

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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FOLLOWING THE ARK

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DS My exercise in taking up this reading, dear brethren, is that we may see the will of God in the ark, a type of the Lord Jesus, and that we may see the attractiveness of it, that we may follow after it. We may see that my will has to go, that I may follow and become formed by another order of Man - that is, a Man distinguished from every other man. The will of God is a very large subject, and cannot be taken up in one reading, but I wondered if we could look at it in the context of the ark, the thought of the testimony first of all. We have the One who was the Ark of the covenant and goes through the Jordan. There were two thousand cubits between the people and the ark. The ark of the testimony is seen in Deuteronomy 10. Moses had been told to go up the mountain and hew two tables of stone like the first; and come down and put them in the ark. The children of Israel could not keep the law, could not keep God's commandments. There was only One who could. The ark was made of acacia wood, and the wood as we know from Exodus was overlaid with gold inside and out, chap 25: 11. The overlaying of the wood is very interesting, and we can get help about it together. It has been helpfully pointed out that the wood is for God, and the gold is for testimony. We can see One here that God is going to commit Himself to. Moses came down with the two tables of stone and he puts them into the ark which he had made. The Lord Jesus was not an afterthought, speaking reverently and carefully; He was One who was ready, who was committed: "Lo, I come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do, O God, thy will", Heb 10: 7. Here was One who was ready to keep it and to fulfil it to the glory of God.

I read these Old Testament scriptures, and more in the New Testament, to show these thoughts. The second one relates to the gospel; the testimony was fulfilled; there was One who was about His Father's business, One on whom the heavens were opened, whom the heavens could declare. There were the thirty years of the Lord's private life, and not much was recorded of it; but that was for God alone. Here He was coming out in public service, and the enemy was doing his utmost to overthrow Him. It is very interesting that the enemy had

completed his work at that point. The enemy faced a dependent Man; the order of Man that God is going to fill the universe with, the Man who had done the will of God. That will will pervade the coming day; but it is to fill our hearts now. We are to do that will. I wonder if Deuteronomy would link with John's gospel, as to the One in whose steps we are to follow, at a distance of two thousand cubits. It is the character of the Man, the lowly Man, the One who is going to endure; but here He was in the glory of His Person, and there are the two thousand cubits: "I lay down my life that I may take it again". Right through John's gospel we see One who cared for the sheep, One that cared for His own; One who had feelings as a Man. Think of John 4, where it says that "he sat just as he was at the fountain", verse 6. Then in relation to Lazarus, it says that He wept, chap 11: 35. There were the feelings of a real Man, but One who was carrying the will of God through to completion.

If we are going to contemplate that Man, and follow in His steps, we need to take up Exodus, I believe. This is what led me to this thought because we read this locally a few weeks back. It is very encouraging to think that we come to the waters of Marah as soon as we come over the Red Sea. We see what Christ has accomplished for us but, as we go on in the wilderness path, there will always be matters or exercises that will hinder us in pursuing the way. We have to change; my will will never do. Here the waters of Marah became sweet as the wood was applied. The wood speaks of the will of another Man, that order of Manhood that is so pleasing to God. As the wood is applied, the waters become sweet. I have to change my direction, and I see that God's will is greater than mine; and as I see that there is blessing in it. It says, "they came to Elim; and twelve springs of water were there, and seventy palm trees; and they encamped there". There is movement as we move to follow the ark in relation to the will of God, but we must see it first in Himself. I wondered if we could get help in these thoughts? The Spirit may help us to see that order of Man that is so pleasing to God.

EFW To have an Object for our walk is everything, is it not? It saves wandering, it saves apprehension that is fairly easy for the flesh; but you have an Object, you are going forward. Is that what is in your mind?

DS Yes, that is very helpful; to have an Object for our mind and for our affections, for our hearts. It is the same Object that God has and He is there in heaven, "crowned with glory and honour" (Heb 2: 9); He is the same Object that God had when He was here. The heavens could

open and He could make that declaration; never before had there been a Man fully in accord with the will of God; and that is the ark. The ark is one of the greatest types in the Old Testament. It is good to see the type in relation to the Lord; it opens the scripture up for us, and the Spirit would help us in relation to that, I am sure.

SFE It is hard to give up our wills, but the will of God is not arduous, is it? The will of God helps us to centre everything in Christ. So, the quicker we yield, the greater the benefit for all of us, or for me personally?

DS Yes, very true: the quicker we give up our own wills. We will see what comes out in Exodus 15, that they apply the wood; it is the desire to come under the will of Another. These are not things that are automatic, or quick or easy to go through for the believer, because naturally speaking, even if I have put my faith and trust in Christ, I still want to go on with my own will. I will never come into full blessing unless I commit myself to the will of Another. And He is the One who has gone that way, and we are to follow in His footsteps. He has left us a model, that we should follow in His steps, 1 Pet 2: 21. I think the ark in this context is a model that we can follow.

