

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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CALLED TO LEVITICAL SERVICE

**Numbers 3: 5-13, 23-26, 29-32, 35-37;
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AM We were speaking yesterday as to the passage in Corinthians, “to us there is one God, the Father, of whom all things, and we for him”, 1 Cor 8: 6. Generally in our conversations yesterday, we were occupied with what God has done, that we should be for Him. We thought about the way in which all of the children of Israel were brought out and they were redeemed. Now the Scripture makes distinctions amongst God's people and we have read today about the Levites; and I think the first thing to say is that every believer is a Levite. Every believer is a priest and every believer is a Levite, just as every one is counted as among the children of Israel. We all come in on the basis of redemption as we were saying yesterday. Our brother in his address yesterday referred to the way in which we are set together in local companies. And that comes in immediately before this section in the book of Numbers. The children of Israel encamped every man by his standard and by his father's house. It is a picture, a wonderful picture, of the way in which God's people were seen in the divine eye; the way in which they were arranged. It is no wonder that even a man like Balaam could say, “how goodly are thy tents”, Num 24: 5. He could take account of it. There was order there that had been established of God. If God was to receive His due from His people, it was that there was that which was to function in the wilderness. Now, it says of the Thessalonians that, when they were converted, “ye turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to await his Son from the heavens”, 1 Thess 1: 9, 10. Paul does not say 'ye have turned to God from idols to rejoice in your salvation'. He says, “ye turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to await his Son from the heavens ... Jesus, our deliverer from the coming wrath”. If we have been taken up at all we have been taken up to serve God.

Now I thought for this reading that we may take these passages referring to serving God in a testimonial setting. There is a sphere of testimony here. Numbers is the book of the wilderness. I have read that the original name for the book of Numbers was, 'In the Wilderness' (see JT vol 9 p107). It is a book that traces God's ways through the wilderness. So, right here at the beginning of the book, He is arranging the children of Israel, how they were to dwell and how they were to serve. He had already taken up the family of Aaron to be priests. That

was done before He selected the family of Levi. The family of Levi was taken up on a moral basis. They showed themselves faithful in a time of crisis and God took them up from that time. But He had already taken up the priestly family. And He said that those who were going to serve in the wilderness first belong to the priests. They were given to the priests. Whatever we do, however we serve God in our responsible life, it is as under the control of our Aaron, Christ. He directs the operations. And then Jehovah goes on to say that 'I have a special claim upon these; this is a family that I am taking in place of the firstborn ones of Israel'. Remember how at the time of the passover, it was all the firstborn that would have been slain, had it not been for the passover lamb. And God said, 'on account of that lamb the firstborn are mine', Exod 13: 2. Here He says, 'I am going to take the family of Levi, as the family of the firstborn ones'. It is a wonderful thing that we have such a part. It is one of the things we have come to, "the assembly of the firstborn", Heb 12: 23.

But then they had their service, and I would not be able to go into the detail of all the distinctions here, but I would just say that, although the family of Levi were divided into these three sub-families, we should not have such segregation. We see this, I think, in the service of others in the Scriptures. Take the apostle Paul; he says, "I have not shrunk from announcing to you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20: 27): there is Paul the Kohathite. Just before that, he was in Troas, and there was a young man who fell asleep and fell out the window. Paul descending fell upon him: that was Paul the Merarite. Then you see him standing for the rights of God. You see divine principles set out in 1 Corinthians, for example: that is Paul the Gershonite. Every one of us, I believe, has to do with holy things. We all have to do with the principles of the house of God. And we all have to do with the care of one another.

Now we have the Lord Jesus in John 17 speaking about those whom the Father had given him. We have there the great antitype of Aaron. He says, "the men whom thou gavest me", and he commits them to the Father. John 17 was in view of the testimony continuing in the absence of the Lord Jesus. It was in view of the testimony continuing and He commits them to the Father; He says, "Sanctify them by the truth". They are going through a world which is marked by what is not the truth, and He says, "Sanctify them by the truth; thy word is truth". That is, they are distinct, God's people, and He said, "I do not demand for these only, but also for those who believe on me through

their word”.

JRB Would you say that in what we were thinking of as God for us, in a certain sense, it is in view of our being for Him? In Romans you have “that the goodness of God leads thee to repentance” (Rom 2: 4), and then we have the passage “For the love of the Christ constrains us”, 2 Cor 5: 14. It is God moving from His side to secure us on that basis.

AM Yes, that is what I thought. Everything that we spoke of was from God's side, was it not? Redemption, reconciliation - that is all from God's side. We could not have effected it. The testimony has been established. When the Lord Jesus came, He was the Vessel of testimony. He is now on high and the testimony remains and now He is looking for faithful men. Is that not really what, in this context, the Levite is to be? Faithful. He has a charge. His links are with Aaron and his sons. He is not doing things as he thinks they should be done, but he is getting direction from above, and he has a charge to fulfil. Is that right?

JRB Yes.

NJH This comes in before the tabernacle moves.

AM Yes, it has to, but say some more.

NJH We are brought into a divinely ordered system before the journey and that remains. Korah's band sought to change it and they died, not as other men died but really under the judgment of God. We have to realise that there was a divine order of things that we are brought into that abides.

AM At the end of Exodus the glory came and filled the tabernacle. The tabernacle was there complete in the last chapter of Exodus, a wonderfully triumphant chapter. If any young person thinks that Exodus is a difficult book, read the last chapter, because it all comes together there. Everything that is specified through the book of Exodus comes together in the last chapter, and Moses puts it all in place. The whole system is erected and the glory fills it. The glory filled the tabernacle and then Jehovah spoke out of it. That is, Leviticus 1 follows straight on. Well, if the glory of God has filled it, is He going to allow man to change it?

NJH Numbers begins with God speaking in it.

AM Yes, that is right. Go on.

NJH I was just thinking of persons. It was a wonderful thing that was set up at the end of Exodus, but God is wanting the persons to fill that out in activity of love. Is that right?

AM Yes, absolutely. So He sets all this up and everyone has his function so that the tabernacle would be able to move, so that the testimony could move forward. How could the testimony have moved if it was not for the service of these men?

APD As to faithfulness, that would be seen in Exodus 32, would it not, that they were faithful in a critical time? Does that help to show us that every one of us can have part in this? It is not a matter of gift but it is a matter of faithfulness, do you think?

AM Yes. And so in that section there are those who were faithful, and they stood for God, stood for His rights. That is what Moses called for, was it not? "He that is for Jehovah, let him come to me", v 26. It was "we for him", 1 Cor 8: 6. He that was for Jehovah came to Moses, and then immediately following on that Moses established the position publicly. He took the tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp, and everyone that sought Jehovah went out to the tent of meeting, chap 33: 7. Now that is our public position, is it not?

