is fresh, there is what is green, by way of testimony. My desire is to be marked by these features, and my desire for my brethren is that they should be too. It speaks in Psalm 92 of those that are old, that “They are still vigorous in old age, they are full of sap and green”. On that basis there is something that can be handed on. The basis of life and freshness is to be maintained. Really the testimony depends on it, and our enjoyment of things depends on it.

I trust Isaiah 53 is well-known to everyone here. How attractive it is, and how attractive this reference is, “For he shall grow up before him as a tender sapling”! Have you ever thought of the Lord Jesus in that way, affording pleasure to the Father, affording pleasure to heaven in His life here? Our brother in the reading referred to the “blade” and the “ear” and the “full corn in the ear” (Mark 4: 28) in relation to ourselves. I was thinking too of Genesis 40 where the cup-bearer has a dream. He says, “In my dream, behold, a vine was before me; and in the vine were three branches; and it was as though it budded: its blossoms shot forth, its clusters ripened into grapes. And Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh’s cup”, v 9-11. That has been applied to the Lord Jesus: “a vine was before me”. Think of the One that afforded pleasure to God

and to men, that one here as “a tender sapling”. Where did He draw His resource from? Where was His sap drawn from? Was it drawn from this scene? He is “as a root out of dry ground”. He derived nothing from this scene, derived nothing from His parents in that sense. He drew everything from above, drew everything from God. He was rooted there, and the life came into expression here, and what pleasure it afforded heaven. I trust it affords you pleasure too in thinking of it. Think of the Lord Jesus being referred to prophetically in this way: “for he shall grow up before him”! Think of the Father's eye on that blessed One. It has been described in ministry as the one green spot upon the earth, JT vol 6 p188. How attractive that is! Things that are green draw our eyes to them. It came in in creation, “every green herb”, Gen 1: 30. There is what is restful there, what is pleasurable, what is pleasurable for divine Persons. The Lord Jesus was that when He was here. There had never been anyone like that before. In that sense there has never been anyone like that since, but the same character goes through. He has gone through death - we will come to that in the “olive-leaf plucked off”, something that has come through judgment. This blessed One had to go that way in order that life should be known by us. It is good to have our minds stayed on this blessed One: “he shall grow up before him as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground”. Read Luke's gospel as to the Lord Jesus and His incoming! Read of Him as a babe! Read of him as a boy of twelve: “did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?”, chap 2: 49! Think of that tender sapling growing up before Him! How attractive, how fresh, how full of life: there is nothing to compare with it! Of nobody else could this be said, but the Lord Jesus. Think of the tenderness of that One to the eye of God! How blessed! What a contemplation! Have you thought of the life of Christ, dear young friend? Have you thought of what afforded pleasure to God in all its beauty, in all its perfection, never a life like that before? In one sense, that life was for God. We have come into the benefit of it, but that life was for God, and God gave that life up. That is an affecting matter too. In order that blessing should come in, in order that the thoughts of God should be fulfilled, that precious life was given up in death; but just to be impressed for the moment with what this life meant to God. How blessed, “a tender sapling”. Think of Him as a babe, think of Him in boyhood! Scripture is almost silent as to it. We get detail as to His incoming; we get a little as to Him as a boy of twelve; but think of these thirty years under the eye of the Father. Across it all you could write “he shall grow up before him as a tender sapling”, in

complete consonance with the divine mind, ever in accordance with the will of His God and Father. Think of Him in the carpenter's shop. Think of Him amongst men, going about doing His "Father's business", not Joseph's business - although He did that too - but He drew His resource from heaven and He found His pleasure in the will of His God and Father. What an Object He is for our contemplation! I trust you have found rest and pleasure in considering Him. I have spoken of God finding that point of complacency, that green spot for His eye in that blessed One, but I trust in measure that you have too, dear friend, because we need an appreciation of His life, and all that was involved in it, if we are going to appreciate His death and all that was secured by Him going into death and coming out triumphant, this life which was so precious to God, perfect, "sin apart", Heb 4: 15.

Think of Him growing up. We read of it in Luke. "And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and God's grace was upon him", chap 2: 40: "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men", v 52. Think of every step of that pathway, every stage of growth. I almost hesitate to use that term because the Lord Jesus was perfect in every way. We learn generally from our mistakes, but there was never that with Christ. Every impulse was derived from heaven. Everything was in keeping with this "root out of dry ground". It had its source in what was above. What a Man! I trust you have found Him attractive in your own soul, dear friend. I trust you know something of what I am speaking about in the reality of your links with Him. I trust that He is attractive to you as He was to the Father.

