

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 65

August 2012

CONTENTS

“Believed and Known”

Page 1

The Pattern and The Shekel

Paul Martin

Page 18

Our Circumstances Ordered of God

Calum McKay

Page 27

“BELIEVED AND KNOWN”

John 6: 68, 69; 1: 14-18, 29-34

1 John 2: 1-6; 3: 13-17

PM I was thinking of the word that Peter says to the Lord Jesus, “we have believed and known that thou art the holy one of God”. I wondered, dear brethren, if we might enquire together as to these two expressions, “have believed and known”. I think if I had written this I might have thought it was sufficient to say that we have believed, but Simon Peter says, “we have believed and known”. What great things the disciples had seen, Simon Peter among them. This is in the setting when so much departure is taking place; similar to our own day. John writes and presents the Lord Jesus as coming to a world in which He is rejected. Matthew, as the brethren know, presents Him as coming into a scene where He is protected and Luke into a scene in which there is ground ready for Him to be received; but in John He comes to a scene where He is rejected. “He came to his own, and his own received him not; but as many as received him”, John 1: 11, 12. John proceeds to write in view of forming believers. He says at the end of the gospel, “these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life in his name”, John 20: 31. He sets out the great principles, the fundamentals, of Christianity, beginning with the One who in Himself is God, Himself the Creator. He says, “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us”. What a wonderful movement, dear brethren, that the One of whom it says, “without him not one thing received being that has received being” (John 1: 3) should dwell among us. We might just get some touch as to that. And then he goes on to speak of the experience of John the baptist. John the baptist, although not in this dispensation, saw “the Spirit descending as a dove”. We have never seen that, of course, but John the baptist did; he saw “the Spirit descending as a dove”. He had received witness to what the Lord was going to do in the dispensation of the assembly, that He would baptise with the Holy Spirit. The great fundamentals upon which we can pin our faith lie in belief that God has come out in the Person, in One who is the Word, and He would baptise with the Holy Spirit.

Then in the epistle there is not only what is believed but what is known through experience. We must come not only to rest in what we have laid hold of in faith but be in exercise of soul, go on to experience the

knowledge in our own souls of these things. I wondered if that might provide some enquiry together.

RDP It seems that the matter of knowing involves some action on our part, some change. I was thinking of those in John 4 who say, "It is no longer on account of thy saying that we believe, for we have heard him ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world", v 42. It is an interesting thing that there is a step on. There are steps on in John, steps on from new birth to born of God where there is some response Godward: born of God seems to be movement on beyond the initial work of God, too, something in themselves.

PM That comes to light, does it not, in that woman in chapter 4? It is not only, might we say, that new birth had taken place but she grasps the greatness of the moment in which she was and the One who was before her, and reaches out to the great things that God has in His heart. John's gospel brings these sample cases to us. In chapter 9, we have a man who lays hold of one thing, "One thing I know" (v 25), and the Lord opens up more to him. I say that to those of us that are younger, and all of us: we are touching very great things. We may know little, but lay hold of what you do know. Hold it, do not let it go; and in exercise of soul the Lord will add more. That is what He did with the man in John 9.

JW You have used the word 'experience'. When Peter says, "we have believed and known" is that a result of experience with the Lord? In other places he has something by revelation, but this is something of experience with the Lord Himself and, referring to "the holy one of God", does that require holy conditions?

PM I thought that. No doubt we are dependent on the Holy Spirit to work in our souls and that that experience may be known by us. The Spirit of God creates and forms conditions in the heart of the believer in which divine communications can be made, but there must be a receptive condition. Peter is one that exemplifies that, I think. In Matthew 16, the Lord says, "for flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in the heavens", v 17. Think of the Father finding delight in material in which He could make known His own thoughts regarding His Son.

DJW It is interesting that the Lord says, "For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe", John 6: 64. I was thinking of chapter 3; it seems that Nicodemus came because of the

signs. We may be affected by a lot of external things but real belief is something more than being affected by signs, is it?

PM It is; belief links us with the Person, and not just what He does. It comes by faith, does it not? We could not believe if we did not have faith. Faith is a gift of God, of course, and we need faith to lay hold of what there is in the Person Himself. We are in a day - and one feels this for the young brethren especially - and we are moving through a world, in which Christianity is fast being set aside as just a theory. Someone said recently that it stops at the church door. Dear brethren, it does not stop at the church door. It is in persons moving here in the light of all that has come into expression in Christ, come right to where we are. That is not a theory; that is a Person, living and glorious. John says, "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us". In his epistle he says, "that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes; that which we contemplated, and our hands handled", 1 John 1: 1.

JAT So could we say that God desires to be known?

PM Well, we could, yes.

JAT I think that is a good start really, that is His desire to be known. He is thought of by many as a hard God, a God of judgment, but we know differently. I am just thinking how God has been misrepresented, but this God desires that we know Him. Paul says, "we have brought nothing into the world: it is manifest that neither can we carry anything out", 1 Tim 6: 7. But we will carry out the knowledge of God which is made known through Jesus as you are bringing before us.

PM And He desires to be known in relationships. Not just, if one might say, as being at a distance: "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us". It is a profound statement.

RDP-r Should we add to what our brother says, that God wants to be believed?

PM Yes, and to be loved.

RDP-r Paul says, "I believe God", Acts 27: 25. That is a good start too, is it not? - "For he that draws near to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who seek him out", Heb 11: 6.

PM We need perhaps at times in our histories to come back to see that our faith is on bedrock, if one might say that carefully. Not only principles, important as they are, but the great revelation of God

Himself: everything must hinge on the greatness of the movements of God coming out in grace. “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us”, and then it says, He was “full of grace and truth”. Think of the fulness of what has come out in this Person, all that God was and all that God is was there in One who tabernacled amongst men.

BWB Does what Paul says to Timothy help, “I know whom I have believed”, 2 Tim 1: 12? I know it is Paul, and you are speaking about John, but they go along together, do they not? Men had believed in Christ and companied with Him, but there is more than that; they got to know Him, and they would understand something of His affections and the greatness of His thoughts towards them.

PM That is helpful, and whilst what we have here in John 1 is distinctive to the apostles, yet each of us ought to have something that we have come to in our own experience with our link with the Lord Jesus that we can say for ourselves. It is not just what we have been brought up with, precious as that is. We were speaking about this before the reading; many of us have the favour of being brought up in believing households where the light as to the gospel and the light as to the assembly has been held and cherished. My exercise today is: have I made it my own? Have I come to the knowledge of the Person in whom everything for God is centred and in whom everything from God has come forth, and have I come to appreciate for myself the fulness of what is available in the gift of the Holy Spirit?

RDP Is the knowing essential in view of present salvation? We were reading in the week of the children of Israel and their refusing of the testimony of the land, and God is quoted saying of them in Hebrews, “*they* have not known my ways”, Heb 3: 10. They had had the light of it but they had never known His ways. I think Caleb was one who believed and knew, was he not? I just wondered if at the present time we need this matter of knowing in view of salvation for today.