RG Would you help us why it is Gershon first here in Numbers?

AM All I thought of Gershon is as one who maintains principles. The Gershonites had charge of the coverings and the tent, and we can see divine principles coming out there, can we not? What was heavenly in the curtains of blue with the purple and scarlet, and then the principle of separation from evil in the goats' hair, and so on, all that comes out. I believe that these things were worked out in the homes of the Israelites. The material was spun and then brought, Exod 35: 25, 26. And that is a very precious thing. The households of the saints, where divine things are maintained and the truth is loved, are so precious to God.

RG I just thought on this just now, but it says in Acts that "they persevered in the teaching and fellowship", chap 2: 42. Would you link the teaching with the principles?

AM Yes, I think that is right. You think of all the teaching that has come out from the apostle Paul, and we see the principles have been laid down, have they not? It is not a system of rules exactly as men have rules, but it is what is suitable to God. That is what divine

principles are, and they are given to us to maintain.

RG As to what you said about the households, I remember my father teaching us that Christianity begins at home.

AM Yes, so it does.

RFW We were reminded recently of Aquila and Priscilla and the various ways they are spoken of, and the exercises they took up in various connections, so that is the inward idea of the households, forming the basis for this kind of service.

AM I think that is good, and you think of what went on in their household. First, they had the apostle Paul there (chap 18: 3), did they not? You think of all the teaching that would have been gone over in that household. But then there was another brother, Apollos, and he did not have the same extensive understanding of the truth as Paul had. But they "took him to them and unfolded to him the way of God more exactly", v 26. You think of the way in which the truth was treasured in that house. I think, beloved, it is very pleasing to divine Persons to see, in a dark world in which we are, that every morning there are souls who get up in the morning and they read the Scriptures, and they pray. What that must mean to the Lord in the midst of a scene where He has been rejected!

HWJ It is striking that God knows the names of these persons in each of these tribes, is it not? He knows all our names, and He is looking for service from every one, is that right?

AM Yes, that is right. You see that coming out in the Lord's ministry, and you see it in Paul's ministry as well. We were reading at home the other day of the man who was carried on his couch and he was let down through the roof. The Lord says, "take up thy couch" (Mark 2: 11); 'take it up, do not just be carried along'. The Lord did not use all those words, but that is the principle, is it not? Do not just be carried along, but take up your couch and walk. "Go to thine house", He says. There is a sphere of responsibility there. But it is a blessed thing. We speak about responsibility sometimes as if it were an irksome thing but it is a real joy to serve the Master that we have.

DFH I was thinking of Paul's charge to Timothy as bearing on us in the last days. The thought of charge comes into this section, does it not? Would that bear on taking up matters as you have suggested?

AM Yes, I think so. So he says, “the things thou hast heard of me ... these entrust to faithful men, such as shall be competent to instruct others also”, 2 Tim 2: 2. Think of the apostle Paul. He was looking down three generations: Timothy was his child, faithful men, others also. He was saying, just carry the charge, carry it on. He knew that he would not be here for much longer, but he was saying to carry it on as there is a charge that is laid upon you.

JAQ It says here that they are wholly given to Him out of the children of Israel. I suppose that refers to all of them, but I wondered too if there was a suggestion of what Paul says in Timothy, about being “wholly in them”, 1 Tim 4: 15. Is not secularism a very dangerous thing at the present time - we might be one thing in the meeting amongst the brethren, or to be one thing at home, but another thing publicly in the work situation, or wherever? It is a matter of reality, is it not, to be consistent and wholly for God at the present time?

AM Yes, I think so. And I think that maybe the Lord is just allowing things in the world to deteriorate; it almost looks like they are heading for a collapse sometimes in the material world, and maybe the Lord is allowing that sort of thing to happen so that the saints should learn to be wholly for Him, to trust in Him, and to be committed to Him. I think what the enemy has done in what is secular, and what is material, has undermined the faith of saints far more than any persecution.

NJH Anything that we pass through assembly-wise is in view of strengthening priesthood. Priesthood seems to be the predominant and greatest matter in this chapter, is it not? The Levites are given to the priests; it is particularly in God's mind that things that are passed through are not to weaken priesthood but to strengthen it.

AM Yes. We have the reference later to the prince of the princes of the Levites. Now he had the oversight of all these matters. He was, of course, a priest, but it was in view of all that was needed for the priestly service to continue being maintained.

DTH I was going to ask whether the effectiveness of each of these families having had a lamb in their household is seen here? I am thinking in Exodus 12 where it says, “let them take themselves each a lamb, for a father's house”, v 3. Every one of them had experienced this; and the effectiveness of the lamb being there it was light in their dwellings.

AM Yes, that is good. Go on.

DTH I am just thinking how much of the influence of what the passover lamb speaks of is known amongst us in that way?

AM That is good, because that is where the matter of the firstborn is of such importance, is it not? The firstborn was preserved because of the lamb in the house. So you take account of the character of the lamb. We were speaking of it yesterday, "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world", John 1: 29. And these people were taken up, the firstborn ones, because of that lamb.

SWD Do you think that we see something of this in the history of the recovery of the truth? The first thing that really alerted saints was 'Separation from Evil, God's Principle of Unity', JND Collected Writings vol 1 p353. That is Gershon, do you think? And then there was teaching as to the sufferings of Christ - Kohath. And I was wondering where Merari has come in since? I suppose that involves you and me.

AM Well, that is very good. It is very instructive. You think of what was taken up in those days. The saints came apart from all that was taking the name of Christ that was unsuited to Him. What holy things they were dealing with. We have the charge of these holy things.

APD Would you say some more about the curtains being made in the house?

AM It seems that there is something wrought out there, does it not? The first ones spoken of were suited to the presence of God: the blue and the purple and the scarlet and twined byssus and cherubim of artistic work. It was all wrought out in exercise, do you think, in the house? You get the impression that everyone would be exercised that there would be what was suited for the presence of God. And then the curtains of goats' hair come in. The house would be maintained in separation. You get the rams' skins dyed red. They were dyed red before they were brought to the tabernacle. That was done in the house, was it not? They speak of the distinctiveness of the devotion of Christ, His strength of devotion in love. And the badger skins have the ability to repel evil. What do you say?

APD Well I think that is very helpful. It has been said that the household is the bulwark of the local assembly, and therefore what flows out of the house would affect the saints, would it not?

AM Yes, it would, and it all comes together in a glorious structure that God could commit Himself to.

PDS It is interesting that what is artistic is there. I have often wondered why that is. It is not just functional.