SFE The Lord Himself uttered the most powerful words one can think of: “not my will, but thine be done” (Luke 22: 42) in relation to His own pathway, and that is a divine Person speaking.

DS It is very glorious to take account of that, is it not? This blessed Person emptied Himself; He took a bondman's form (Phil 2: 7); He committed Himself in relation to every detail of His life, “not my will, but thine be done”. That should bring out worship and thanksgiving from every one that has faith in Jesus, that there is One who came in to fulfil God's will and completed it to God's glory.

AEM Would you say something then about the ark here being ready for these tables of stone? You referred to it in your opening remarks. Moses brought down the second tables, and the ark was ready for them to be laid there.

DS The Lord as coming into Manhood was not an afterthought. He was One who came in as was always in divine purpose. It was the will of God that this blessed Man should come at the time when it was right. Every other man had been tried, but God brought in *His* Man, the Man who was able and willing, and suitable. The acacia wood speaks of what was able to carry everything through, and every believer should

have their affections secured in connection with another order of Man, because this is the Man upon whom God is centring His universe. The whole of the world to come will be in relation to the will of that order of Man.

AEM I was thinking of the divine complacency in what was to be there in Jesus. These two tables were brought down and there was immediately a place for them to be laid. God's complacency was in having such a Man ready for that.

DS What a delight it must have been to heaven! We see what has come in: that blessed Man was insignificant as far as the world is concerned. He did not come in in pomp and glory, but He came in as a babe, in smallness and outward weakness, but there was moral beauty reflected in a Man who was going to carry everything through for the will of God. That is something for every real believer to set their hearts upon.

DAB Would you say more about your comment earlier in relation to the ark that the wood was for God and the gold was for testimony, bearing in mind especially that the gold is not mentioned here?

DS The gold is referred to in the scripture in Exodus 25: 11. I am only quoting what I have read (JT vol 4 p 459), but I think it is an interesting comment, that the wood really was the Lord's pathway, and that is why I read in Luke's gospel because there was One whom the gold could be put upon. The wood was really the Manhood of Jesus here in the thirty years of His private life, and as walking through in relation to a commitment to the will of God - "I ought to be occupied in my Father's business", Luke 2: 49. God found His delight in one Man, and that Man is the One He was able to put the gold upon. The gold was inside and it was outside; there was that in Christ inwardly and outwardly which was consistent - "Altogether that which I also say to you", John 8: 25.

DAB I was just thinking about your comment. We know as to the first giving of the law that the people failed, and what Moses is referring to here is the replacement, the tables of stone like the first; but, as was said, there was somewhere where they could be placed. Are you saying that that corresponds to the life of Jesus of which we do not have a full record. The tables were not put in the ark at the age of thirty, were they? God had found His delight in Someone who carried the law in His heart. And *that* is what came out in testimony.

DS That is exactly what I was thinking, that God found His delight in this order of Man. He was tried and He was tested, and He was the One whom God could anoint and heaven could delight in. Think of the delight of divine Persons, the Spirit and the Father united in their appreciation of this blessed Man who was going to complete and fulfil the will of God. It is another order of Man altogether.

DAB We would like to know what had happened in those thirty years, but we know enough - the Father was delighted in it.

NJH The history shows that the old man cannot go through the wilderness; they all failed. God is introducing an order of Man that can be sustained in the wilderness. His food was to do the will of Him that had sent Him (John 4: 34); it is another order of Man.

DS That is helpful. God was introducing an order of Man who could be sustained in the wilderness, and that should encourage every true believer, as they seek to do the will of Another, they do not do it in their own strength, but by another food. Everything that went before the coming of the Lord Jesus showed that man failed, and man failed again; and God went on with man in grace. But then He waited until this point to bring in the Man who would fulfil it; and to carry it through, to overcome everything that the enemy could put in His way.

RMB Would it be right to say that, in the actual giving of the law, God had Christ in mind? It was not only that He was the only Man that could fulfil it, but God had Him before Him when He gave the law; so that the Lord could say, "Think not that I am come to make void the law or the prophets; I am not come to make void, but to fulfil", Matt 5: 17.

DS I think that is a helpful way of pointing it out, that God always had Christ in mind. That is why it is helpful when you see what is referred to in the passage in Deuteronomy, that the tables came down and the ark was ready for the tables to be put into. There was a Man ready to take up that will. God always had Him in mind, before time began. The Lord was not an afterthought - we speak reverently and carefully because of who He is - but God always had Him in mind because God's thought can never fail. We have to see that it will be fulfilled in a Man, and that order of Man is to be reproduced in the saints.

RMB As to the Lord's words in Matthew, when He said "I am not come to make void, but to fulfil", there is a lengthy note there. Mr Darby says it forbids the sense of obedience to commandments. It gives the idea that the law sketched certain things in outline, but the fulness of it was

set forth in the life of Christ.