Think of Him then when the Scripture does speak of Him again, coming up from the waters of baptism; the Spirit descending "in a bodily form as a dove upon him", the voice being heard from heaven: "*Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight*" (chap 3: 22), the thirty years of the private life of Christ underlying that proclamation from heaven when He is about to embark on public service. "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness", Matt 3: 15. Think of the Lord Jesus saying that. He had nothing to repent of. He did not need to be baptised on that account as anyone else did, but think of the delight of heaven in these words from the lips of the Lord Jesus, "thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness". These are blessed things, dear friends. Our salvation and our joy rest upon these things. What a matter it is, "a root out of dry ground". As I said, He did not derive anything from here, but He was ever fresh, ever vital in His links with heaven. He came into

this place of restriction. Our brother reminded us in the reading of the place that the Spirit has taken of His own volition, but think of the Lord Jesus, He who Himself was God, coming into this scene as man, but as a Babe, and coming into a place where He could be described prophetically as “a tender sapling”. What grace there is in that! Think of the smallness of that and the humility that would mark the “tender sapling”, “no form nor lordliness”, nothing to appeal to us naturally, but the Lord Jesus took that place, took it of His own volition and glorified God in it. What an Object He is for our contemplation. “He hath no form nor lordliness, and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.” He came from Nazareth. Think of the reproach that the Lord bore, but none of that detracted from what the Father could see in Him, that green spot.

Well, I have alluded to Genesis 8 already and I go on to that scripture now. That life of perfection of the Lord Jesus had to be given up in death. I have referred to the vine being before the cup-bearer in his dream: every stage of growth yielding its fruit to God. How blessed that is! But it came to the point when these grapes were pressed into Pharaoh's cup. That speaks of what the Lord Jesus endured and suffered when He “poured out his soul unto death”, Is 53: 12. The life, perfect though it was in every detail and in every impulse, was not sufficient for God. If we were to come into blessing, and if God's purpose were to be reached, that life had to be given up, and it was given up in its entirety. I am speaking now of the Lord Jesus in offering Himself to God. There was no mitigation for Christ as He suffered. There was no comfort for Him. Perhaps there was in those that stood around, but think of the way He faced death and went into it. It was a real matter. It should affect our souls that that blessed life was given up, and the One who so pleased God went into death. He suffered on our account. I trust everyone in this room is convicted as to that because the Lord Jesus went that way; He went that way for you; He went that way for you as an individual; and He went that way in order that you should prove what is really life, and that is proved in relation to Christ as raised from among the dead. All that the Lord endured has that in view, that there should be what is pleasurable to God: “good pleasure in men”.

Well, I am impressed with this “olive-leaf plucked off”. Think of those in the ark, Noah in particular, waiting for that dove. The dove had already been sent out but she “found no resting-place for the sole of her

foot". There was nothing there that the dove could rest on. Think of the discriminating nature of the dove, speaking typically of the Holy Spirit. In that respect there was nothing that the dove could associate itself with. But then, after the seven days, "he put forth his hand, and took her, and brought her to him into the ark. And he waited yet other seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. And the dove came to him at eventide; and behold, in her beak was an olive-leaf plucked off." Think of that, "an olive-leaf plucked off". It has been pointed out many times that it was not an olive-leaf that had survived the flood, that was floating on the surface. Amid all the death and destruction there was "an olive-leaf plucked off", speaking of the life and vitality of an olive, consistent with the root of that plant, plucked off in life, something in resurrection life that was in evidence here, and it was brought back into the ark. Wonderful matter! How it must have cheered Noah's heart, not only that there was a spot that was clear of judgment; the waters had gone down, things were beginning to come into evidence, "the tops of the mountains" had already been seen, v 5. So there is life, life where there was judgment. There is life out of death and it speaks of all that is in this blessed One. You might say there is a green spot on earth now in spite of the judgment that has passed on the earth, and that is pleasurable for divine Persons.

It is interesting to note that while we could not have part or association with Christ in His life here, as out of death, that brings us in, brings others in. He is in life again in a different condition, a condition in which He can be associated with others. "And he waited yet other seven days, and sent forth the dove; but she returned no more to him". Well, this has a dispensational bearing as well, but I just want to fasten on this fact that where there was judgment; where the Lord bore the judgment, there is now life, "an olive-leaf plucked off" amidst a scene of judgment that the dove can alight on, and that gives us great cheer. It would have cheered Noah and it cheers us because things have not ended with the Lord Jesus going into death. Think of the disciples at that time; they thought everything was finished. The two on the way to Emmaus, their hopes had been pinned on what was going to happen on the earth. The Lord Jesus was able to manifest Himself to them and show them that there was still life and there was still hope and it was all resident in Himself. And so it comes down to us and whether that life has been availed of, whether we have availed ourselves of that life, whether we are in the good and the vitality of it.