AM No, I have sometimes wondered about that as well - artistic work. I do not think it means that men's mind has any scope in the things of God. That certainly would not be so. You are an artist, but do you not have to produce things to a specification sometimes? Is that not the case here, that the cherubim stand for the rights of God, do they not? That would be impressed upon God's people and this would be woven into the fabric, do you think? The rights of God are maintained. But I would be interested to know what others have to say.

DBB It is all according to the divine pattern.

AM It is. It is according to the pattern.

NJH It would be attractive to God. Man tries to make things artistic now, to make it attractive to men, but this is attractive to God.

AM Yes, it is His standard, according to His pattern. Now we had a word recently in England on beautifying the house of God. What an expression that is. You think of God, that He appreciates what is beautiful in His sight.

JAQ He knew that the people had the scarlet and the blue and all those wonderful things. He knew they had them, and it is very interesting that God would name the colours, and so on, that were to go into the tabernacle system, as though He was looking for that beauty.

AM I suppose a lot of that had been worked out in the sufferings in Egypt. And then they came to appreciate what God could do in redemption, bringing them out from a land of bondage. How that would enhance in their thoughts the greatness of God and their knowledge of Him. And our knowledge of Him should be greatly increased, dear brethren. We have all, collectively and individually, been through so much, our knowledge of God should be tremendous; it really should. We should know what is suited to Him.

DFH There is the thought of adorning the doctrine, is there not? It is in Titus: "that they may adorn the teaching", chap 2: 10.

AM Yes, that is good. I think these references help because there is always a tendency for me to add something of myself, but I have no adornment. That would take away from it. But to adorn the doctrine is a wonderful thing. It is really setting it out, is it not? It is displaying in an attractive way what is suited to God.

DTH You would have thought that with the curtains and all of the weaving, things like that being involved, there might have been what was feminine introduced, but what is said as to the Levites all refers to males.

AM Well, the women had their part in the spinning, did they not? Every wise-hearted woman spun and so on. But this is the care of it, is it not? This is the maintenance of it. They had come out of Egypt. There they were at Sinai and the tabernacle was set up, but they were not going to remain in Sinai. It was going to move. It had to move forward. And how was it going to move? If it was going to move at all, it had to be because there were those that were prepared to bear it. So elsewhere, we get the qualifications of the Levites, do we not? If we are going to take up the holy things it had to be those who were thirty years old and upwards, and less than fifty, Num 4: 3. They were the ones that handled these holy things. It is suggestive of maturity and experience.

NJH Mr Raven has that outstanding address, and I would point all of our brethren to read it again, showing that the maintenance of the truth is the responsibility of **all**. It is not just the responsibility of persons that may minister or are older or lead, but it is the responsibility of **every** person to maintain the truth, vol 2 p267. Is that important?

AM Yes, indeed and I would have to say that, for some of us, the realisation of that came rather late and we feel it now. For example, in England, we no longer have many of those who were committed to the Lord sixty years ago. You have more in Scotland. Many of us realise that we should have been following their example. We should have been carrying something.

Well, here, after the Gershonites, were the Kohathites, and they had to do with the most holy things. Their charge was the ark and all the holy furnishings. As is always the case the ark comes first. God starts with Christ. He comes first. The charge was the ark and the table and the candlestick. The table of shewbread suggests the setting forth of the saints in order before God as viewed by Him, and the candlestick, divine light shining. These things had to be carried. Later we read

when they are carried they are all covered, chap 4. No one should see them. The veil is put over the ark and the badger skins and then the cloth of blue. They are carried through the wilderness. The cloth of blue was seen.

GRW What we have to do with as believers is not common, is it? It is not for unholy eyes, you might say. We need to be sanctified by the truth and perhaps that is where John comes in.

AM I am glad you have brought that in because that is absolutely essential, is it not? Divine things are holy. The temple of God is holy. We have experience of the temple in an occasion like this and it is holy. It is not for our natural minds, it is not for our natural instincts to work, but it is what is for God. "Holiness becometh thy house, O Jehovah, for ever", Ps 93: 5. And even when going through the wilderness, the ark was not seen. But what was seen was the cloth of blue that covered it. You think of that cloth of blue. The footsteps of Jesus going through this scene. No wonder, John says, "Behold the Lamb of God", John 1: 36. There was the cloth of blue, a Man of another order, a heavenly Man. And all the furnishings were covered with the cloth of blue. The others had the badger skins on the outside but with Christ the heavenly character shone through. It could not be hid. He was the Man who the legal man could not understand.

DBB So we need to be maintained in holiness as we speak to divine Persons.

AM I think that is very important. To remember who it is we are speaking to and who we are.

APD According to Numbers 8 the lamps throw their light over against the candlestick, v 1. It brings the candlestick forward in its beauty. Would that be according to the way we would think of how ministry should be? The light is really thrown against the candlestick, is it not?

AM Yes, that is right. I love that passage in Numbers 8 because it is almost breathtaking. "And Aaron did so; he lighted the lamps thereof over against the candlestick, as Jehovah had commanded Moses. And this was the work of the candlestick: it was of beaten gold; from its base to its flowers was it beaten work", v 3, 4. He saw it there in its own setting and the light shining, and he said, "this was the work of the candlestick".

APD There is beauty there. We spoke about what was artistic.

There is a beauty there. I suppose ministry, true ministry, would draw attention to the beauty of Christ.

AM Yes, I think that is right. I think the lamps themselves relate more to the saints, do they not? So that the candlestick was seen in all its beauty.

DFH Do you think Peter's reference, "sanctify the Lord the Christ in your hearts, and be always prepared to give an answer to every one that asks you" (1 Pet 3: 15) is the Kohathite? It is cherishing. There is something very precious, cherishing the Lord as we walk in this scene?

AM "Sanctify the Lord the Christ". What titles! "The Lord": there He is in all His greatness; the One to whom we bow and own allegiance. But "the Christ": the anointed One who is the Centre of an anointed system. Sanctify Him in our hearts. That really confirms what was said as to the way in which we speak of divine Persons, and speak to them. We sanctify the Lord the Christ in our hearts.

NJH Is it how we view the saints, too, as we had last night? I think it is a sanctified area and you view the saints as there. Do you not think so? I was thinking that in Ezra the first thing they did was set up the altar on its base, chap 3: 3. So it shows that we have got to get divine things rightly in perspective in view of recovery?

AM That is right. You might have said, 'Why did Ezra set the altar up first?'. Why did he not get Nehemiah to repair the walls first? But Mr Darby has a wonderful comment on that. He says that, with the altar set up on its base, they were safer than they had ever been with their kings and walls, Synopsis vol 2 p4. God was there. The protection of God was there. He also was there. They were thinking for God: "we for Him".