PM How do we come to know? It says as to Israel, “we shall know, - we shall follow on to know Jehovah: his going forth is assured as the morning dawn”, Hos 6: 3. How do we come to know?

RDP I asked earlier whether the knowing is linked particularly and directly with the Holy Spirit. The references you read are to the Spirit coming, and so on. I just wondered if believing would be connected with the Spirit. I wondered if there is a direct link with the Holy Spirit as to the knowing.

PM I am sure there is, and this gospel helps us as to that and what the Lord Jesus says, does it not? "He shall guide you into all the truth", John 16: 13. That is a formative action of the Spirit. It is not just an enlightening action but a formative action, causing persons to come into the experience of what the truth is. The truth is wonderful, but if it is to be effective in my soul it must be as I am formed in relation to it. There is what is objective and we need what is objective, and we have that so fully in the gospels, and the Spirit brings it to us. He forms the soul of the believer in relation to it, so that it is not just outside of himself, great as that is, but there is an answer formed in keeping with it in measure, in the believer.

AEM So is the knowledge of this power of the Spirit very reassuring in the light of the conditions of which you spoke? Simon Peter speaks of the "holy one of God" in the presence of Judas. Therefore it is possible by the Spirit to know such a One, even in the presence of what is opposed.

PM We are in those conditions, are we not, where there is opposition on every hand? And we should not shut our eyes to the wily operations of the devil, publicly, in the scene through which we are passing. But the substantiality of what we have is held in the affections of the believer by the Spirit. That is why I have read the reference to the Spirit here in John 1. It is almost as if John in writing this gospel says, 'I must give you the two great cardinal facts, that the Lord Jesus has come into manhood and the Spirit has come'. Not only did He come upon the Lord Jesus in a distinctive way but he says, "he it is who baptises with the Holy Spirit". How did John know that? He was looking on beyond his dispensation to the dispensation in which we are, in which persons were going to be formed and filled with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Is that right?

AEM Yes. "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world", 1 John 4: 4.

PM Yes, and there are persons moving through the scene of opposition and departure that are living in relation to another world. I am if I am.

GR I was thinking of Rahab the harlot; she was living in what we might call impossible conditions in Jericho but she had been affected in her soul by what she had heard of Jehovah and His activity, and she laid hold of that and there was something substantial there, Josh 2.

PM That is very fine, because she was living in circumstances that were coming under judgment, and we are moving through a scene that is under judgment; but that was not what was occupying her. She put the scarlet cord in the window because she knew, she had the assurance in her own soul, that Jehovah was greater than all that was around her and she lived in the enjoyment of that. She was told to put the scarlet thread in the window when the Israelites were coming but she put it in straight away: she lived in the enjoyment of all that God was as moving in power in his people.

GR It is good to have a window in our house with an outlook away from the city, is it?

PM Yes, we do not want to be looking over this world that is under judgment, but to have our eye on what God is doing and what He is effecting and has affected, because what He has done stands. There is so much that is passing in the scene around us: “the world is passing”, John says, “and its lusts” (1 John 2: 17), but the believer has in his soul that which is permanent, and has the light of what God has effected already.

MJW Faith does give us certainty, does it not? We can say that because God says things they are certain, and therefore we know them just from faith; but we need to remember that what we have to do with are realities. They will be actualities soon but they are realities. It is good for us to bear that in mind, so that we can say from faith that we know, but then the things we have to do with are spiritual, but real. Does that help?

PM It does help, and what you say is important, because I am not in any sense wanting to set aside or belittle the belief of what God has presented in Christ and in the Spirit; that is why I began in this chapter. We must lay hold of what God has presented from His own side. What He has presented is full and is complete and is perfect, and the believer can lay hold of that and rest his faith in it. As we said earlier, it is like bedrock upon which the believer rests his soul. The whole of our salvation, the whole of our being taken up for blessing, and given a part in the assembly, rests not on our appreciation of it, but upon what God has done from His own side; and we can grasp that through faith. But to come into the gain of it, and to make it our own livingly, requires the operation of the Holy Spirit in the soul.

DJW The two on the way to Emmaüs help us, do you think? They

had a great exposition but they said, "Was not our heart burning" (Luke 24: 32); that is formation, is it not?

PM Yes, and what was the result of that?

DJW They gravitated to where the truth was enjoyed by others.

PM Immediately it says, "they returned", Luke 24: 33. They appreciated immediately that if their heart was burning within them, there was a circle in which Christ was loved, and that is where they belonged.

DJW Their hearts had been burning, and I was thinking that no amount of discussion would have convinced them otherwise.

PM What a journey back that was. It had been a slow and painful one while they were going away, and they went back with a light step in the knowledge that Christ was risen, and that everything that had been foretold in the Old Testament was there embodied in that blessed Man who had appeared to them on the way.

RDP It is a remarkable instance because, not only were their hearts burning and they knew Him, but He made Himself known to them and suddenly they knew which way to go. Without being told, they turned round and went back to the company. One of the tests today is what we should do, where we should go, how we should act and so on, but those two persons had been wandering. They were true believers, they had companied with Him, but their direction was all over the place. It became purposeful as they came to know Him.

PM And is that not how we find our part in the company? It has often been said, has it not, and it is true and we prove it I think, that we do not find the Lord through the company but we find the company through the Lord? I find my place in the company in which I am through my own link with the Lord. Some of us who are a bit older now have had to ask these questions in our experiences. We were not all that old when we had to make decisions as to which company we would be in, and the decision reached was not on a basis, 'Well, I thought this company might be better than that one, or this company might appeal to me more than this'. That was not the basis of the decision that the brethren reached. The basis of the decision was in exercise with the Lord to find where the Lord was. Where is the Lord in the midst? That was the exercise, and the Lord is where the truth is held. That is what those two on the way to Emmaüs found: that the Lord was where the truth as to Himself was

held and cherished.

RDP We do not find our way through logic, putting together facts, or picking up opinions. The only way you get Christian direction is as you have to do with the Lord Himself, yourself; is that right?

PM It is, and each one of us has to come to that. I was brought up in a Christian household, and I thank God for that wonderful privilege, but eventually each one of us has to come to it, 'Why am I where I am?'. I remember as a boy that that used to be asked often in a reading. We had an old brother and he used to go round and ask. 'Why are *you* where you are; why are *you* where you are?'. We never answered, but it put exercise in your soul, and that I think is something that each one of us has to come to in our own experience. Why am I here? It is not to put any doubt as to whether I should be somewhere else but to give me the certainty that the path on which I am treading is the path that the Lord would have me to be.

AEM What underpinned the recovery of those two people on the way to Emmaüs was a Master who "made as though he would go farther". I am just thinking that the decision that you are speaking about is not one we have to make alone.