So we come to Psalm 1, the godly man:

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked,
and standeth not in the way of sinners, and sitteth not in the
seat of scorers;

But his delight is in Jehovah's law ...

And he is as a tree planted by brooks of water.

This applies to those that find their resource in areas that are not known in the world. It is a source of supply that the world knows nothing about. The psalm starts that way. We spoke in the reading about the moral way into things. I suppose Psalm 1 gives us that, the godly man. Psalm 2 is more the official side. It does not seem so long ago that we were here listening to a brother talking about Moses refusing and choosing and esteeming, Heb 11: 24-26. I would gather that most here would have heard that address. Well, here is a man "that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, and standeth not in the way of sinners, and sitteth not in the seat of scorers". It was not just that it so happened that he did not get into the place where the counsel of the wicked was in operation. This was a deliberate step; this is someone judging that there are "things that are more excellent" (Phil 1: 10), and that did not mix with the things down here, that were characterised by "the counsel of the wicked", "the way of sinners" and "the seat of scorers". This is a man thinking for God, and thinking of his relations with God, and consciously refusing things. There was a great appeal made in that address, and it tested me at the time. As thinking of it I wondered how much of that address had remained with me, and whether, in fact, I had refused anything and chosen rightly and esteemed things differently as a result of hearing that. The Spirit is stressing something and it relates to our walk and it relates to the pathway of the Christian here. It relates to a separate path, and we perhaps shrink from that at times, and I feel the edge of that for myself, possibly more than anyone here, but it is essential. The way into life and vitality is maintained through separation from the world, from worldly influences, from persons that are characterised in the way that these persons are in the first verse. And we are to refuse these things. We are not to go along with them and think that we can get through. They have to be actively refused. If we are to know what vitality is, if we are to know what life towards God is, there are certain things that cannot be gone on with; there are certain things that are, you might say, mutually exclusive. You cannot have a foot in the world and a foot in God's things, as we are often reminded: it

does not work. Those of us that are of any age at all would say that from our own experience because we have tried it and we cannot do it. So I would encourage the saints and myself to find grace to refuse things, and to come into things more fully in a moral way, and in a way that is pleasurable to God. "But his delight is in Jehovah's law": is your delight in Jehovah's law or would you rather be found with scorers, sinners? The line of demarcation is clear. "In his law doth he meditate day and night"; so we begin to become characterised by these things.

"And he is as a tree planted by brooks of water, which giveth its fruit in its season, and whose leaf fadeth not; and all that he doeth prospereth". This is someone beginning to live according to God, finding his pleasure in the things that God provides, finding his resource in what has been made available as among the saints. These "brooks of water" we may take them for granted. Sometimes I do. We come to occasions and we find help and we think that it was always thus, but we need to be exercised, we need to go in for these things in reality. We need to appreciate what there is amongst the saints. What blessings are ours! How readily we can gather for fellowship, how readily we can enjoy one another's company, how readily we can enjoy practical fellowship. Numbers are not everything, but it is a great thing and a blessing to work things out together, to be impressed with things, and to discuss things together, and to grow together. I think that is what is in mind here: "as a tree planted by brooks of water". I do not picture in my mind that this was one solitary tree standing by brooks of water. I think there were other trees, other trees drawing their resource from the same brooks, from the same stream, a heavenly stream, nothing to do with this world. Our roots are not consistent with what we have here in this world; but of drawing our resource from what is from above, from what God gives: "which giveth its fruit in its season".

Well, that is a wonderful thing too because the fruit is for God, "fruit in its season", something seasonal is in the fruit. We know what the seasons speak of. There are times when we need to endure the winter; we need to go through exercises. There are times when we cannot avoid these things. You seek to go through it with God. You seek to draw resource and sustaining grace from Him and from His things, and the brethren are a help too, but primarily we need to prove these things from the hand of God. But think of this tree giving "its fruit in its season, and whose leaf fadeth not; and all that he doeth prospereth"! What a picture it is! I trust we have some knowledge of it

ourselves. I know we do, and I can see in the faces of the brethren that there are those here that are in the enjoyment of it. I trust all are, and I trust that the younger ones find something attractive, not only in what is being said, but in what they observe among the brethren, those that are enjoying these things, these trees in all their dignity, in all their fruitfulness, that are affording pleasure to divine Persons, giving "its fruit in its season". Sometimes the winters can be very hard. I believe it is the case that if there is a particularly harsh winter, the blossom in spring is brighter, and more vibrant. So if we are going through these things, and the brethren are going through much at the moment, it has in view that there may be a result, that there may be a blossoming, that there may be fruit for God, something that is pleasurable to Him.