JRB You have referred to Nehemiah. I was just thinking of what he brings forward in chapter 7, "And it came to pass when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, that the doorkeepers and the singers and the Levites were appointed. And I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananniah the ruler of the citadel, charge over Jerusalem; for he was a faithful man and feared God above many", v 1, 2. I think faithfulness springs out of the fear of God, which really is having respect for what is pleasing to God, is it not? He feared God above many.

AM Yes, that is good. So he was one who was trustworthy. He was able to be entrusted with the charge.

JRB You have mentioned faithfulness a few times this morning, and it is just a challenge to me as things come up in our localities; am I prepared to be faithful and stand by what is for God, and His principles?

AM We rejoice in everything that has come down to us, do we not? The truth which has been unfolded over the years, it is wonderful and we rejoice in it, but we are stewards of it. And it is sought in stewards that a man be found faithful, 1 Cor 4: 2. That is what is required of a steward. And our generations have been given stewardship of all that has come down, and it is required of a steward that he be found faithful. I find that such a test.

JB At the end of Joshua, after he had gone over their history, he says, "And now fear Jehovah and serve him in perfectness and in truth", Josh 24: 14. The footnote there says, 'sincerely'. It is much like what our brother is saying. It is not a casual matter, is it?

AM No, and then Joshua is prepared to set an example, is he not? He says, "choose you this day whom ye will serve ... but as for me and my house" - there is the house again - "we will serve Jehovah", v 15. And then it says that they were maintained, does it not? All the elders who were alive in the time of Joshua, all through their lives, things were maintained. It is a very encouraging thing.

DTH There must have been unity amongst these families and the building of each thing, or each operation. There were many men involved here, and they are all thinking the same thing, and they are all doing the same thing. Why is that?

AM The tabernacle was the centre of their lives, was it not? The ark was there and that is what would ensure that we are doing one thing, thinking the same thing. In each section relating to the families it says that they were encamping behind or beside the tabernacle. That is where their home was. That is where they lived. Really, where is our life? When I get up in the morning, am I looking forward to going out to work and getting something done there, or am I looking forward to coming back in the evening, just meeting with a few other brothers and sisters? Which is the highlight of my life? They encamped by the tabernacle.

GRW They were in different orientations too. They have got the west and the south and the north. Could you say something about that?

AM Well, the west is where the sun goes down. It is the day coming

to an end, the west side. We are living in that day. The day is drawing to an end. Who is living by the west? Those who maintain divine principles. The south - the enjoyment of divine favour, blessings from Jehovah. Those who bear the holy things are living in the light of divine blessing and favour. Those in the north, who feel the cold of the north, feel the pressures and tests that come, the Merarites, they are the ones who care for the saints. Beloved, we have these experiences, do we not? We know what it is to see decline. We know what it is to feel the cold wind coming. And the brethren in these days are feeling it tremendously. But there are things to be done. There is the care for the saints. But through it all we know the blessing of the south side. We know what it is to enjoy the divine favour and the goodness of God that, through these circumstances of life, leads us to appreciate something of Himself, that we would never otherwise have known, and we rejoice in it. Now, that is my impression.

GRW None of the families is to the east? I was only remembering that in Ezekiel the prince comes in by the gate from the east, does He not? Christ Himself.

AM Yes, and that is the approach to God.

RFW You have that in verse 38, have you not? You have in verse 38 those that encamped eastward, Moses and Aaron, towards the sun rising. I was just thinking about the sun rising. That is the great thing, is it not?

AM Yes indeed it is.

NJH Their place did not change even when they had to turn towards the Red Sea.

AM No, that is interesting.

NJH It is quite remarkable that when the generation that refused the heavenly land and the first generation was told that they could not go into the land because they refused it, the places around the tabernacle were not changed.

AM No, the tabernacle itself still faced to the east: the opening, the entrance still faced to the east. God always had in mind the sun rising, and the way that they were going. That was always in God's mind. He did not point them back to Egypt. When they came of Egypt through the Red Sea it says, "the waters returned", Exod 14: 28. There is no going

back. Time and time again they said, 'Well, let us go back to Egypt'. There is no going back. The waters have returned.

DBB The tabernacle was at the centre. All were in relation to that.

AM Yes, they were. So the journey took place and we know that three tribes set forward and then some of the Levites and then three more tribes, and then there were the Kohathites in the middle and then three more and so on. They went through and they came to the next encampment where they were going to stop and they put up the tabernacle. Where am I going to put my tent? Well, where is the tabernacle? I will find my place there. Perhaps we should just touch on John 17 because it is a very elevated view. The Levites were available to serve, and it was all under the direction of Aaron: it was all under the priestly guidance. They were given to Aaron and to his sons. And the Lord Jesus here speaks to the Father, and He says, "I am no longer in the world". The testimony was going to remain here, but He says, "I am no longer in the world, and these are in the world." That is where they were. He says, "the men thou gavest me". There were those who were here for God. And, although initially this may refer to the apostles, what they set on, as we have been saying, has been passed on, entrusted to faithful men: "those who believe on me through their word."

GRW Is it interesting that he says "men". It is not disciples, or apostles, or followers or anything else, it is men. There is, as you said, maturity and the ability to carry things?

AM Exactly. Yes, that is right. They are not children. At the beginning of John's gospel we get children of God, and that is a precious thing in itself as receiving the Lord Jesus. "But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to be children of God", John 1: 12. They are brought into the divine family, but here it is men. God made man upright. That is the boards of the tabernacle, is it not? They were made upright. They were made standing up it says, Exod 26: 15.

NJH They were really formed after Christ. Another order of manhood, is it not?

AM It is, yes. Well, those boards were the same material, were they not, acacia wood covered with gold? Well, He says, "They were thine, and thou gavest them me". We belong to God. We were God's in purpose before time was, chosen before the world's foundation. "They were thine, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word".

Those curtains had been maintained. They had been carried through the wilderness. "They have kept thy word".

RG It says in verse 8, "I have given them, and they have received them, and have known truly", but I was thinking of this reference: "that I came out from thee". Is that a beautiful reference to the Lord at the manifestation publicly at the Jordan?

AM Yes, well that is good.

RG That is where He came out from the presence of the Father.

AM He was sent from the Jordan, was He not? The Lord in John's gospel constantly refers to himself as being sent, does He not? And that is where He was sent from; the Father's presence at the Jordan. Say some more about it.

RG I was thinking that is what is really in mind because it comes in earlier in John's gospel, that He came out from God, but it also says, "I came out from the Father and have come into the world; again, I leave the world and go to the Father", John 16: 28.