PM No, we make it with Him. There is nothing that can replace our link with the Lord in relation to any exercise or any matter through which we pass. We have to work it out in our own exercise with the Lord.

DJW Our brother referred to Caleb. It is interesting that he was in the minority; two out of maybe two million. God says of him, "But my servant Caleb, because he hath another spirit in him and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land", Num 14: 24. God must support what is of Himself even if the majority have gone a different way.

PM What touched Caleb was the fruitfulness of the land, was it not? It was not just that he thought it was better than the wilderness; it was the fruitfulness of the land that held his affections. He proved it himself.

RWF Is it like the contemplation of His glory?

I suppose John was referring to himself and the disciples in using that expression, "we have contemplated his glory", but it is open to us to do

so. It is the glory as He is and where He is, do you think? It is not just contemplation of Him - and I speak with care in saying this - but His glory. I wondered if that connected with the fruits that we are speaking of?

PM Yes, and what a glory it was. A glory that they had never seen before, "a glory as of an only-begotten with a father", John 1: 14. Here it was in a divine Person, here in manhood. Moses had not seen it, David had not seen it, great men as they were, and yet it waited to be known; as John says, "... dwelt among us", "glory as of an only-begotten with a father".

JAT John has said, "*He* was in the beginning with God" (chap 1: 2), but He was God, and then He took on this position so that we might be able to contemplate Him.

PM Yes; "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us". He became what He had never been before. He became flesh; it does not say He became man or even that He became flesh and blood: He became flesh. One divine Person came into substantial conditions, so that John says in his epistle "our hands handled", 1 John 1: 1. What we are speaking of is not a theory. Christianity is not a theory; everything centres in One who came into conditions which were substantial, and in becoming flesh came into substantial conditions that go right through. He remains a Man, a glorious blessed Man. John is referring to what was substantial in one divine Person coming and tabernacling among us.

JAT It says, "the Word became flesh", not that He was asked to become flesh; we might say reverently it was His own initiative, so that He could be near enough and tabernacle among us. It was really God who was there; it was Jesus Himself that could be contemplated. It is very attractive, over against what man thinks of God and the distance between God and man: this is the nearness into which God has come.

PM I think what you say is right, that God has come. Paul says, "God has been manifested in flesh" (1 Tim 3: 16); what a wonderful thing that is. If one might speak reverently, it was not a part of God, but God was there manifested in flesh.

KM Maybe it has gone by, but as to the two going to Emmaüs, it was not commendable that they were marked by certain unbelief, but it says about them, "Was not our heart burning", Luke 24: 32. God could have

removed all that kind of thing, opposition and unbelief and so on but he allows it to go on; but it is combustible. It means that by experience we know we are marked by unbelief sometimes - quite often, more often than we should be, but that is combustible. We should receive things as they are. We are affected by things that are in the world, and things make us have a tendency towards unbelief, but that burning only comes about by the work of God in our souls, and it makes us burn all the more brightly, do you think?

PM I think so; what you say is interesting, I had never thought of it like that before, but the unbelief soon melted and what remained was the warmth of the knowledge of the One who had broken the power of death and was the centre of everything for God. Think of Him opening up the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and the prophets, think of the opening up of these passages, all concerning Himself; and those two persons would say, 'We have never heard anything like this before: we did not realise that it spoke of One who would go into death and secure everything for God and hold it for God's pleasure eternally'. But He held them, and that I think is one's exercise today, that He might hold us in the captivating power of His Person, that He might hold our hearts and hold them in relation to both what He has effected through His death and rising again and what He is effecting even at the present time. He shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit; no one else could do that, but He does it Himself.

GJR "For of his fulness we all have received", can you give us a touch on that?

PM It is a remarkable expression: "of his fulness". We could not receive His fulness. What is there is so vast in that blessed Person, but we have received *of* His fulness. I think it brings out the nature and the divine attributes that came into expression in a Man, and we have received the benefit of and warmth and glory of *His* fulness.

BWB The glory of the Person and all that belongs to Him is in no way diminished by what we may have received in that way.

PM It could not be. He is inexhaustible. The greatness of Christ stands beyond compare. We are saying these things and I trust something may lodge into the hearts of the young as well as those of us that are older; that we are speaking of One who is beyond compare, and all that has come into expression in that blessed Person could never be exhausted. He is Himself in His person divine. Is that right?

BWB I am sure. What is corrupt is sin in the flesh, and the Lord laid down that condition of flesh and blood but then in resurrection He says, "for a spirit has not flesh and bones" (Luke 24: 39); so the condition of flesh goes through as man.

PM I would be glad of your help as to that because we are speaking of what is so great, but John does not say He came into flesh and blood conditions: "the Word became flesh". I think it is to give an impression to us of what is substantial in that blessed Person, not ethereal, but what came into expression was substantial, and there was what went right through. There was what was terminated because of us but in Him there was what went through. The Lord Jesus did not come into "made of dust" (1 Cor 15: 47); that is the condition in which we are.

BWB It says, "took part in the same, that through death he might annul him who has the might of death", Heb 2: 14.

PM Yes, and then Paul in the Philippians says, "taking his place in the likeness of men; and having been found in figure as a man", Phil 2: 7. These references - perhaps we tend to slip over them as we read - are very full of meaning. The Lord Jesus did not come into the condition that was made of dust, but He came into a body that was prepared for Him that in itself was intrinsically holy.

RWP-r These things leave Peter and ourselves without any alternative, do they not? The revelation of the greatness of this Person means there is nowhere else to go to satisfy the work of God in our souls, is there?

PM That is the question, "to whom shall we go?". The question is not 'to which company shall I go?', but "to whom ... ?". Questions come up, as our brother has said, in our day to day experiences but, where is the Lord?

MJB You referred earlier to the fact that you and I had faced exercises in relation to divisions. I presume you were referring to 1970 and 1972. You and I had to face exercise that the younger generation in the ways of God have not had to face as dramatically as we did. Can you help the young people as to it? I think in our experience it established us; that is in my experience anyway. I am not suggesting we should have another division to bring about establishment in the souls of the brethren, but can you help us as to the way things are established in the souls of the saints without such experiences?

PM Well, I feel tested in answering that because I do not know that any of us could say we shone very much in the tests through which we passed; at least, I could not; but one thing was sure, that you went through it with the Lord. You could not go to somebody else and ask what they thought, where they stood; that would not provide the basis of where you should be. What it did was to cast you on the Lord. I can remember those nights coming home from the office and all that was before me was the felt need of being in the Lord's presence to know what His mind was and where He was at that time; and as you were in His presence He gave an indication, and the Lord does that. He gives confirmation. There is no one else that can do that. The Lord does it Himself, and I would say that to younger persons: speak to the Lord about the exercises you go through. If you have doubts, speak to Him about it. One thing that came to me was a remark of Mr Darby's. Mr Coates says that someone asked Mr. Darby how much evil would justify one in leaving a company of Christians, and he answered, No amount of evil would justify anyone in separating from any company of Christians, but the refusal to *judge* the least bit of evil would justify separation, CAC vol 6 p187. Now I think through wondrous grace we can say, even up to date, we have experienced in some measure the presence of the Lord, and that would make us very hesitant to even think of leaving a company. What happened in 1970 was that we had to judge moral evil, and evil teaching and that involved our separating from a company that refused to deal with these things. In 1972 we had to seek to maintain that a yoke with unbelievers was not consistent with fellowship.