DS I think what you say as to the fulness being fulfilled and demonstrated in the life of Christ is good. It is very attractive to see that He does not only fulfil it but He shows it to others; it shows the attractiveness of committing ourselves to the will of Another, so that others - the disciples and those who were with Him - could take up this pathway. Then it could be committed to others and right down to this point, that there would be others who would follow this order of Manhood. God has only one Man, and one order of Man, that can fulfil it and it has been brought out in Christ.

PM Is that seen in the reference to the “roll of the book”? - “Lo, I come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do, O God, thy will”. I wondered if the Lord Jesus, in referring to that, gives some of what was for the divine pleasure even before He came into Manhood. When that book was written, divine Persons were rejoicing that there was one Man who would fulfil the will of God.

DS That is what I wondered, and I think what you point to is helpful; it was in divine purpose before time began. Think of the joy there must have been for heaven when this Man was seen on this earth, a perfect Man, an obedient Man, and a Man who was able to endure every contradiction and every other thing that the enemy could throw against Him. The One who in the purpose of His heart was committed to the will of God; every day, every moment of His life gave pleasure to the Father. That was never seen in any other man before.

PM That passage goes on, “by which will we have been sanctified”, Heb 10: 10. That has in mind that there are men set apart for the accomplishing and working out of that will in persons here.

DS I wondered that, and that is the attractiveness of Christianity, that God shows everything first of all in the perfection of one Man, and then He gives us the wherewithal to fulfil it. We have the power of the Spirit here and a Head in heaven. So that our wills can be removed, and we can go on in relation to the will of Another. Christ always shows us the pattern; He is the pattern for everything and He has left us “a **model** that ye should follow in his steps”. There are certain things in the two thousand cubits that belong to Him alone, the distinctiveness of who He is in His Person, but there is the attractiveness of the *testimony* of Christ which we can seek to take up and maintain.

DSB It says “thou hast prepared me a body” (Heb 10: 5); does that

link with the ability to receive these two tables?

DS Yes, I think what you point out is helpful. I would like help myself as to the matter of preparing a body. There was a Vessel here ready to receive these two tables of stone and commit Himself wholeheartedly to the will of Another. The thought of the body is a vessel, which was able to contain what was in the mind and heart of God. This was not something that was just written down, but it was seen corporeally in a Man here; and not only that but others could be attracted to it.

GAB Moses hewed these tables himself. On the previous occasion, God provided the tables (Exod 24: 12), as though God is setting out His demands, and man was totally unable to meet that and they had to be broken; but now we have a Man, suggested in Moses himself, I suppose, who is able to meet every requirement to God's pleasure.

DS So are you looking at Moses as a type of the Lord Himself, as writing this law down and then going through to fulfil it? He knew what He was coming to fulfil. It was no light matter for the Lord Jesus as coming into Manhood. He was a real Man; He was in the same condition as you and me, sin apart; and He felt it. He felt for man, He felt for the condition that man was in; but He was One who was committed wholeheartedly as writing these two tables. I think that is very attractive, the wholehearted committal of One who would go on. Later on, he says, "My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; but not as *I* will, but as *thou* wilt" (Matt 26: 39); that is the completion of these two tables.

EFW Why are there two tables?

DS I do not know.

JW Two usually refers to adequate testimony. It links on with what you were saying as to the testimony; the fulness of testimony there was in Christ. It says prophetically of the Lord, "thy law is within my heart", Ps 40: 8. Does correspondence with us begin when we can say, "I delight in the law of God according to the inward man", Rom 7: 22?

DS I think that is very helpful; so it becomes part of my affections. I think that is a very good scripture, and it shows the Lord taking the matter on, not in a mechanical way, but it was His affections because He was fulfilling the law of God in order to bring others in, and to bring in a universe which was going to be for the glory and pleasure of God, and for the pleasure of Christ.

DAB The ten commandments are in two directions, are they not? They cover my righteousness towards God and my righteousness towards my neighbour. For example, “thou shalt love Jehovah thy God” (Deut 6: 5), “Thou shalt not make thyself any graven image” (Exod 20: 4); and “Thou shalt not steal” (Exod 20: 15) are different in their objects. Both sides were seen perfectly in Christ: He was everything that God looked for in man, and He was everything that man should be to his fellow as well.

DS I think that is very helpful. It is worth pointing out, so that we can see the two sides. He was everything that man should be according to God, and everything that God found His pleasure in as a Man. So that you can see that this will pervade in a day to come. Think of the millennial period when this will pervade: what a time of glory that will be to God! I think there is a greater glory now in a sense when man is doing his own will, everyone doing what is right in his own eyes. But there are those in this scene who are seeking in their affections the attractiveness of another order of Man. They are waiting themselves, and finding the blessing as committing themselves to it.