Well, we had a word last week in Brechin in another scripture I was thinking of. We referred, in relation to the matter of constancy, to the verse in Hosea: "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? (I answer him, and I will observe him.) I am like a green fir-tree. - From me is thy fruit found", chap 14: 8. He spoke about the constancy of the green fir-tree. We know what evergreens are like; they are always green; and that is a blessed matter. It is in the setting of recovery: "What have I to do any more with idols?". There are things, again I would say, that can be a distraction to us, that have to be set aside in order that this fruit should come out and this leaf should not fade. As we draw on this resource, there is power to maintain the leaf, to maintain the green for God's pleasure in all its freshness and vitality.

In Psalm 52 we read, "But as for me, I am like a green olive-tree in the house of God". It speaks of the inward consciousness, that you are such a thing. You recognise it in yourself: "But as for me, I am like a green olive-tree"; something of the Spirit is coming into expression, "a green olive-tree". The oil and the olive-tree often speak of the Spirit. We have not to shy away from going in for spiritual things as thinking that they are beyond us. The Spirit would guide us that way, and I believe that as we tread this moral road, this is where we are led: "I am like a green olive-tree in the house of God", planted there.

We come on to that in Psalm 92, that there is the result of this constancy and enjoyment and freshness that finds its expression in the house of God. It is not greenness or freshness for its own sake: it has an objective in view; it has an end in view; and it finds its expression in the house of God. So just as when the Lord Jesus was here, there was a point of complacency and attraction in Him; there are these areas of

green coming into expression in the house of God, in our localities, in individuals. Heaven can look down and rest; the eye can rest there. We need to be exercised that we are rooted in things rightly. There is a scripture that speaks of the Father's planting: "Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up", Matt. 15: 13. We want to ensure that the Father's planting has gone on in our lives, and we indeed have been planted, and are bearing fruit for God because that is really the outcome of this. If we are to be fresh and in life, it has in mind vitality in the service of God. The testimony is a great thing, but, as mentioned in the reading it is almost a consequence of our enjoying our links together, and our links with divine Persons. The great matter is what is for God, and we have that in Psalm 92: "They are still vigorous in old age". "Those that are planted in the house of Jehovah" - that is the inside position - "shall flourish in the courts of our God". That is perhaps what is more outward; there is flourishing there. There is evidence of life there, evidence of where the roots are, "planted in the house of Jehovah", stability there. How blessed it is! How we would covet to be planted in this way, "planted in the house of Jehovah" and flourishing "in the courts of our God", "still vigorous in old age". I do not want the young ones to think that they are being overlooked in this matter because, in one sense, we bear fruit at every stage of our growth. There is what can be taken account of in the blade; there is what can be taken account of in the bud; and there are various scriptures that would bear that out. We are to bear fruit to God. It is not that we are to wait until we are old to bear fruit: we bear fruit at every point. The Spirit's service is conducive to that. So identify the work of God in yourself, dear friend, and cry to the Spirit that you might be helped to further that work, that you might be rooted rightly, that you might know the stability there is, not in what you do yourself, but in relating yourself to what God is doing, relating yourself to the purpose of God. This is so at every stage in life. There are those that are in old age and they *are* "full of sap and green", but then elsewhere we have a scripture, in the Authorised Version, that says "The trees of the Lord are full of sap", Ps 104: 16. It does not say what age they are exactly. In this translation it says, "The trees of Jehovah are satisfied". I think that is a great thing. If we are going to be bearing fruit, if we are going to be rendering to God what is His due, we need to be satisfied persons. "Full of sap" suggests that. We have drawn the sap from elsewhere. We are satisfied in ourselves. We are convicted as to things; we are not "tossed and carried about" (Eph 4: 14); we are planted; and we are here for God; and we are seeking to render to Him what He is due. And there

is the means to do that in this type. There will be a great result in a coming day, but we are given grace to do that now, and what an encouragement it is to those of us that are younger and coming up in the faith to see those that are old, that they are still “vigorous”, still “full of sap and green”. We have taken account of that in persons that have gone before us; we are taking account of that in persons that are still with us. We are in the time when we can still take account of that and I would encourage us all, in every age group, to take account of this and to emulate it, “full of sap and green”. How pleasurable that is to God, how attractive it is to His people.

Well, there is a great result being secured in this dispensation. If I go back to Genesis 8 again, I suppose that scripture could be applied in that way, that the Spirit's work has gone on tirelessly in the whole dispensation and He has come back at eventide with this olive-leaf plucked off, which is green, which has been taken from the living root. The dispensation will yield that for the divine pleasure, and the Spirit's work now is towards that end. May we be in line with it for His Name's sake!