DJW Is that borne out by what you had read in 1 John 2. It says, "And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments"., So really what helped us as to where the Lord was, was what He had given us as to His commandments. We knew where He was because He was consistent with Himself.

PM That is important because, as we said earlier, the Lord is where the truth is. "He cannot deny Himself", 2 Tim 2: 13. We may be unfaithful and deny Him, but He cannot deny Himself. He must be where what He has given is treasured, not only in the affections but held in the practice of those He loves; and where that is so that is the place for every believer. I think we should just be clear as to that, that the ground on which I gather with the brethren in the locality in which I am is really the ground on which every true believer should gather.

DJW A statement of Mr Jim Renton stands in my memory, that the Lord is more ready to make known His mind to me than I am to receive it. That is the difficulty, is it not? The Lord does not make things difficult for us, does He? But He likes exercise; that is not exactly the same thing is it? It is that you are with Him as going through the experience.

PM Yes, and John says in this epistle, "And this is the boldness which we have towards him, that if we ask him anything according to his will he hears us", chap 5: 14. Now immediately the question is, 'Well, how do I know that it is according to His will?'. I know it by keeping company with Him. That is how I know what His will is. You see, a wife knows her husband is at work and someone knocks at the door and says, 'I am going to take the roof off your house and give you a new one'. She says, 'That is not according to my husband's will, because we talk about all these things, and I know him'. That is how she knows his will, and that is the same for the believer. That is how he knows the Lord's will, by keeping company with Him and by keeping His word, and that is what we have in this epistle of John.

DJW That is confirmed in John's gospel chapter 7, is it not? "If anyone desire to practise his will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is of God or that I speak from myself", v 17. The Lord is so ready to make His mind known to me, if I will only be ready to receive it.

PM Yes, and if I have that desire to practise His will He finds His pleasure in unfolding all that He has under His hand and making it known.

RDP-r There is a verse in Psalm 25 that has helped me in those sorts of conditions. It says, "What man is he that feareth Jehovah? him will he instruct in the way that he should choose", v 12.

PM Yes, and then immediately it says, "His soul shall dwell in prosperity", v 13.

RDP-r There have been a couple of occasions in my experience when that Psalm has been the guide as to what we should do.

PM I never knew that this would come up in this reading, but I think it is important to lay hold of, that the Lord has made His mind known in the scriptures firstly, and in the ministry. He has made His mind known and it is the believer's responsibility to walk according to that and to practise what He says.

RWF I think it is essential that we do fear Him. We can make no progress without, but progress is of the essence to your enquiry, is it not? You go back to John's gospel that was written for believers that that "might have life in his name", John 20: 31. So we progress in our belief, but along with that there has to be progress in our knowledge. We never reach a point in our lives when we can make no further progress do we?

PM I find a lot of comfort from what the apostle says, "For we know in part", 1 Cor 13: 9. Think of the apostle, his intelligence in the mystery, what had been made known to him by the Lord direct from the glory, and yet he says "we know in part". We are on very dangerous ground if we think or begin to think we are the masters of the truth. We are never the masters of the truth; the truth is always the master to us.

JB I was struck by reading in the week as to what Mr Darby says as to the word of God, that it judges me rather than me judging it, vol 32 p387. I was thinking of what we are enquiring into as to having the Lord's mind; am I subject to what He is saying, rather than thinking that I know what He should say?

PM Yes, that is most important. It "is living and operative, and sharper than any two-edged sword", Heb 4: 12. It divides between dark and light, does it not? It divides what I find in myself that may be dark or light, may be according to the flesh or according to the spirit; it penetrates, but it leaves a quickening effect in the believer. It does not just leave me exposed; it leaves a quickening effect and attaches my heart to the One whose word it is.

RDP "Grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ": it is a most interesting note there in John 1: 17. "Grace and truth" are two very wonderful things and, as far as the world was concerned, seeming to be opposites. They subsist "through Jesus Christ". I think we shall perhaps come to that at the end, but everything is in Christ. There are many things that are here to help us. There is truth, there is ministry, there is history, there are our brethren and all these things but the thing subsists in Jesus Christ.

PM And superseded all that had gone before. The law was given by Moses, it was administered by angels; think how great it was; and yet "grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ". All the mind of God and the resource from God was there in that blessed Person in order that men might come into the gain of it and be sustained in it. How

wonderful!

JAT So Moses says, “If thy presence do not go, bring us not up hence”, Ex 33: 15. He could not bear the thought of being without it. We could say that today of the Lord’s presence, and Peter likewise who you brought before us. You are bringing Christ before us, but it was Peter’s conviction to say, “Lord, if it be *thou*” (Matt 14: 28); he only needed to know that much. I think that helped me in 1970 as to the Lord: “if it be *thou*”. If we are going to leave His presence to follow a man or whatever, that is not the idea is it? It is Himself.

PM We only rightly reach the result of any exercise as we reach it with Him.

PWB Just to go back to the earlier question, which I think is an interesting one and perhaps links with what you have already said; do we really understand where we are and why we are there? If you wait for a crisis before you really understand the truth and the principles of it, it may be too late. The Lord is very gracious and if we are dependent I think the Lord would teach us. If we have an ear to hear and the exercise and desire the Lord would teach us the truth, and then when exercises and questions come we have what you refer to as the bedrock on which we can rely. Other influences and things are always there, but will not have as loud a voice as what we really learn from the Lord. This is good to sober me. It is not necessarily a crisis that drives us to it, but soberly to go through with the Lord the principles of the truth and the things that the Lord has taught us from the scriptures and to make them our own in our souls and time with Him.

PM I think that is most important. If we come to the bedrock in our own experience with the Lord, the crisis may never come; but if it does it will not be such a crisis to me if I am founded on what is firm and stable. We do not want to go over sad history, because young persons have been preserved from it, but some of us were caught up in a drift that flowed fairly fast, and drew us away from a living link with the Lord; and the Lord brought us back to Himself. If we are founded on the rock, and go through exercises and our experiences with the Lord, in going through them He becomes more precious and valuable to us. We find that whatever storm may come, it is not as great as we might have thought it would be.

RWF If we do we love the brethren, if we are standing on that bedrock, we might be able to avert the crisis. It is not simply that it might not

come, but that we might well be able to avert it under the Lord's direction.