AM Well, He says, "the words which thou hast given me I have given them, and they have received them". It shows that there was something in these men that had a desire to receive what the Lord had imparted. They received His words.

JB They would be true Philadelphians would they?

AM Yes, that is right. That is a good reference. "Thou ... hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name", Rev 3: 8.

JB So in our day it is critical to remember that it is "a little power", is it not?

AM Yes. The Philadelphian may only be conscious of the little power. The Lord says to him, 'You overcome and I will make you a pillar'. Think of the strength of one who exercises the little power that he has in keeping the Lord's name. He says, "I will write upon him ... my new name", Rev 3: 12.

DBB What it must have meant to the Lord Himself, just as before He was going into death, to have these disciples and what they had imbibed there.

AM Yes, as to His earthly people, there was nothing but sorrow. He

could say, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought", Isa 49: 4. They will come in, in a coming day. But there were those who were His own and He says, "the words which thou hast given me I have given them, and they have received them". Not only the words but "known truly that I came out from thee". It was the Person who was treasured by them.

DBB And the early Acts shows that coming out, does it not?

AM It does, yes.

NJH The Lord is like the Ark in the midst of the sanctuary here. You think of what was set up typically in Exodus and Leviticus and Numbers. You have the reality here, do you not? The Ark is in the midst of the sanctuary and the saints are with Him in it. These men are with Him in it.

AM Yes, that is right. You read this chapter and the Lord Jesus is about to undertake the tremendous work of redemption. He is speaking in holy communion with the Father. What is occupying His mind? It is the saints, the saints on earth. How precious they are to Him.

DFH Could you say something about the Father's word being 'truth'. We know that the Lord Jesus is the truth and the Spirit is the truth, but what would you say about the Father's word?

AM Do you think this comes in in the context that the saints are being left here in the world? They are not taken out of the world. The world is in the hands of the wicked one. He is the father of lies. Everything around is based upon what is not truth. But there is such a thing as the truth, and that is absolute and can be relied upon. And it says "thy word is truth". "Sanctify them by the truth: thy word is truth." There are different aspects of sanctification, are there not? We are sanctified by the blood of Jesus. "Wherefore also Jesus, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered without the gate", Heb 13: 12. We are sanctified by the blood, but here do you think it is a case of receiving something as having been taken up by the Lord? Receiving the truth, that which belongs to another realm, and it sets us apart. Elsewhere we get sanctification of the Spirit, which means that what we receive is worked out in us and there is what is substantially formed, but what do you say?

DFH I was affected recently by Mr Raven referring to this, vol 3 p192.

It greatly enlarged my own thought as to the truth, because every divine Person is connected with it. And here there are the Father's communications.

AM Yes, and the Lord starts by speaking of the only true God, does He not? "And this is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent", v 3. So the truth has to do with God Himself and His order of things.

JAO What does it mean, "I sanctify myself for them"?

AM Well, the Lord was setting Himself apart in a way that no other could. He was soon to be going into death. He says to Peter, "Where I go thou canst not follow me now", John 13: 36. Sanctification is being set apart for holy things and the Lord says "I sanctify myself for them". What a way He was going. He was going into death and then He was going on high. He was set apart.

RFW Would it involve the Lord's present position then, and the Holy Spirit being here, consequent on that?

AM Yes, that is right. So the Lord is now in glory. Men cannot see Him. We see Him by faith and by the Spirit. We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour. He was set apart there for us, is He not? "I sanctify myself for them". Think of His present service going on. Think of what engages him: always living to intercede for them. It is a wonderful thing to think of that service going on day after day after day. He is there for us.

RFW I wonder if that would sustain us, especially in taking up the exercises involved with separation and so on. The Lord has sanctified Himself. He has set Himself apart that we might be sanctified by truth.

AM Indeed, yes, and I think as to that particular exercise that you refer to, the lesson in Hebrews would weigh with us, would it not? "Wherefore also Jesus, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered without the gate: therefore let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach: for we have not here an abiding city", chap 13: 12, 13.

NJH Would it be right to say that the Lord effects more by being separated from His own now in this dispensation than if He had remained with them?

AM Oh, absolutely! "It is profitable for you that I go away", He says,

“if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you”, John 16: 7. You think what was achieved when the Lord Jesus was here, but it was principally for Israel. A Gentile woman who had extraordinary faith cried to Him and He said, “I have not been sent save to the lost sheep of Israel's house”, Matt 15: 21-28. He was straitened: the Lord's service here was necessarily limited because He was here in physical conditions. But now, as ascended on high, think of the greatness of all that is available from the One above because He has sanctified Himself for us.

NJH Therefore, Himself going there and the Spirit coming makes us heavenly. We could not be heavenly without it.

AM No, that is right. So the Lord here ministered to an earthly people. But the Lord in heaven has a heavenly race. It is a thing that I think we need to keep reminding ourselves about: we are a heavenly people. Our life is connected with a Man in another world. We do not belong in this world. We are passing through it. It is a wilderness. The death of Christ has made it a wilderness to us and we are journeying through it but we belong to another world - a world of which He is the Centre.

DTH Is that the substantiality of the side of the fellowship of God's Son? That is a sphere that is entirely separate and has Christ as its centre.

AM Yes, that is interesting. So, every believer has been called to it, but you could not say that every believer enjoys the fellowship of God's Son. It is something that is open for us to enjoy.

DTH I would like you to say some more about the thought of sanctification in relation to separation that was mentioned.

AM Well, that verse in Hebrews is what comes to mind. Hebrews 13, “Wherefore also Jesus, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered without the gate: therefore let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach: for we have not here an abiding city, but we seek the coming one”. Now the whole profession is going on, but we seek to go forth to Him, without the camp. He is the Object! It seems to me that the whole question of separation and things like that revolve around one point what is the object? Who is the object? Christ is the Object. He has suffered without the gate. We go forth to him without the camp bearing his reproach. He is the One we go to.

DTH Some of us know what it is to have left the system of things where even today they will show you how to do separation, but the question of sanctification does not enter into it. You cannot have it.

AM No, and unless the Lord is before you, separation becomes isolation and that is not right. If the Lord is before you, then you find there is a sanctified company and you have your part and enjoyment in such a company.

APD We are marked out. It says, “because they are not of the world as I am not of the world” (v 14), an extraordinary statement, is it not? You think of the Lord Jesus being absolutely separated from the whole system of things here, but then that is to mark us, is it not?

AM Yes indeed, and the test is because we are in mixed conditions, is it not? “They are not of the world”: well, the Lord can regard us in the light of divine work, can He not? And that is entirely of God. Are we true to the work of God within us?

APD What He has begun in us.

AM Yes.