DAB The Lord speaks about one of the commandments which is not in the ten words. They asked Him what is the greatest commandment and He refers to their homage to God, but then He says, “And the second is like it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matt 22: 39); and those two wonderful features were seen in the humanity of Jesus. You might say He was the perfect Man for God, but He was the perfect Man for us too.

DS It is very attractive what you are bringing out.

RMB The two commandments that have been referred to are the foundation of the ten commandments. It is generally understood that the first four deal with loving God, and the last six with loving your neighbour. It is traditionally thought that the first four went on one tablet, and the other six on the other; which answers to the question why there were two.

DS It shows the perfect balance that there was in this order of Man.

NJH I am thinking that in the life of Christ, He says, “I and the Father are one” (John 10: 30); the witness of two men are accepted in law, and He says in John, “I am one who bear witness concerning myself, and the Father who has sent me bears witness concerning me”, John 8: 18. There was something extraordinary in that blessed Man. I am just

thinking of what is being said as to the two tables. John develops the great thought that, in everything He did, the Father was there, the Father was doing things in Christ. "I and the Father are one", is a tremendous truth to lay hold of.

DS I do not know that I could say much about it but it is very attractive. It shows again that there is something beyond us in this blessed Man; and yet He has become a Man, but in the majesty and glory of His Person He is always God.

AEM I like the word that has been used, that what was there was extraordinary, and in the scripture in Luke, the word is, "in thee I have found my delight". It is not exactly what He has done, although that would have been so, but "in thee I have found my delight". That was what was for God. Later on, when He stands up in the synagogue, He says, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your ears", Luke 4: 21. That is the other side, but there is a beauty in the Person being delightful to heaven.

DS "In thee I have found my delight"; there had been no testimony publicly up to that point. It is what He found in the Person, and there was One who was going to commit Himself wholeheartedly. He had never found that before; but then there is a public side. Jesus is tested by the enemy, but then He is coming out as One that was going out towards mankind; and that is the gold, that is what God could put upon Him. That was what was there for man to see, another order of Man altogether. It says later on in that chapter that they "wondered at the words of grace that were going out of his mouth" (Luke 4: 22); never could that be said of any other order of man or any other man previously.

JW The Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form as a dove upon Him. Is that like the gold being put upon the acacia wood? It emphasises what you are saying as to testimony, that God should be known in such an attractive way, and the Holy Spirit coming in a bodily form. It shows that the Spirit was entirely complacent in that order of manhood.

DS Yes, I like your word as to entirely complacent. There was One who was full of the Holy Spirit, and from that point He moved out as under the hand of the Spirit against the enemy. He was a real Man but a Man that was full of the Spirit. The Spirit strengthened Him, and the Spirit directed Him, and He moved here in complete dependence. I think that is a very attractive thing to see, as we see the Lord moving out

in public testimony to another order of Man altogether that had never been seen before.

DJW The body that was prepared for Him, Luke tells us that it was “the holy thing” (chap 1: 35), as if He was unique, and He stands out distinct in the way. But then Luke's gospel also brings out the features in His Manhood that were perfect morally, such as dependence; He was seen praying more in Luke's gospel than any other gospel. Are you thinking that these are the kind of features that can be found in us by the Spirit?

DS I wondered that, and that is what took me to Luke's gospel, because the testimony comes out in a dependent Man, a Man who was here dependent on the Spirit, and dependent on His Father, “I do always the things that are pleasing to him”, John 8: 29. He never did anything, or made any comment - speaking reverently - that did not come first of all from what was in the Father's heart, or the Father's desire for Him. That was a wonderful thing; it was there to be seen. There were those who were opposing Him, and in everything He was a Man dependent upon His God. And is that not something that is attractive to the believer?

DJW “All ... wondered at the words of grace that were coming out from his mouth”. It was the anointed Man, and that conveys what can be seen shining out. That is the attractive side, is it?

DS It is something that is tangible; I think that there is something in the Saviour that is tangible, for every believer. I hope that everyone here, even the young ones, has had a session with Jesus so that they see something attractive in Him, something that God has found His delight in.

PJW The devil tried to take Him out of that dependence. But he says, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God”, Luke 4: 4. He failed in that temptation as in every other, but His attempt was to try to get the Lord out of the sphere of dependent manhood.

DS Yes, that is the acacia wood which was able to endure and to go through. The enemy tried his utmost, and his hardest, with every resource that he had, and there was One who was speaking in relation to the will of God; it was His food - think of what He fed upon. “He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed” (Isa 50: 4); that was another order of Man.

PJW Gethsemane has already been referred to; again, the enemy brought everything to bear upon Him, but He said, “not my will, but thine be done”. The only thing that the pressure brought out was absolute perfection; “tempted in all things” (Heb 4: 15), the apostle said, “**in** like manner, sin apart”.

DS I think what you say is good, that every temptation and every trial of man or of the enemy only brought out the gold, brought out the beauty and order of manhood that was in Jesus. The harder the enemy tried, the more the gold shone out of this order of manhood.