PM Yes, and hold the brethren for the Lord.

RWF That is what I had in mind. That really is involved in passing from death to life, is it not?

PM Yes. Those of us that are older have a responsibility in our local companies to minister and develop conditions which are apart from all that is around us, apart from the world, apart from all that is of man; but to minister to that which is of God in the saints in our local places in order that the saints might be held in relation to Christ where He is. That is one way that we lay down our life for the brethren, is it not?

ADP Caleb kept the land in his heart; yet he went back and spent forty years in the wilderness. I should have thought Caleb would have been quite an encouragement during those forty years in the wilderness. He kept it in his heart and at the end he says, "now give me this mountain", Josh 14: 12.

PM It is important that we move here as not confined by the scene of responsibility. We must fulfil our part in the scene of responsibility but we fulfil it rightly as we are living in another world. That is what gives colour to everything here. If we live in the world in which Christ is exalted it will make us shrink more from the world in which He has been rejected, but it will not work the other way. It must come that way. It says as to the man in Psalm 1, "he is as a tree planted by brooks of water" (v 3); he is drawing his resources from another scene altogether, and that is what the believer is like.

JW Does the verse earlier in John 6 bear on what we are saying? The Lord says "As ... I live on account of the Father, *he* also who eats me shall live also on account of me", John 6: 57. I wondered if that would really help us; do we really live on account of Christ? It is not the company exactly, although we value the company, but if we live on account of Him we shall be preserved, do you think?

PM Now just help me, what does it mean, to live on account of Christ?

JW We get the example in the Lord Himself: He lived on account of the Father. As Man here He derived from the Father. We really derive our life from Christ; He is our life. I find it a challenge: do I derive my life

from Him, completely dependent upon Him?

PM It is a challenge, but the Lord Jesus derived everything from the Father. It says, "he shall grow up before him as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground", Isa 53: 2. He did not derive anything from this scene. But not only did He derive from the Father, but He lived in view of what was for the Father. The Father was His Object in everything. He lived on account of the Father.

DJW You could ask whether, if I took the Lord out of my life, I would have anything left.

PM That is a challenge is it not? As the Lord lived on account of the Father so feeding on Him builds up in us the constitution where we not only derive from Him but He becomes the Object in what we do. We may bring other things in and say, 'Well, if I do this and that and so on', but it becomes very simple. Is Christ the Object and is He the resource? If that is so, my life here will be for the divine pleasure.

Birmingham

10th March 2012

Key to initials:-

M J Bedford, Birmingham; B W Burton, Taunton; P W Burton, Taunton;
R W Flowerdew, Sunbury; J B Ikin, Manchester;
K Marshall, Rotherham; P Martin, Colchester; A E Mutton, Witney;
R D Painter, Yeovil; A D Plant, Birmingham;
R D Plant, Birmingham; G Richards, Malvern; G J Richards, Malvern;
J A Turner, Malvern; M J Welch, Newport; D J Willetts, Birmingham;
J Wright, Havering

THE PATTERN AND THE SHEKEL

Paul Martin

Exodus 25: 1-11, 23, 24, 31, 40

1 Chronicles 28: 11, 12

Exodus 30: 11-16

Numbers 3: 44-51

I seek the Spirit's help to say a word as to the pattern, and the shekel of the sanctuary. Both were clearly shown to Moses on the mountain. They bring out, of course, God's appreciation of Christ. If God speaks to man, He always speaks to man in the light of His appreciation of Christ. The Lord Jesus is the Mediator. That is wonderful for us, but it is very wonderful for God that He should come near to us in the person of a Man.

Both the pattern and the shekel of the sanctuary remind us that God has a standard. We might think that if God had a standard, it would always be far beyond us; and naturally, of course, it is. God has His standard and, because He is God, He never changes it. It is because He is God that He has a standard. We are in a world of changing standards, if there are any. Moral decay is sweeping especially the western world like a tornado. What a world it is - even the church publicly is legalising alarming lower standards that are contrary to God. We might say, "What will God do? Will He change His standard?". Oh no - He is God. He does not need to change His standard. He showed His pattern to Moses on the mountain. Someone may say, "Where can I see the pattern?". It was not shown to Moses in Egypt - no, God showed Moses a burning bush before the people came out of in Egypt. What does that mean? It was being burnt and it was not consumed; a thorn bush, dry, prickly, like ourselves I suppose, like Israel was; and dwelt in the bush (Deut 33: 16), and it was not going to be consumed. What wonderful grace. He showed it to Moses.

When they were in the wilderness in this section, God says to Moses, "Come up to me into the mountain, and be there", chap 24: 12. Dear young soul, you will never get a view of God's pattern in Egypt. You will find it on the mountain, apart from this world, in all its degradation, in all its corruption. God would draw you apart and show you that He has another order altogether and it is centred in Christ, and there is a standard that governs it which is unchangeable. How wonderful to fix your soul on that! It was going to be brought into expression through

the affections of God's people. They were to bring a heave offering. He brought them out of Egypt, they sang on the banks of the Red Sea, rejoicing in their deliverance, "The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea", Exod 15: 1. Think of God bringing them out with a powerful hand. What mighty power there was in the deliverance from Egypt. We have proved it, have we not? Set free from our sins and the bondage of them, and from the world in which sin finds its home. We have been set free from it all, but we have been set free for a purpose. The purpose was not only to bring the children of Israel into the land, but it was that God might dwell among them. He says, "they shall make me a sanctuary, that I might dwell among them". I find that most affecting. A rebellious people, a people that deserved judgment, a people whose bodies were strewn in the wilderness, but God says "make me a sanctuary". He looked at them, not from the viewpoint of their failings, but he looked at them as His son; He says, "let my son go", Exod 4: 23. He never ceased to see that in the children of Israel, and He says to Moses here that they were to make the sanctuary, the tabernacle, and the utensils "according to their pattern, which hath been shewn to thee in the mountain". Oh may God give us today a fresh sight of the pattern that He has, that is unchanged, that is beyond the failure of man; that gives character to the scene of testimony through which the children of Israel were going to pass and through which we are to pass. The tabernacle system was going to give character to it all. How did they go through the wilderness? They followed the ark, Num 10: 33. How did they cross the Jordan? They followed the ark. There was the committal of God to His people: the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, that they might journey by day and by night. Dear brethren, we have known what it is to journey by day and to journey by night. It has not altered God's commitment to His people - no. You say, 'The night time is coming, how dark it is'; have you seen the pillar of fire? It is there, going before the people that they might have light as to the way in which they were to go. What a God!

Light divine directs thy going
God Himself shall mark thy way

Hymn 76.