Vancouver

4th August 2012

Key to Initials -

J R Bellamy, Vancouver; D B Bodman, Birmingham;
J Buchan, Calgary; AP Devenish, Edmonton; S W Drever, Calgary;
R Gray, Calgary; N J Henry, Glasgow; D T Howie, Edmonton;
D F Hugill, Vancouver; H W Jensen, Los Angeles;
A Martin, Buckhurst Hill; J A Oberg, Villa Grove;
P D Soukoreff, Vancouver; G R Wellington, Melbourne;
R F White, Londonderry

GIFTS

John C Gray

Ephesians 2: 8

Romans 5: 15-17

Luke 11: 13

Galatians 4: 4-7

Everybody likes to receive gifts. Times come round, birthdays and the like, and children, especially, look for something as well as a card. Young people are always alert to see how many times in the year they can establish a proposal to get a gift. You do not get many gifts in the world; mostly it is demands. We live in a time when God is *not* demanding. We live in a time when God is giving. There is much in the economy, in the administration of men, that demands that we pay this and we pay that. There is no sense in that of getting a gift. You rarely get a gift from the government. If you pay too much you get it back, but it is not a gift. It is just your right. But the gospel brings something totally different.

The first thing that we read about was the gift of faith: "For ye are saved by grace, through faith; and this not of yourselves; it is God's gift". Do you have faith tonight, dear hearer? Do you have faith in your soul? You listen to the glad tidings concerning the Lord Jesus, and you get light as to the way that He has gone to Calvary's cross to bear the wrath of God for sins, but have you had that light stream into your soul? Does it affect your mind? Does it affect your conscience, young people? If you are in doubt, you can ask for faith. It is a wonderful thing that God has gifts in His favour. He has gifts to dispense in His favour. He has a gift for each one of us tonight, every one. Even if you have known the Lord Jesus for many, many years, God is impressing you with the gifts that He has at His disposal, able to dispense them in the glad tidings that there might be faith in your soul. We live in a time when men are doubting. Faith never doubts. Do you ever doubt, dear fellow-believer? Do you ever have doubts in your soul? "Faith is the substantiating ..." - it makes them substantial - "of things hoped for" (Heb 11: 1), and brings us into the unseen world where Jesus is. How wonderful that is! Jesus is in glory tonight, of course. That is what we preach in the glad tidings. He has completed the work that He was given to do, and now God is satisfied, and He has enthroned Him at His own right hand, on His own throne, in glory. Well, do you have faith to

believe that? The teaching of Romans is the teaching of the glad tidings: "if thou ...shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from among the dead", chap 10: 9. That is faith. Faith does that. Do you believe that? It is a time for believing, a time for the activity of faith, God's gift, given in grace. We are in the dispensation of grace. The whole two thousand years has involved that God is not reckoning to men their offences, but holding the world, provisionally, as reconciled to Himself (2 Cor 5: 19), *waiting* that you might *answer* in faith and believe on the Lord Jesus. How great that is! It is God's gift, the gift of faith.

I start with that. I think it is a wonderful matter that believing is an expression of faith. When God gives faith, a person sees they are all wrong; he is a sinner. What do you do? There is only one thing that God asks for in the glad tidings. He is not asking for your money; He is not asking for your property; He is not asking for anything else material; He is asking for repentance. That means that you get down on your knees and you tell God you are a sinner. You come to that. Come to it that it is no use; you cannot go on. Your pride in your heart might lead you to go on for quite a long time. We see that in examples in the Scriptures, like Saul of Tarsus. When he was converted, the Lord said to him, "it is hard for thee to kick against goads" (Acts 26: 14); that is, that his conscience had been affected long before, and he resisted it. Have you resisted it, the light of Christ in your soul? Dear young friend, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! How simple it is! The glad tidings are provided that everyone can understand it and everyone can accept it and everyone can come into the joy of it. How wonderful and great that is, that faith operates that we might believe. And then you "confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord" (Rom 10: 9); that is, that while before you were under the domination and bondage of sin and Satan, you get freed from that because you find that Jesus has cleared the ground for you. Have you found all that, dear young friend? Are you quite sure, are you quite convinced, that by faith you believe on Jesus because He has borne the penalty?

When you come to Romans you find more references to "gift". Firstly, it speaks about "the free gift in grace". What do you think that is? Then later on it says, "the free gift of righteousness". God has many gifts. The first thing about your sins is that you need to have your eyes on Jesus, have your eyes on the One who came into the manger, the Man who went to the cross. Every person here knows the story so well, but it is a great matter whether you believe it or not, that Jesus went to

the cross so that the wrath of God would be exhausted, the wrath of God in relation to sin, the whole sin question taken up and, if you believe, your sins cleared entirely before the eye of God. My sins are gone. I thank God for that. I look around all the dear believers here and see that their sins are effaced, wiped out, the slate clean, never to be remembered any more; but what about you, dear young friend? The Lord Jesus bore the wrath of God and died. He went into death. He bore that penalty, suffered that, suffered the curse, suffered the ignominy of it, suffered the shame of it; and He felt it all because He was a holy Person. God would never have accepted a sin-offering unless it had been perfect. The Jews were encouraged to offer offerings and that has been taken up in idolatry by many religions, but God would never accept any offering unless it was perfect. Jesus was the perfect Sin-offering. How wonderful it is to contemplate that, to think that here was a Man who was sinless. Each of the main writers of the New Testament bear witness to that. Peter says, "who did no sin" (1 Pet 2: 22): not a single one. You think of your life, dear fellow-believer, dear young person, think of your life and what you have done wrong before the eye of God. It is not just that we have done wrong to our parents, or done wrong to somebody else, but it is what we have done wrong to God; but Jesus "did no sin". Paul says, "Him who knew not sin", 2 Cor 5: 21. Think of that! Think of the mind of Christ and the purity of it, the holiness of it, the spotless character of it: "knew not sin". And John says, "in him sin is not", 1 John 3: 5. That is that the vessel there was a holy vessel. We sometimes sing that:

Holy vessel of God's pleasure. (Hymn 30).

"Him who knew not sin": how great, how full! What a perfect offering Jesus offered on the cross, ready for my acceptance!

And having gone into death He shed His blood. That is very important. The whole price that God demanded was the life of Christ. Now the witness of the giving of His life was the shedding of His blood. He gave that. We sometimes sing that:

Thy blood love's answer gave (Hymn 230).