Glasgow

6th October 2012

WHAT GOES OVER

Jim T Brown (Edinburgh)

Ecclesiastes 5: 15

2 Corinthians 4: 17

1 Peter 3: 4

You might think the scripture in Ecclesiastes is an unusual one to read at a ministry meeting but we had it this morning in our household reading. It, of course, carries with it a sober reminder that death brings to an end everything that is of nature and material. Paul, in writing to Timothy, says, “For we have brought nothing into the world: it is manifest that neither can we carry anything out”, 1 Tim 6: 7. But it occurred to me, as the day proceeded, that morally and spiritually, the believer does carry something out of this world, and I thought these two scriptures in some sense illustrate that: first, “an eternal weight of glory”, and then what has been formed in a believer's spirit, described in 1 Peter as “the incorruptible ornament of a meek and quiet spirit”. What is incorruptible will go over into eternity. The believer has that assurance as “being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible”, 1 Pet 1: 23. That is what we are.

Our brother has referred to what is substantial as seen in a believer's life. God looks for that, and it comes out early in the Scriptures, even in relation to creation. There is a remarkable passage in Genesis 2 where Moses, in reciting the history of creation, says that God created the heavens and the earth, “and every shrub of the field before it was in the earth”. That is, the potential of every shrub of the field was in the divine mind. Then it goes on to say, “and every herb of the field before it grew”, v 4, 5. God made it before it grew, an extraordinary thing, suggesting that He had in mind, even in relation to the creation, the formation and development of something substantial for His pleasure and for His glory. So we sang in our hymn,

As Thine Thou didst foreknow us
From all eternity;

(Hymn 78).

“Because whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son”, Rom 8: 29. God, in eternity past, was looking forward, in His wonderful foreknowledge of each of us, to our response to the overtures of divine grace, having in mind that, as formed in the divine nature, we might for all eternity be “conformed to

the image of his Son". How very wonderful that is! So also, in relation to the assembly, as the psalm brings that out, "Thine eyes did see my unformed substance, and in thy book all my members" - not 'are written' but - "were written", Ps 139: 16. God was anticipating the wonderful vessel which would emerge substantially through the death of Christ. How blessed to think of all that entering into God's mind as He looked down through the dispensations to a day when there would be a great revenue for His own glory and for His pleasure.

This scripture in Corinthians speaks about an eternal weight of glory: "For our momentary and light affliction works for us in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory". The sorrows and afflictions of the present time are not for nought. God weighs in the divine balances all the griefs and all the trials through which His people pass, and what emerges is something glorious, an eternal weight of glory. What is wrought out in time becomes morally substantial in our souls and is carried forward into eternity. The eternal weight of glory will doubtless enter into the fabric of the holy city. It comes "down out of the heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband", Rev 21: 2. How fine to be assured that what is wrought out substantially in the souls of the saints in time will be expressed eternally in the holy city. Interestingly, the greater house in Solomon's temple was boarded with cypress wood but it was overlaid with fine gold, and Scripture adds that delightful touch, that it was the gold of Parvaim, 2 Chron 3: 5, 6. There was something distinctive and special about the gold, as the product of divine workmanship. Then it says "the weight of the nails was fifty shekels of gold", v 9. You think of each saint contributing to the establishment of God's house in that wonderful way. What delight to heaven to fasten in these nails. We thought last night in the prayer meeting of the "nail in a sure place", Isa 22: 23. Surely that refers to our Lord Jesus Christ, the One who has accomplished everything for His God and Father's pleasure. But the emphasis in 2 Chronicles is on the weight and quality of the nails, blessed tribute to God's own work in the saints. What a comfort it is that our momentary and light affliction produces such an outcome. The second epistle to the Corinthians gives us some insight into what Paul himself endured. In chapter 4, he says "seeing no apparent issue, but our way not entirely shut up; persecuted, but not abandoned; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body", v 8-10. Then in chapter 6, he writes, "in much endurance, in afflictions, in necessities, in straits, in stripes, in

prisons, in riots, in labours, in watchings, in fastings, in pureness, in knowledge, in longsuffering", v 4-6. These things entered into the life of the great apostle; yet he characterises it all as "our momentary and light affliction works for us in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory". In Daniel's time, the king was weighed in the balances and found wanting (chap 5: 27) - sharp contrast to an eternal weight of glory! Everything through which we pass is weighed in the divine scales, and what there will be found is an eternal weight of glory, which will be for God's eternal pleasure. So we have this treasure in earthen vessels. These earthen vessels, of course, will one day perish and yet, within them, there is something very valuable. How fine that within these frail, mortal bodies a formative work is proceeding to produce this treasure, which will be for God's glory eternally.