PM Was it also a feature of that dependence that He waited for the Holy Spirit to descend upon Him before He moved in public service? In the perfection of His Manhood, He could have moved in service at any time, but He waited until the Spirit came upon Him. I wondered if that brought out the distinctive dependence of the Lord Jesus.

DS Yes, I think that is very interesting, that he waited on the Spirit coming upon Him, descending in a bodily form as a dove; and then He went out in relation to a testimony where there is obstruction, where there is difficulty, where there were going to be many things that would stand against Him, but He was able in dependent manhood to rely upon the resources of heaven. I would like to understand more as to what is in your mind.

PM I do not think I can say more, save to worship the One who was here, seeing in the pleasure that the Spirit had in descending upon One who was fully in keeping with every feature that He looked for in a Man here in flesh and blood. I wondered if that came out in the energy that follows; and then it says immediately, “But Jesus”.

DS This is part of what you were speaking about earlier, that blessed Man was in divine purpose before the foundation of the world. Think of divine Persons working out that this blessed Man should come in, and that He should relate Himself to the Spirit in order to fulfil a testimony which was going to be for the glory of God, a testimony to man here.

RWF It says in Luke 4: 1, “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness”, and again after the temptations, “And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee”. It is interesting to reflect that that resource that was available to Christ is available to us; and the service is to occupy us with that One in whom this power to overcome was fully demonstrated.

DS Yes. I am impressed with what you say, that the power is available to the believer. But we have always got to remember that Jesus was *full* of the Holy Spirit. We are *filled*, because there is that which has to be removed in us, but there was never anything that had to be removed in this blessed Person. He was always full of the Spirit, and His service was always in the power of the Spirit. This is what led me to refer to this passage, "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit. It says, "and a rumour went out into the whole surrounding country about him and *he* taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all".

PJW In connection with what has just been said, it says, "do ye remain in the city till ye be clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24: 49); so that the same power was available in men who were really like Christ, do you think? Then they moved out in that power, and as He said, "he shall do greater than these, because I go to the Father", John 14: 12.

DS I think that is helpful what you are pointing out, that the wonderful divine resource that was seen in a dependent Man is here for every dependent and true Christian. And they were to wait for power from on high; that power is not from ourselves - or even in the ministry books - it is not anywhere else but in Christ. It is in the Holy Spirit who has come from an ascended Man in heaven.

We should move on. I only read that scripture in Joshua to relate it to John's gospel, because I think that following the footsteps of this blessed Man relates to the two thousand cubits. There was One who going to go into death, but He was not going to go into death in weakness but He was going to go into death in power. As following in the two thousand cubits, we stand back and see the glory of a Man who says in John's gospel, "I lay down my life that I may take it again", chap 10: 17. We are to follow as those who are His sheep, those who belong to and are cared for by Him. As we go through John's gospel, we see the Lord as a real Man. We see Him in relation to the woman in John 4; He says, "thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water", verse 10. Think of the character of the Man that was here; think of Him in relation to Lazarus. "Jesus wept" (John 11: 35); that was a real Man that was here. But *who* was here? I think that as we follow the order of Man that was pleasurable to God, we have to be careful and to look, we may say, at a distance of two thousand cubits, at the glory of a Man who is carrying through everything for the pleasure of God. "I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from

me ... I have received this commandment of my Father", John 10: 17, 18.

AJMcS I was struck with what has been said as to the Lord Jesus as to His distinctiveness. The other side is that there is an affinity of nature between the Shepherd and the sheep. We have often said that John's sheep do not go astray; there is something in the Shepherd that they find delightful and it keeps them near to Himself. It is wonderful to see the way these things are blended in chapter 10. As you are helpfully saying, there is what is distinctive to Christ. He is the only One who can lay down His life and take it again; He is the only One who is able to do that, but on the other hand the sheep are like the Shepherd and they have an affinity in nature, do you think?

DS What you say as to an affinity in nature with this blessed Man is very helpful: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me", John 10: 27. It speaks earlier of many other voices, but they do not follow them; there is an attractiveness in the voice of the Shepherd, One who leads them out, and they have life and they have it abundantly. It is wonderful to see sheep following a shepherd; and you have to follow Him to where He has come in, and where He has been, and to where He is. It is wonderful to see the Lord Jesus as distinctive, the One who has gone into death, gone through the Jordan. As to the two thousand cubits, it has been rightly taught that we have to go that way likewise, and to take up the stones and come up out of the Jordan as those who are a testimony that we have died with that blessed Man. There is life; there is One who has life in mind. We can take account of One who is in control. I do not think John's gospel gives us the victim exactly, but it gives the One who has gone through in victorious power, that the enemy cannot touch and man cannot touch.

BHC I was thinking of how John the baptist could say, "Behold the Lamb of God". He beheld a Man walking here, and it says that the two disciples followed Jesus, and then they abode with Him that day, John 1: 35-39. I was wondering if there was something in that; what living conditions they were brought into, into the secret of that relationship between the Father and the Son.