He did it in love. Everything that God has by way of gifts is in His love. He does it in love. So we come to this matter here; the Lord Jesus, having done the work of atonement, rose again in mighty power that God might show that the work of atonement was completed. God raised Him by His power and by His love. What a wonderful thing that

Jesus was seen by so many persons in that new condition in which He was, a new condition in which He could come in and go out in a spiritual body that was seen by lovers of His own. We were speaking about John 21 today; there was Jesus on the shore, all the food ready. The Lord had everything under control. He is a great Person! Would you not like, dear young friend, to come to know Jesus, believe on Him, trust in Him, come in repentance, confess your sins? It is a great matter because in it you will find eternal life. Your life in this world is one thing. "It is even a vapour, appearing for a little while, and then disappearing", James tells us (chap 4: 14); sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety years - still it will vanish away, but believing on the Lord Jesus Christ leads to eternal life.

Now, I want to say about this "free gift in grace". There had been an offence. God has been offended by the introduction of sin into His universe, firstly, by Satan in pride, and, secondly, by man in disobedience, but Jesus has come in in the very opposite of that. He came in in lowliness, into lowly circumstances, and He came in to "undo the works of the devil" (1 John 3: 8); that is, that He "humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross", Phil 2: 8. How great and wondrous that that would be so, and in that God found great satisfaction, in the movements of divine love. By the offence of the one many have died. That is the penalty that is on us, governmentally, because of sin, but the grace of God over-abounds. That is what the believer comes to see. I think this "free gift in grace" includes the forgiveness of sins. John says, "I write to you, children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake", 1 John 2: 12. Now, dear young friend, do you know that? Are you sure about it? Everyone of responsible age needs to make sure that they are clear about it, "your sins are forgiven you for his Name's sake". What a wonderful matter that is! It is "the free gift in grace", God not demanding. God has a fine supply because Jesus has been to the cross and is risen again. He has a fine supply of forgiveness, "the free gift", the gift of forgiveness on the basis of repentance and believing. It says, "For if by the offence of the one death reigned by the one, much rather shall those who receive the abundance of grace ...". Have you received that, dear friend? It is "the abundance of grace", not the abundance of demand, but "the abundance of grace"?

But when we come further down there is the important matter of "the free gift of righteousness". Well, as I have said, God was offended

by sin and the principle of righteousness was *challenged* by Satan and by man's disobedience. God's righteousness was invaded. Sin is an attack against God, but Jesus has overcome that. How? Because He has borne the penalty on the cross and died and shed His blood. God says, 'Now, I have re-established my righteousness'. He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. How great that is! What a clearance! Are we all in the joy of that, the joy of the clearance, "the free gift of righteousness"? Now, that applies to *you*, every believer. You have "the free gift of righteousness". Do you believe that Christ is your righteousness? You could not appear before God otherwise. Christ is your righteousness, established at the cross, and in His rising again. Now, that is a great matter because it gives you confidence, not just confidence before the eye of God, but confidence that you can face up to anything as you go through this world in your responsible life because you know in your heart of hearts that by believing on the Lord Jesus, He has given you the gift of righteousness. Is there anyone here that does not believe that, that they are blameless before the eye of God, "holy and blameless before him in love", Eph 1: 4? How can that be? It could only be because you have been given "the free gift of righteousness". What a wonderful matter that is! I hope we are all in the joy of it. I hope we live in the joy of it. I hope we are all in the full gain and understanding of what "the free gift of righteousness" is because it is a great matter to "reign in life by the one Jesus Christ".

How can you "reign in life"? Well, that is where the gift of the Holy Spirit comes in. We read about it: "If therefore ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much rather shall the Father who is of heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?". That is another gift, the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a great matter that we should "reign in life by the one Jesus Christ" in the power of the Spirit of God. Earlier in the chapter in Romans where we read, it says, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit", v 5. It is a gift. Dear young person, if you believe, are you sure you have the Holy Spirit? Is your life changed? Your life would change because it brings you into the understanding of Jesus enthroned in glory on high. It gives you the *understanding* that God is towards you favourably, that God wishes to give you the very best, give you everything that will satisfy your spiritual desire and prepare you for heaven. That is another wonderful matter. These are the Lord's own words and I will say, too, to believers that it is very interesting that this is said to the disciples. Jesus is not speaking here to Pharisees. "If therefore ye, being evil": he is talking to the

disciples. Do we know how to give good gifts to our children? The greatest thing is for them to have the gift of the Holy Spirit, as enjoying forgiveness of sins and “the free gift of righteousness”. It is a great matter, the gift of the Holy Spirit, coming down at Pentecost when the Spirit came to the assembly for the first time. It says here that the Spirit is given “to them that ask him”. Wonderful thing the Lord Jesus should bring this into His ministry. There are other scriptures which bear on it, of course, quite clearly. When Peter gave his first preaching, they were all affected in their conscience and their hearts. They realised they were sinners and had to do something. “What shall we do, brethren?”, they said. He said, “Repent, and be baptised, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins,” - that is forgiveness of sins, they are written off - “and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”, Acts 2: 37, 38. The Holy Spirit comes in immediately in Peter's preaching. Well, these are great and wonderful things that lead us into reigning “in life by the one Jesus Christ”. Are you reigning in life or are you struggling in your spiritual life? Do not let us struggle in our spiritual lives! Let us “reign in life by the one Jesus Christ”. We do that by the power of the Spirit given to us as a gift, God's gift.

Finally, in Galatians, we have the gift of sonship. “God sent forth his Son ... that he might redeem those under law, that we might receive sonship.” What a gift that is! He has called us sons. You say, ‘Yes, well, I have been a sinner and I have had my sins forgiven and I would like to be here in testimony for the Lord Jesus, but I am just a nobody; I am just a bondman’. No, you are not! You are a *son*, brothers and sisters. There will be no male and female in heaven, “all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus”, Gal 3: 26. What a gift that is, “that we might receive sonship”: receive it! Great and wonderful gift to enjoy that! Why should we enjoy that gift, and where do we enjoy that gift? We enjoy it, beloved, especially at the Supper where we remember the Lord Jesus and the way that He has gone through death into new life in resurrection and into the glory, and we enter into the service of God in praise and song.

Oh dear friend, have your eyes lifted up! Lift up your eyes! There is so much in this world that drags people's minds down. God has gifts to give tonight. I would hate to think that there would be anyone that would go away and be without salvation before the Lord comes. How sad it would be! Persons of responsible age, that is. But all of us, let us see that we understand that God is in grace dispensing

favour and blessing and gifts, and all these favourable gifts are based on His beloved Son's great redemptive work that He has accomplished by the shedding of His blood, the giving of His life. Not only will it embrace, as we often say, saints of the present time, saints of the assembly, but the redemptive work of Christ will bring Israel onto the ground of redemption and be in a proper state before God; and other families like the heavenly saints of the Old Testament brought in on the basis of the blood of Christ, and saints in the time of the tribulation - saints of every dispensation brought in.