The epistle to the Colossians gives us some insight into how this treasure is acquired. It says: "bearing fruit in every good work, and growing by the true knowledge of God", chap 1: 10. But then too, "seek the things which are above, where the Christ is", and "have your mind on the things that are above", Col 3: 1, 2. All these things enter into a believer's life and the outcome is the production of treasure. It requires application, and developing our links with divine Persons. It requires studying the holy Scriptures. There is a great need for young people to acquire an intimate knowledge of the Bible because Satan can use the Scriptures for his own ends. He may misquote them, or give them an inflection which is not quite accurate. So Proverbs says in relation to wisdom, "they that seek me early shall find me", chap 8: 17. "Durable wealth" is also hers, v 18. There is "the knowledge that cometh of reflection", v 12. Then there is the promise "that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures", v 21. How good to think of the wisdom of God, filling our spiritual treasures; so that there is this treasure in earthen vessels. Though the earthen vessel will disintegrate in the dissolution of the mortal body, the treasure in it will go through to eternity as forming part of the eternal weight of glory. In Solomon's temple there were precious stones, 1 Chron 29: 2. These reflect, no doubt, the special handiwork of the Lord Jesus in an individual, formed in time, each one radiating a feature of His glory and shining as a precious stone in God's house.

We feel deeply the many sorrows and griefs which beset the people of God, but how very encouraging that whatever the exercises we are caused to pass through, they will eventuate, as part of "an

eternal weight of glory”.

In Peter it says, “but the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible ornament of a meek and quiet spirit”. How easily our spirits are ruffled. Naaman “went away in a rage”, 2 Kings 5: 12. It would be a terrible affront to the Spirit of God if any brother or sister went away in a rage, or became enraged. We have the Spirit of God to help us exercise self-control. Then, too, as having Christ as “the hidden man of the heart”, we would be helped in our spirits. The spirit of a believer is a very precious thing. Of course, it was distinctive and unique in the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus was His own spirit, and yet as in Manhood, He was really Man, see JT vol 48 p183. On the cross He committed His spirit - that spirit so precious - to the Father, Luke 23: 48. He died. He actually went into death. His body was placed in the grave. 'His spirit was Himself, but as Man and without His body, He went to paradise, and so opened up the place for man; the saved thief would be with Him there' (JT vol 17: p13): “To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise”, v 43. These things bring out our adoration in the contemplation of the greatness of our Lord Jesus. We, of course, receive our spirits from God and our spirit returns to God. Ecclesiastes says, “Who knoweth the spirit of the children of men? Doth it go upwards? and the spirit of the beasts, doth it go downwards to the earth?”, chap 3: 21. Our spirits are what we really are. God forms the spirit. Zechariah tells us that that God “formeth the spirit of man within him”, chap 12: 1. God has to do with our spirits. Our spirit is, as it were, our identity. The new birth changes it, but it is still my identity. So Caleb was a man of “another spirit”, Num 14: 24. He will be readily identifiable in a coming day! There he was at the end of his pathway saying, “I am this day eighty-five years old. I am still this day strong”, Josh 14: 10, 11. What an eternal weight of glory Caleb would have acquired when you think of his life and his faithfulness to God. With Joshua, he brought back a true report of the land. A wonderful warrior he clearly was but, too, he was a man acquainted with the land. His strength to continue all these years was no doubt maintained from his experience of the land. Christ typically was for him the Man of the heart. His life was where Christ is. He had his eyes on the things which are above. And what did he ask for? He asked for “this mountain”, v 12. He was given Hebron. Hebron was built before Zoan in Egypt: he was looking beyond this world, Num 13: 22. These are the characteristics and interests of a man of a different spirit, and what is formed spiritually as a result goes through. Then one thinks of Stephen and how he followed in the steps

of his Lord. As his breath was departing and these wicked men were casting stones so cruelly, he says, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge”, Acts 7: 60. That was a man of another spirit, a man who had imbibed the spirit of his Master. Such a spirit will shine as an ornament and as a precious stone in the coming day, as God displays what in His sight “is of great price”. With what happy acceptance the Lord Jesus would receive that precious spirit. There it is in His custody until that great day when the dead in Christ shall rise to meet Him in the air. He could say, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit”. Could we all say that? It is very testing thing. Are our spirits such that they could be received at any moment, with entire satisfaction by the Lord Jesus Himself?