Think of those men who moved in faith, coming out of a broken system and moving in faith, in the light of a heavenly calling. Beloved, that is our calling today - it is a heavenly one. I have said it before, please excuse me for saying it again, we have in our hands the holy Scriptures that have come down to us through the martyrdom of those that have

gone before, and those men gave their lives and were burnt at the stake. In Oxford, one said to the other, as they were tied to the stake, and the flames were just beginning to catch light, 'Be of good comfort ... We shall this day, by God's grace, light such a candle in England as I trust shall never be put out'. That candle was lit by men who gave their lives at the stake, brother and sister, in order that you might have the Scriptures in your hand and might have the liberty to read about the blessed Saviour and to know the ways of God, and to get a view of the pattern. Those men gave their lives and they put a legacy into the church; and the church, wanting support and protection, put its hand into the hand of the State and lost its power. What a moment! In the 1800s, through divine grace, God moved in the hearts of many men and women and they answered to the call, having a view of the pattern. It is not an earthly one, it is a heavenly one there, centring in Christ: "make an ark". Christ is the Centre of God's purpose, the Centre of His ways. I say to you, dear friend, today, and to my own soul, get a view of the One who is there at the Centre of this whole system. He gives character to it all.

If you went into the tabernacle there were the outer courts and the curtains, the boards, and as you went in the first thing that was before you was the brazen altar. As the priest went in, there was the largest piece of furnishing in the tabernacle - the brazen altar, five cubits by five cubits. Think of how it stood there as a reminder that our approach to God must be on the basis of the death of the Lord Jesus. There is no other way - everything else has had to go. Our approach is on the basis of that blessed One.

Then he would move forwards towards the tent and there was the laver, and the priest washed himself in the laver because, if God was to be served, there had to be right conditions in the priest as well. He had the bearing of the death of Christ not only in its judicial character as represented in the altar but in its moral claim as we move through a world of corruption. The bearing of the death of Christ had to be known by the priest, and then he would draw near to the tent and there in the holy place he would enter in. Along one side was the candlestick and it was shining in all its lustre, Christ shining in that scene. Opposite it was the table of shewbread - we have read of these things - and there upon the table were the twelve loaves placed in order upon the table. What a scene. Nothing of man's mind intruded, nothing disturbed it, the light shone in its glory and there were the loaves standing on the table. They

never rested on the sand of the desert. Their place was in Christ before God, a wonderful thing; but, dear brother or sister, have you seen yourself on the table of shewbread along with the saints? Have you seen yourself there? You do not belong to the sand of the wilderness - no, we pass through it in our responsibility but where you belong is on the table, not only chosen in Christ but upheld by Him.

And then after the priest went past the lamp-stand and the table there was the altar of incense. The incense was burning constantly, that which was for the pleasure of God, speaking to Him of the Lord Jesus in all His fragrance and all His preciousness, not so much as the offering for sin, or even the burnt offering, but the incense - it says it was beaten small (Lev 16: 12); the detail that was there in the life of the Lord Jesus is there as a fragrance ascending to God. Moses was shown all this as a pattern upon the mountain.

The high priest once a year would go into the holy of holies and there, standing all on its own, without compare, was the ark and the mercy-seat and the cherubim of glory. It speaks of every right of God maintained, in that blessed Man, and in all that He had done, and there God says, "there will I meet with thee, and will speak with thee", Exod 25: 22. Think of God, wanting to talk with men, with you, dear friend, and me, but He had to do it on the right basis according to His pattern.

We are told at the end of this chapter that, not only was Moses shown *the* pattern, but he was shown *their* pattern, for each detail in that system there was after a pattern. I used to think when I was a boy that God showed him a miniature of the tabernacle and he took down the dimensions and made it, but I have come to see that I was wrong, and what God showed him was a world of which Christ is everything to God. Standing there in all His glorious distinctiveness, the One in whom God could come out to man, and by whom man could go in to God, having nothing to do with the world around, separated by the badger skins and the other coverings that were there, all a protection against the elements of the world. What a scene! And Moses saw it there in its glory upon the mountain, and he saw that God would speak to him of His beloved Son. He saw that there must be an answer in the heart of men; so He says, "bring me a heave-offering". I ask my soul, and maybe you might ask yours, 'What part have I had in the heave-offering?'. It can only be in the appreciation of what Christ is to God that there could be a heave-offering in relation to the system that God has. Moses came down from the mountain and he had it in his heart. What

he carried down were the tables of stone - he did not carry a plan of the tabernacle as well: every detail of that system was in his heart, even down to the snuffers. You say, 'I cannot do much, I am not much', but there was a pattern for the snuffers, there was a pattern for the snuff trays, for the light was to be kept burning, as it is in your locality - the light is to be kept burning; and it required daily and constantly the trimming of the lamps and the provision of the oil, and using the snuff trays in order that any dross might be removed. All had to be accounted for, and maybe, dear brother or sister, you might just be such a utensil in the divine system. You say, 'Why a snuffer?' - because there was to be nothing of me in the light. I know what it is like; sometimes you have a candle on the table and you try to blow it out; and the wax goes on the cloth and everything becomes a mess. There was nothing like that of man in the tabernacle system. It was all of God, and that is so in the local company; there is to be functioning in the local company and the functioning comes from what is of God, not what is of man. Moses got a view of that and he came down and he built it, according to the pattern that had been shown to him on the mountain.

When we come to David, David wanted to build a house, and Jehovah says to him, "Thou shalt not build a house unto my name, for thou art a man of war, and hast shed blood ... Solomon thy son, he shall build my house", 1 Chron 28: 3, 6. It was built by the beloved, but where did he get the pattern? He got it from David. Where did David get the pattern? He got it by the Spirit. It is a remarkable touch as to David in 1 Chronicles 28; it says, "the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit", v 12. Where do you get the pattern today? You get it by the Spirit. Someone may say, 'How can we see the assembly today? We see it in ruins'. Ask the Spirit to show you this wonderful vessel, the assembly; not in ruins, no, but in its glory. Daniel was living in a day like ours and he had his windows open towards Jerusalem. That was characteristic of him. Think about that. What was Jerusalem like? It was a ruin, but not in Daniel's eye. Is it a ruin in your eye, beloved; is that all one sees? The assembly scattered and torn - we feel these things, and we should feel them more, the departure that has come in and the sorrows that the departure has caused; but the Spirit says that he got the pattern by the Spirit. And I say again, ask the Spirit to show you what the assembly is in its glory. It is there as the bride of Christ, publicly in the scene in which we are it is moving as His wife, but He will show you the bride. He showed John; He caught him up and showed John "the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God", Rev 21: 10.

Have you seen it? How wonderful it is - a city in which everything is vibrant in response Godward answering in its moral features to all that was manifested in Jesus. What a city! The Spirit would show you. You may say that John got it specially. Yes, he was in prison on the island of Patmos (Rev 1: 8); he was not looking at the prison walls; he was looking at "the city that has foundations, of which God is the artificer and constructor, Heb 11: 10. What a city; "coming down ... having the glory of God. Her shining was like a most precious stone, as a crystal jasper stone", chap 21, 10-11. What movements of descending dignity and glory, answering to the movements of descending grace that had been seen in Jesus, seen in the vessel that comes down as the bride, adorned as a bride for her husband.