DS Right through John's gospel we see the Lord as leading, and the way He brings in life in relation to many individuals. I think it is helpful what you are pointing out, that the Lord has life in mind, but in order to bring us into life, as we see from John 10 and later on, the Lord was leading into death. There was instruction going on; He was giving

them an indication in secret of where He was about to go; He was going to His Father. He was also giving an indication of the relationship that was going to be established by One who would lay down His life that He might take it again. Divine purpose comes into that again: "I have received this commandment of my Father". These things were worked out before time began and there was a blessed Man, not only willing to do it but able to do it.

RMB Would you say something for our practical help as to how we determine what the will of God is in a particular situation? It is so wonderful to contemplate the Lord Jesus and His committal to it and, sitting here, I suppose we would all agree that we ought to be governed by the will of God; but the test is how that works in practice. Help us as to how we identify what the will of God might be for us.

DS That might relate to my last scripture in Exodus; as we go through the Red Sea there is what Christ has accomplished for me as One who has triumphed and defeated the enemy; but then I come on to different ground but I am still here in flesh and blood, I am still here in the wilderness and I need to be sustained. I am still one who will want to do my own will, but I think as we move on in these steps, we come to the bitter waters. God will always test His own work; He will always test what is within the believer, in order that there may be progress, that we may move forward. And, as we do so we come to Elim, we come to the twelve springs of water. We come to an area that will reward us, for those who are prepared to overcome and to overcome what is in ourselves; and not to do our own will but to do the will of Another.

DAB I was wondering if some more could be said about the remark about affinity. He says as to the sheep knowing Him, "as the Father knows me and I know the Father" (John 10: 15); I am just reminded by our brother's question about an article by Mr Darby about how to know the will of the Father (Collected Writings vol 16 p18). He shows that there is no magic formula but that, if a son that did not know his father's will, you would conclude that he was estranged from his father. I wondered if nearness to the Father, as we see in Jesus, is the answer to our brother's question?

DS I think that is very attractive and very helpful. So this matter of following is to continue; the affections are moved in relation to another order of Man; not only to see that He will carry me through the wilderness, that He will carry me right in to the joy and fulfilment of the purpose of God; but He has a relationship with the Father where He

desires to bring me: "I go to prepare you a place ... that where I am ye also may be", John 14: 2, 3.

DAB I was just noticing that the children of Israel had as it were to be commanded as to their journey through the Jordan, but in John 10 the Lord *draws* His sheep, does He not? It is done by attraction and affinity, is it not?

DS I think everything in Christianity is attraction to a Person. It is not a system, it is not a book of rules, something that is put on a screen on a wall, it is a Person. And I say again to the young here, as you put your faith and trust in Jesus, God desires that you should move in your steps in relation to another order of Man, because there is more attraction, more in Christ than you will ever understand; there is something further that the Spirit would open up as to the glory of that Man.

GAB There are two instances in John's gospel where the Lord discloses to persons who He actually is - the woman in chapter 4, and the man in John 9. He sat there by the well, wearied with the way He had come - that is really the ark of wood, is it not? But, when He says, "He that speaks with thee is he" (John 9: 37), that really involves the two thousand cubits, do you think? The Lord put mud on the eyes of the man in John 9; and yet He says, "Thou hast both seen him, and he that speaks with thee is he".

DS I think we see it right through John's gospel, and I think what you bring in is very practical and very helpful. It shows the nearness of the relationship in which that blessed Man was, because He will come into my circumstances and He will come near to me in order for me to see the beauty and glory that is in Himself, and to take me for a relationship which He enjoys. That is the grace of Christianity, that there is One who has come in as Man, taking up the will of God. We see the attractiveness of that - He comes near to me, He takes up my situation, and takes on my circumstances; but then in doing so I am attracted to see who He is in the glory of His Person.

DJW The Lord says, "thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me after", John 13: 36. Was "thou canst not follow me now" linked with the two thousand cubits? It brings out a spirit of worship, that none could follow where He went. But "thou shalt follow me after" is what you are seeking to help us in, is it?

DS Very good. I think it just brings out worship in the heart as to

who this Person is; no mere man, but “thou canst not follow me now”. There was only One able for it, and there was only One who was willing to do it. We should be attracted to this blessed Man, that He was not only able for it but was willing to undertake it. But then “thou shalt follow me after” shows that God has in mind that there should be myriads brought in of that order of Man, and that that will should pervade in the universe.

DJW I think what you say helps. For us to follow after would involve for us the gift of the Holy Spirit, would it not? There is no other way in which we can be formed after Christ, is there? The key is how much room we give to the Spirit.

DS That is the secret to everything of life in Christianity; it is the gift of the Spirit of God. When you have the Spirit, and make room for Him, life is maintained.