These are things that go through. Naked we came into the world, naked, materially and naturally, men will go out from it. But for the believer, there is something very precious that is carried over into eternity: an eternal weight of glory, born of the afflictions and sorrows through which he passes on the wilderness journey; and then, too, this precious reference to the spirit, “the incorruptible ornament of a meek and quiet spirit”. It will shine eternally. It will shine in the holy city like a precious jewel.

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

Edinburgh

23rd October 2012

DESIRING OUR INHERITANCE

James Brown

Deuteronomy 3: 25

Joshua 8: 33; 13: 33

Ephesians 3: 19

I thought of the desires of Moses. We know that he could not go into the land because of how he had called the people rebels; and he was told regarding the rock to speak to the rock but he smote the rock: so he was not allowed to go in, Num 20: 10-12. Also, he was not the person, having been related to the law, to lead into the land. But I thought of his desires. The land, which is the inheritance, was there before him, and he had this tremendous desire: "Let me go over, I pray thee, and see the good land that is beyond the Jordan". He had in his soul what the Jordan meant, and this land was "beyond the Jordan". You might say the wealth of the inheritance was in Moses's soul, "that goodly mountain, and Lebanon". What a description he gives! It gives you somewhat to see what was in his heart as to the thoughts of God. In our time there is such a wealth before us: the inheritance is there. Speaking for myself, I think it would be a wonderful thing if we could all have this desire that Moses had: "Let me go over, I pray thee". I always think it is a wonderful expression of Moses, the expression of his own heart, and how God would delight to see such an expression in each one of us! We all fluctuate, but, oh to have this desire!

I thought of that scripture in chapter 8 of Joshua. When he came into the land, you find that the ark is the centre, the ark speaking of Christ; but then it is the power of God. In this particular section you find that the Levites have had this great privilege of carrying the ark. What a privilege that was! Levi had three sons and they all had this special privilege in relation to the tabernacle, but carrying the ark was something very special. But here we find that "all Israel" were supportive, "all Israel". There were all the different tribes, but in this section there is no rivalry between any of the tribes. You have all the different categories: the officers and the judges, the priests, the Levites, the stranger, every one is following and surrounding the ark, supporting the ark. What a thing that is: there is no sense of departure in their thoughts at all, no rivalry, no differences of opinion as to the matter with the different tribes, but all concentrated on following and surrounding the ark. We can bring that into our time; and how wonderful for each

one of us to be supporting what Christ is bringing to us in these days. We all have our different thoughts and opinions and so on, and every one is different, but we should all be concentrated on having Christ as the Centre. What a thing that is!

In chapter 13 it says, “to the tribe of Levi Moses gave no inheritance”. Every tribe got their inheritance. There were two and a half tribes whose inheritance was on the other side of the Jordan. They went across, twenty thousand went across. They were quite willing to fight and to secure the land, but they did not want to dwell there; they came back. In any case they all got their inheritance. It is very fine what they had, but there was something very special with Levi: “Jehovah the God of Israel is their inheritance”. How wonderful it is for each one of us that God is our inheritance. We speak much about the inheritance and what there is amongst the saints: what is provided amongst the body of the saints all wonderful, and the gatherings together of the saints, but for each one of us to have God as our inheritance, how marvellous that is! We find later that “the house, the house of Jehovah, was filled with a cloud, and the priests could not stand to do their service because of the cloud; for the glory of Jehovah had filled the house of God”, 2 Chron 5: 13, 14. How wonderful when God comes in and shows Himself. “The priests could not stand to do their service”. Why was that so? Because when God filled the place, there was no need for the official line, the official priests. God filled the place. What Levi got: “Jehovah the God of Israel is their inheritance”. What a marvellous thing for each one of us.

I think in our time we really get it in Ephesians: “and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge; that ye may be filled even to all the fulness of God”. That really is the inheritance, “that ye may be filled even to all the fulness of God”. That is available to each one of us. In the old dispensation there were all the different categories: Levites, priests, ordinary persons, princes and so on, but in our time all these categories apply to each one of us, objectively at least. As to whether or not we are in the gain of it and come up to it is a different matter, but each category is available to each one of us, so that we are all Levites. We can all come into the blessedness of what Levi had: “Jehovah the God of Israel is their inheritance”, and then we have it here: “that ye may be filled even to all the fulness of God”. That is available for each one of us in our time. What more could we ever desire while we are here? It is quite beyond us but nevertheless it is

there and available for each one of us, and that is the inheritance for us, available to each one of us. The Spirit would help us into it.

That is just a simple thought, that we might be able to come into the fulness of the inheritance that God has made available to us even in this our time “that ye may be filled even to all the fulness of God”. May God bless each one of us in these things!