These things are to grip our souls, beloved; God has them and they are unchanged and unchangeable. If what God sets on could be changed by man's failure, He would cease to be God. God is carrying His thoughts through and He is carrying them through victoriously. Then there is the other side - there is the shekel of the sanctuary. That comes down to our side. The shekel of the sanctuary brings out a divine standard, "according to the shekel of the sanctuary", Exod 38: 25. As I understand it, the shekel of the sanctuary was a piece of silver. It had a value and it had a weight and it was kept in the sanctuary by the priest. The divine standard was there before God. Was it going to change as time went on? No, it does not need to change. It is still there, the shekel of the sanctuary; it is there before God. The people were to come, and they were going to be numbered, not as David did in pride, but they were to be numbered in order to bring out that each was one of the redeemed. Peter says, "ye have been redeemed, not by corruptible things, as silver or gold ... but by precious blood", 1 Pet 1: 18, 19. Remember that: you go out on Monday, if we are still here, to school and work and other things we may do; remember you have been redeemed by precious blood. The ransom price was according to the shekel of the sanctuary. Paul says "Do ye not know ... ye are not your own? For ye have been bought with a price", 1 Cor 6: 19, 20. And Paul goes on to say, "glorify now then God in your body". That touches everything I do in my life, does it not? I put my hands to something and I remember, I have been bought with a price. The shekel is there in the sanctuary; the standard remains unchanged. You go out to school, and you might keep company with persons, but suddenly you remember that the shekel is there through God's grace. It is not making anything of me, but there is a difference. The Lord Jesus shed His precious

blood to secure me, not just for eternity but now also, to hold me for God. How wonderful that is. "Glorify now then God in your body".

So it says, "This shall they give - every one that passeth among them that are numbered - half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary, - twenty gerahs the shekel; a half shekel shall be the heave-offering for Jehovah. Every one that passeth among those that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give the heave-offering of Jehovah. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less". You could not add to the work of Christ, could you? You could not add to your redemption however much you have. It stands in its distinctiveness. If I sought to contribute something to the work of Christ it would be the man that had to be removed seeking to add something to the shekel of the sanctuary; but God has His standard. He says, 'I am satisfied with all that the Lord Jesus has done, and that work is perfect and complete, that blood is still before God in all its intrinsic value because that is sufficient and nothing could add to it': "The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less". Why should I live with a lesser appreciation of the work of Christ? Paul has to remind the Corinthians of this; they were going along with all sorts of things. Those epistles to the Corinthians bring out the standards that God has set for the believer's life in the assembly. It touches on everything: it touches on marriage; there is a standard, a divine standard. In the world it is said, 'Get married and, if it does not work, you divorce and get someone else'. That is not the shekel of the sanctuary. The divine standard is that marriage takes character from Christ and the assembly. I speak humbly of that; we are tested in our own circumstances but that is the standard for marriage and we should not think that there is an alternative. The shekel of the sanctuary remains in the presence of God.

"Thou shalt take the atonement-money of the children of Israel, and devote it to the service of the tent of meeting; and it shall be a memorial to the children of Israel before Jehovah, to make atonement for your souls". In Numbers it is the Levites that are numbered. Levites, as we know, consisted of three families; the Kohathites, the Merarites and the Gershonites. They each had their area of responsibility, and each one of them was necessary, and each one of them was important. You say, 'I am not sitting taking meetings'; you can give thanks for that; but you have your own area of responsibility in service Godward. Each one of us does. In this dispensation, we are each taken up to serve God. The Levites had no inheritance; Jehovah was their inheritance. Is that not

the same for us? What a wonderful inheritance. Paul speaks of it; “to know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, if any way I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead”, Phil 3: 10, 11. You think of the inheritance Paul was enjoying and he was pressing on, in order that he might come into it even more. What an inheritance there is for each one of us. “Jehovah, he is their inheritance”, Deut 18: 2. We were speaking in the reading about how we take up our place in responsibility in the testimony; I say for myself, take it up in the light of the fact that Jehovah is your inheritance, and you are here to serve Him. Each one of us is here to serve Him. It says, “and the Levites shall be mine: I am Jehovah”, Num 3: 45. They were here to serve God. As Mr Darby says,

To serve thee here on earth, unknown;
Then share thy heavenly bliss. Hymn 411

That is the portion for the saints today; to be here with God as our object, Christ as our resource, the Spirit as resource and power within the believer. But why? That God might be served. "Let us", the writer of Hebrews says, "... serve God acceptably with reverence and fear", chap 12: 28. In what we do in our daily path and in our assembly walk, let us remember that we are here to serve God. We had a young sister who asked for fellowship a little while back and I asked her, 'Why do you not go back to the church where you were converted?' She said, 'I could not do that, for that church has man as its object. I want to take up my place in a company that has God as its object.' That is a Levite; she already had in view that her path here is to serve God. That is the path for each one of us; it is a worthy one, and the standard of service is in keeping with the shekel of the sanctuary. Christ is the standard. If you think of any service Godward, you find it in Him; what a service, both when He was here, and now serving before God. We have such a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens. What a service; it is going on, even at the present time, supporting those who are passing through circumstances which otherwise would be overwhelming, but the great High Priest is there supporting them. What is He doing it for? In order that they might be liberated and be here in keeping with the shekel of the sanctuary. How wonderful Christ is. Think of Him as the One who is leading the praises as the Minister of the sanctuary. What services the Lord Jesus undertakes! What response Godward He secures and is maintaining, and has maintained, right down through

this dispensation! What a Man the Lord Jesus is! There in the presence of God, and yet, alongside the glory and attractiveness of the Man, is the border of gold that was round the altar and round the ark and round the table; a border of gold, speaking from every direction that you looked of the divinity and glory and majesty of the One who alone could uphold everything by the word of His power. What a Person, and we are held if we are in relation to such a One. It may be wrongly said to you, 'Christianity is dying out': but there is a living Man upholding all things for God, and He is upholding all according to the pattern, and He is upholding men according to the shekel of the sanctuary.

May we prove it, for His Name's sake,

Birmingham

10th March 2012

OUR CIRCUMSTANCES ORDERED OF GOD

Calum McKay

Philippians 1: 6; 4: 11, 12; 1: 12-14

An extract was printed in a monthly magazine recently from Mr Raven's ministry (vol 13 p113), in which he spoke of our circumstances and how we are to be in our circumstances in our daily lives and our pathways down here. It set me thinking about them and looking into it a little bit, and one thing that strikes me is that it is a great comfort for the believer to know that his circumstances are ordered of God. God has ordered all our circumstances with a view to our greatest possible gain and spiritual development. It takes faith to lay hold of that. The unbeliever does not have that at all. He has no faith. He has no link with God and therefore he is exposed to all the ups and downs of this life. When something displeasing happens to him, he perhaps bemoans his bad luck or whatever he might say. There is no ordering in it, there is no purpose in it, but the portion of the believer by faith has a great comfort and a great stay, I am sure, in seeing that his circumstances are ordered of God. I remember a brother saying that he did not suppose there was any of us that would not like in some way to have some of our circumstances changed: perhaps as regards family life, or work life, or in relation to our local assembly, or whatever it may be, he did not think there would be anyone who had everything entirely pleasing to them. God works with us in that way; He puts us through experiences in view of what is pleasing to Himself.