JW The Lord met the full power of death, and He has done that. The Jordan overflowed all its banks when the Lord went into death. He has made a way through for us, so that we can enter with Him into a realm which is beyond death.

DS I believe that is so. So the twelve tribes - one from each - were to take a stone, and take it out of the Jordan. It is a testimony that we have been through on account of Another, and we follow and are attracted to Him. So we are now in an area where we can enjoy life, with another Man of another order. We can never take this matter up if we are not attracted to Him, and that is what comes out in Exodus, I believe, that we are attracted to the Man who saved me, who has overcome the power of the enemy. We look back, the children of Israel sang that song on the other side, and they looked back and saw the enemy dead on the seashore. We can see the attractiveness and the power of the work of Jesus. But then, am I going to follow, am I going to continue, so that my will is changed and I commit myself wholeheartedly to the will of Another?

JSH I was just thinking that it says at the beginning of John, “In him was life, and the life was the light of men”, John 1: 4. When we come to Exodus, we have the resources and the protection that is found in Himself.

DS That is very practical again. It is all found in Himself; that is very attractive, that everything is found in Him. He is the resource as we commit ourselves - and we should do so afresh, every one of us. The

challenge for myself at any rate is, am I committing myself daily, weekly, to the will of Another, so that I come into a sphere where there is victory and triumph? The palm trees speak of that. It says, "twelve springs of water were there, and seventy palm trees; and they encamped there by the waters". Twelve springs of water would show that there is a great administration of life and blessing, and there are seventy palm trees; and they encamped there. What a difference this was to the waters of Marah, but they had to go through them; we have to go through soul exercise to lay down our own wills and to commit ourselves to the will of Another. As we do so, the waters will become sweet; we will see a direction which is totally outside of nature, a direction that is totally against my own will, but there is a direction in relation to the will of another Man, and He gives us the resource to continue. The children of Israel had to continue here on their journey, which was only eleven days (Deut: 2), but it took them forty years. It takes us a long time to arrive at what God's thought for us is, and His grace will sustain us.

JMG Did it not take them forty years really to come into the gain of this? I was just thinking of what you say as to the will of God. It says they wandered after this, but it is only towards the end of the wilderness journey, when they commit themselves to the will of God, that they really start to move towards the land.

DS Well, God in His grace will sustain every believer who has right desires; God will be with them, because they know their need of Him; they know their failures. How many times the children of Israel failed - they said God had brought them out to die; they despised the manna. Think of the resources God gives us, every day He gives us food to sustain us. But here is one stopping point, and here God gives us something for our committal. If we commit ourselves, God will abundantly bless us. He will give us something we have never had prior to this. So that we will never have it if we do not go in for it.

JMG So the outcome of the wilderness journey is a people, a man with a people committed to the will of God. I was just thinking, going back to Luke, that all the quotations when the Lord Jesus was tempted are from Deuteronomy. What comes out of the wilderness is a man for the will of God. It was always in the Lord Jesus but, as we get the gain of the wilderness experience, we would be a people that are committed to the will of God.

DS I agree with what you say, that we do it individually. But what is brought out is a people; there is a collective company who have been

brought out, who are committed to the will of Another, and they find others who are in the same path; and there is something that is brought out in a real living testimony to the world, I believe at the present time, where every man is doing what is right in his own eyes. There is so much confusion, there are so many directions that men are moving in; but there is a company of people, as believers, who are in relation to the will of Another.

JW It is seeing the wood cast into the waters that makes them sweet; the way that Christ has been committed to the will of God and gone into death. Do you think we are fortified by this for suffering: "he that has suffered in the flesh has done with sin, no longer to live the rest of his time in the flesh to men's lusts, but to God's will.", 1 Pet 4: 1, 2? I wondered if the way that Christ has gone would fortify us so that we are prepared for the suffering.

DS It is the way God operates to bring out the glory, to bring out His own work; God operates in different ways to those of man naturally. Man does things to make much of himself in an outward manner, but God works in the way of suffering to bring about what is going to shine in all its glory and all its lustre. He operates in us so that we should be prepared for the suffering, and we will be prepared for the suffering as we see the One who has suffered to death in relation to God's will.

AEM He is the One who suffered, but we see Him glorified. I was thinking of what was referred to as to the end of the wilderness journey. Once they had received the Spirit, typically - "Rise up, well! sing unto it" (Num 21: 17) - it is just then that they turn their faces towards the sun-rising (verse 11); is that what helps us as to what has just been referred to?

DS I am sure it is. You must have an objective. You will never take a step in Christianity; you will never actually move in relation to Someone that you cannot see objectively. There is the subjective side which is the formative work in me, but we must see Christ objectively, see that God has secured another Man, and have Him in our affections as an Object there. We will be attracted away from what is dead and what is temporal, and the pleasures of man here. We will endure the suffering and see the glory that is there in Christ.