God is entreating persons that they should repent. We were reading that in the Acts. He is entreating persons, enjoining people. That means that God is concerned that persons do not believe. God is really concerned about it. He "enjoins men that they shall all everywhere repent". Why? Because He has set a day for judgment for those that do not believe and the Judge is Jesus Christ. Now is the time to meet the Lord Jesus as a Saviour, as One who can forgive your sins, give you the gift of righteousness, the gift of faith coming in, and the gift of the Holy Spirit and the gift of sonship. May none of us miss it for His Name's sake!

Grangemouth

10th June 2012

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

C Kenneth Robinson

Ephesians 1: 1-4, 2: 13, 3: 20-21

I suppose as we consider the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God, which we understand them to be, and appreciate them that way, there are times when one particular book of the Bible may become especially precious to us: it could be individually, it could be householdly, it could be collectively. Since Lord's day, I have been very impressed with the value of the epistle to the Ephesians. This is one of the treasures of heaven that were opened to Paul, a prisoner there in his prison cell, and without hesitation I would say that heavenly light was shining in as he penned the epistle to the Ephesians. He loved the saints at Ephesus. He had spent three years with them. He knew them so intimately. He had gone from house to house, prayed with them, admonished them, had not shrunk from announcing the whole counsel of God for the three years he was with them, Acts 20: 31. One of the things that impresses me is the scope of this epistle. In chapter 1, we look back to an eternity that was there even before what we have in Genesis 1: 1. In chapter 3, we look on to eternity, after the rapture, after the millennium, in which there will be glory to God "in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages". Beloved brethren, let us value Ephesian light; it is the light for the last days, Mr James Taylor made a lot of the reference in Isaiah 60, "Arise, shine! For thy light is come", He called it Ephesian light, vol 27 p110. Do we understand that expression?

I would just like to suggest one or two things as we think of it. Think of an eternity in chapter 1 that was there before there was anything at all that had been made, and the marvel of it is that through sovereign operations God chose us, you and me in Christ before the foundation of the world. If anything ought to draw out worship from our hearts, that is one of the glories of the scope which is in the epistle to the Ephesians. You may say that it is quoted every Lord's day in the service of God, and that may be the case. I trust every one of us values the wonderful dignity and privilege to be chosen in Christ before the world's foundation. God chose me in Christ before I was ever here. I trust you believe that. That is a rock to your soul in relation to anything that could possibly come into your life time, that God chose you in Christ

before the foundation of the world. Someone once said that he picked this Scripture up once, and he read this verse, and before he knew it tears were streaming down his cheeks at the magnitude of the scope that is included in Ephesian light. What a great matter to consider the scope which is in the epistle to the Ephesians; it impressed me on Lord's day. What a privilege it is to have the epistle to the Ephesians in our hands. You could say, 'Well there is the gospel' and, of course, there is. I would not decry that, but sometimes a particular epistle or a particular book comes home to you for the moment and you value it as being distinctly inspired of God, written by Paul, one who was given distinctive assembly light; and here he is writing about eternity before he was here, an eternity before God was known in revelation in Father, Son and Holy Spirit, when love existed in a unique and glorious way. And such language! Paul seems to have an insight given of God, divine light shining into his soul, that he can speak and write like this, "according as he has chosen us in him before the world's foundation". What a matter! What a rock! What a consideration! Is it affected by my state? No. Is it affected by what comes in? No: it is an absolute sovereign divine operation, part of the purpose of God because God had His purpose in a past eternity. God purposed in Himself, as we would understand, and brought it out that He had in mind that men in Christ would be in His presence eternally. How precious!

Now chapter 2, I would just quote - there are so many parts to be referred to. I will use it for the moment to think of what has been spoken of as the 'dip down into time', JT vol 33: p199. Man has fallen; but thankfully we were sons in purpose before we were ever sinners in practice. The divine operation was in Christ, a divine Person coming into manhood in the time scene, in the 'dip down into time' as I have referred to it, and in His work was such that, "now in Christ Jesus ye" - that is us - "who once were afar off", far off morally, far off in our sins, dead in sins and trespasses, "are become nigh". How precious it is to see how Paul contemplated God operating. Chapter 1 presents a view of love at home, and chapter 2 displays love as it were away from home, and God operating in Christ to secure those that were the object of His purpose because He wanted them nigh, "ye who once were afar off are become nigh by the blood of the Christ". What blessed matters these are! So you get an impression in the scope of what we can cover, as we consider it, of the greatness of the blood of the Christ. What a precious expression that is, the blood meeting what was outstanding, the blood

always being able to meet the history of man as far as God is concerned. Man could never accomplish his own redemption; so we are told also in chapter 1, "in whom we have redemption, through his blood, the forgiveness of offences". That is another of the great truths which come into Ephesians at this level. What glorious matters these are! In chapter 1 you have redemption, you have an inheritance, you have the light and glory that God will head up all things in the Christ, and in chapter 2 you begin to see how God has operated, in the time scene in Christ to secure those that were the objects of His purpose and they "become nigh by the blood of the Christ". How precious these matters are.

What a chapter chapter 3 is! Practically the whole of it is in parenthesis as Paul opens out his own intelligence in the mystery and his own feelings, and his humility as he says, "To me, less than the least of all saints has this grace been given". How precious that is to consider. What must have been welling up in Paul's heart as he wrote. He is in full flow in chapter 3, bringing out his own feelings, and his intelligence in the mystery. How precious all these things are; and he bows his knees to the Father, "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named". But he does not cease until he closes this whole part, the first three chapters of Ephesians, by looking on to an eternity that is yet to come. We will be ushered into that precious eternal day of which so little is said in Scripture, but this is one of the verses in which it is referred to, where, in the assembly that was in divine purpose and secured in the time scene, there will be glory to God "in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages". How precious, and you and I, covered by redemption, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, as part of that august vessel, will be active, participating in an eternity - without end - for the glory of God. How precious! What scope is in this for us to consider.

Oh, may we appreciate the epistle to the Ephesians, may we appreciate Ephesian light, and appreciate it such that with tenacity we would hold to it in the glory of it and all that it speaks of. All the exhortations come in in chapter 4 and onwards as to the functioning of the body, and chapter 5 the functioning of various relationships and so on. In chapter 6 we come to the defence in relation to the heavenly truth that it be protected, that we be strong in the Lord and put on the panoply

of God. All these things are there. You think of what flowed from Paul in a distinctive way. Ephesians is an opening up of a treasure. May we all appreciate it more! For His Name's sake.

Glasgow

4th September 2012

(this word was not revised by the author)