So I read of Paul. We get an insight in Paul; we get a good bit of detail as to his experiences and his exercises and his feelings too, in relation to all that he passed through, and he is really an example for us. He speaks of himself as a model, Phil 3: 17. So I started with God, "who has begun in you a good work will complete it unto Jesus Christ's day". We have the knowledge of that, that God has worked. He has begun a work sovereignly, in new birth, in each one of us and we are so thankful for that and we know that He is going to complete it. I do not think God begins any matter at all without taking it to completion. I do not think that could be so, but God has in view the completion of the work in each one of us. Now it is a question, I suppose, of how we are to be in our circumstances. Paul speaks, in chapter 4, about privation in the circumstances in which he was. He speaks of knowing, "I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound ... both to be full and to be

hungry, both to abound and to suffer privation". I do not suppose there would be any of us that would know anything like what Paul experienced as regards physical privation. He goes over it in the second epistle to the Corinthians, seeking, you might say, to win their confidence and win their ear. He, almost in spite of himself, goes over some of his physical privation. He says, in 2 Corinthians 11, "in labours exceedingly abundant, in stripes to excess, in prisons exceedingly abundant, in deaths oft. From the Jews five times have I received forty stripes, save one. Thrice have I been scourged, once I have been stoned, three times I have suffered shipwreck, a night and day I passed in the deep: in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own race, in perils from the nations, in perils from the city, in perils in the desert, in perils on the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labour and toil, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness", v 23-27. What a list that is! At one time he speaks of his "despair even of living", 2 Cor 1: 8. You can see how much he suffered as he fulfilled the will of God for him, as he took on the divine commission for him and what it involved for him. I think he is an example in the way that he is, in his circumstances. He had learnt in those circumstances in which he was to be satisfied in himself. I do not think he tried to change his circumstances. He had resources in divine Persons that allowed him to be entirely at peace and restful in his circumstances. Mr James Taylor speaks from his own experience about how he had long since given up trying to order his own circumstances and trying to order his own affairs. It was his own experience, and when somebody speaks from their own experience it adds particular weight because it is not just doctrine, right and good as that is, but when someone speaks from something they have actually experienced it carries its own weight. He found that God was able to order his circumstances and order his affairs far better than he could ever do, so he had long since given up trying. He says, that we should commit everything to God in all our circumstances, and that is a wonderful thing. At the same time he said he had no anxiety at all as to his circumstances, vol 1 p153-154. It is a wonderful thing, and I think that is available to us. We can do that and have no anxiety at all in relation to our circumstances. It is very testing, as I know what it is in my own experience to get anxious as to things, but he proved that. So Paul goes over this list. He goes over all these, you might say, outward difficulties in his circumstances but then he says at the end of the list, "Besides those things that are without", that was the external or

physical things, “the crowd of cares pressing on me daily, the burden of all the assemblies”, 2 Cor 11: 28. He obviously felt responsibility. Times are always critical, but the time of which he was writing was particularly critical for the establishing of local assemblies and the furtherance of the glad tidings. You might say it would have been frustrating for him to be writing here from the prison. He was not able to be with the brethren. He was not able to go out and preach. He was in restricted circumstances, and you might have thought that would have been a very testing matter for him, but God gave him to know that the circumstances in which he was “turned out rather to the furtherance of the glad tidings”. They had not been for the hindrance of things at all. God had used the circumstances in which he was *rather* for the furtherance of the glad tidings, “so that my bonds have become manifest as being in Christ in all the praetorium and to all others; and that the most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord through my bonds, dare more abundantly to speak the word of God fearlessly”. He was given to see that, in the circumstances in which he was, God was using them for “the furtherance of the glad tidings”. I think it is a fine thing for us to have the faith of it, and to come to some realisation that God is using the circumstances in which we are for our benefit. God is our Father. He has our best interests at heart and He would use all these things for our benefit.

God would use them for Himself, too. There is a reference in the Song of Songs where it says -

Awake, north wind, and come, thou south;
Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow forth.
Let my beloved come into his garden,
And eat its precious fruits. chap 4: 16.

God works in that way; the north wind speaking of those trying circumstances and the south wind speaking of the pleasing circumstances in which we are. Scripture says that, “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to purpose” (Rom 8: 28) - both the trying circumstances and the pleasing ones. God uses them all for our benefit and for His own pleasure. We have known what it is when we have trying circumstances to resort more to prayer and feel more dependant, and there is no doubt that God gets something from that. Then perhaps we have been guilty of being negligent in not turning to God in thanksgiving when circumstances have been more pleasing and favourable in God's

ordering. And so it says -

Let my beloved come into his garden,
And eat its precious fruits.

There is something for the divine pleasure in what we pass through. Well, I just wondered if it might be a comfort to us, and a stay to us, to see that our circumstances are not haphazard; they are not according to chance. God is ordering them, and He has placed us in the very circumstances which are best for our blessing, best for our spiritual prosperity.

He is going to complete that work. He who has begun in you a good work is going to complete it, but not only is He going to complete it, but complete it *unto Jesus Christ's day*. That is the day of Jesus Christ. That is the millennium. That is the time when we will reign. It has been pointed out in ministry as to Joseph, that he is a figure of the believer in the way that his experiences in prison circumstances qualified him for the reigning time, CAC vol 1 p229. I understand he was seventeen when the testing came, and he was sold by his brethren; a type of the Lord Jesus of course, and he spent many years in prison. It says Jehovah was with him in the prison. Then, at the age of thirty, thirteen years later, he was finally brought to stand before Pharaoh and he is exalted and given a place of administration. Those years he spent in prison were spent in difficult conditions, in adverse conditions, and the time for us is adverse. In Matthew's gospel the Lord was up the mountain, the disciples were in the boat and "the wind was contrary", Matt 14: 24. That is a picture of the present day. The scene is adverse, the conditions are adverse, constantly adverse, but God is using them in view of that day, Jesus Christ's day, the day when the saints will reign with Christ. What we experience here, what we prove here, and the wisdom and the knowledge of God that is acquired here, God will use, and the saints will be qualified and made fit for that glorious position of reigning with Christ in that day. I just thought it might be a comfort and a stay to see that our circumstances are ordered of God. May we be encouraged for His Name's sake.

Glasgow

21st February 2012