Aberdeen

13th November 2012

OUR GOD

James Alex Gardiner

Ephesians 1: 3-7

This, beloved, is for our enjoyment. Paul was a man who had been in paradise, “a man in Christ”; he said: “I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago”, 2 Cor 12: 2. He had been up as far as the third heaven and into paradise. How blessed that is! He is imprisoned at the moment, but his heart is full. He is enjoying the greatness of the inheritance, speaking of the Father, what God had done Himself - for Himself.- and we, beloved, are the objects of divine activities. Do we fully realise or appreciate the greatness of it, what God has done for the satisfaction of His own heart? And we are the objects of that. So Paul says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies”, not a blessing missing, not a blessing lacking. It is ours. We have the Spirit, of course - later on in the chapter there is “the earnest of our inheritance” (v 14) - to help us to enjoy it. But you think of the immensity of the elevation that belongs to Christianity. It is possible, but Paul, I suppose, may be the only one who has ever been up as far as the third heaven and into paradise. The third heaven has been linked in the type to the holiest of all, the ark in its place, the cherubim covering it, the Father's love in all its fulness expressed in Christ in glory where He is, and we, beloved, are the persons who have been taken into favour in that Person and in that realm. How great that is! How immense it is!

It goes on to say, “according as he has chosen us in him before the world's foundation”. Think of that, beloved! You, personally, and I, personally, were chosen by God before the world's foundation. Do you really believe that? Whether you do or not, that is the truth, “that we should be holy and blameless before him in love”. How great that is! What liberty that affords! This is sonship in its greatness, “holy and blameless”. We have often noted that “holy” is completely according to God in His nature; and “blameless” is like Him and all His doings; and that is what we are going to be. At the present time in His ways and in His workings He is bringing this about, but nevertheless it is true of us, and this is what has happened here, “having marked us out beforehand for adoption” - that is sonship - “through Jesus Christ to himself”. Think of God deliberating in counsel in eternity past as to what He was going to do, and who He was going to choose. We are part of the holy

myriads, beloved, who will fill His house, each one known personally and individually by the Father, and there will never be any diminution in it. The favour will remain eternally. It does not wane; it is not up and down; it remains constant. We may go up and down in our souls, and so forth, and we may think our God is not exactly pleased about this, not too happy about me, that I am out of favour. You are never out of favour, never! Get that into our souls, beloved! It is unchangeable.

“According to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace”: how wonderful that is! “The good pleasure of his will”: He delights to do it. He has no reserves about it; He is wholly and absolutely committed to it. Think of “the good pleasure of his will”, and we are to be “to the praise of the glory of his grace”. Think of Luke 15, think of the best robe, the sandals and the ring, the fatted calf, the greatness of what reconciliation is as having been effected. And that is you as an individual, and that is me as an individual. Think of the greatness of what this is for God! Reconciliation is for the heart of God. That has been wrought out by Christ. In chapter 2 he goes on to show how it has been worked out, how peace has been made, how both Jew and Gentile had been removed, and the man who brought in this distance is gone; he is left in the grave of Christ. God has seen to it all, beloved. We need to rejoice. I know myself how it does not strike me as it ought to; it does not make me pour out like this: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”. That is Paul’s heart, Paul’s affections.

“According to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has taken us into favour in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of offences”. Think of what the favour of God is, beloved! You are in the favour of God. Do you realise that? He has “taken us into favour”. Think of where He took you from into favour and you can see, and you can measure in some sense, “the riches of his grace”. He took Paul out of Judaism; and He took me out of somewhere else; and He took you out of somewhere else; and over all He has taken us out of the world. Think of the glory of divine working, the Spirit effecting new birth in our soul. We did not know that: that is divine sovereignty, the Father drawing us to Christ, we conscious and knowing how guilty sinners we were, come to Christ for forgiveness, and we are forgiven. We are under the shelter of His blood. Consciences are made clear, and we are so pleased and delighted that we are saved. Then He begins

working in His ways, and the truth of the gospel is worked out in it. All that relates to the ways of God, and what He has in mind is to make us consciously enjoy the blessedness of this wonderful line of divine thought in purpose and counsel that He has had in mind before the world was.

Well, may our hearts rise to its greatness, beloved! Maybe somebody will be able to get up to the third heaven, into paradise, but we need to see the greatness of what is available to us and not limit ourselves or limit our outlook or God's outlook, but be concerned that we grow increasingly into the wealth of it so that, consequently, beloved, there will be much more substance in us all, much more conscious blessedness of our links with the Father and with the Son and with the Spirit. May we be helped in this and enjoy it more for His Name's sake!

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