RWF What about the statement in verse 26, "I am Jehovah who healeth thee"? The answer to the will of man, which has done so much damage, is in Christ Himself, the One who accepted the Father's will. As we have to do with God, do we find that the effects of the working of

man's will are dealt with also: "I am Jehovah who healeth thee"? It is a very positive, a very profound and very encouraging statement.

DS I think it is helpful what you say. It has been pointed out that it is a suffering pathway and it is a testing pathway, but there is resource in God Himself, not only to show us what is in His mind and in His affections for us but to heal us, in the pathway. There may be difficulties, there may be sorrows, and many trials, but as we commit ourselves to the will of Another, it will bring in the resource, the healing. It will strengthen us and keep us in the pathway.

SFE Is it right to say that the pinnacle of the believer's life is to become a worshipper? If we are really free of self will, if we are in the gain of what you have brought before us as to Christ and the will of God, we will become worshippers. That is what God wants, is it not?

DS I have been thinking of verse 27, "twelve springs of water were there", there is resource there; "and seventy palm trees"; that is victory. We are not to be defeated but to be in power and, as we go on in discipline and trials, there is something, a greater note of worship goes back to God Himself, the One who brought it about in the first place; the One who operated in grace that we should be brought into this favour.

PM You spoke earlier about the Lord Jesus being led by the Spirit; Paul said, "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God", Rom 8: 14. Is the point reached, in the Spirit taking control of the believer's life, bringing dignity and power in His movement here in testimony?

DS It is a wonderful work brought out in the life of the believer. So what is seen in the believer here is Christ over again. So that there has always been a testimony; ever since the incoming of the Lord Jesus Christ here in actuality there has been a testimony to that character of Man. That is a glory to God, that in the scene of failure and breakdown, and of man's will, there has always been a testimony to another order of Man. It was first of all perfectly in Christ, but now in the saints.

PM I am only right, and those features are only formed in me, by the Spirit; so that nearness to the Spirit as the One who would occupy us with the Object is so essential.

NJH The world is to become the wilderness to us. We need the wilderness, do we not? Christ did not; He was there for forty days, but God is over this for us, speaking practically.

DS It is very helpful to say that we need the wilderness. We need that journey to remove the first order: "He takes away the first that he may establish the second", Heb 10: 9. We need the wilderness pathway in order that there may be a new order of man brought to light.

NJH It is testing for all of us, but it is the experiences of the saints, the experimental side. The problem is that we do not always fulfil the will of God fully, because the wilderness has not yet led us this way.

DS I think that is very attractive, and very helpful. The believer here in his weakness needs the wilderness in order that, if he takes the matter up properly and under the hand of the Spirit, and the direction and power of the Spirit, there will be something formative that will stand every exigency and everything that the enemy would put in the way. So that there is something for the glory of God, and something formative of the manhood of Jesus.

GAB So it says that Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they came to Elim; and then in the next chapter they journeyed *from* Elim. There is a certain joy and exaltation about deliverance from the power of the enemy, but we cannot stay there. This exercise of Marah is something that has to be gone through, and then there is water as they come together; but you cannot stay there; there is constant movement. Nothing short of the heavenly inheritance is what God has in mind for us.

DS Divine grace sustains us on the way and gives us what we need, as we do overcome. As you say, we need to continue to move. In one sense we are always in movement until the rapture. There is something to touch, if the Lord will, on the morrow. We come to the purpose of God, reaching land conditions, but we are always here in movement, do you think, in one sense, until the Lord shall come?

AAC I was very attracted to what was said as to the healing: this healing is complete. We are totally ready for what God would have in mind for us.

DS It is wonderful grace that the Lord gives what is needed so that we are safe on the journey. There are many here in different circumstances, trials, and whatever it may be; and the Lord knows every one of them. He will bring in what is needed. So we need on our side to commit ourselves. There is no hindrance from the divine side, and we can always be assured of divine committals; the Lord committing Himself wholeheartedly, and that committal will never be

undone as long as we are left here in testimony. We need to commit *ourselves* so that this order of Man may be formed and so that there may be glory to God.

DSB It says here that “Jehovah shewed him wood”. If we are to learn the will of God, it is only as learning and seeing what God has provided in relation to that. That is the only way. He is the chosen One; He says, “I have exalted one chosen out of the people” (Ps 89: 19); that is the One that God would point out.

DS It is not what we provide. If we provide something, and try to set aside the will of God, it puffs me up, it puffs the flesh up; but through prayer and dependence, we see what God provides. God will give us to see the glory of the Man who fulfilled the will of God. That is the wood, that is the One that God can put the gold upon. I believe that He can be put on the saints as they fulfil the will of God.

Dorking

10th September 2011

Key to initials:-

D S Bodman, Dorking; G A Brown, Grangemouth;
R M Brown, East Finchley; D A Burr, London;
B H Clark, Tunbridge Wells; A A Croot, London; S F Eagle, Dorking;
R W Flowerdew, Sunbury; J M Gray, Tunbridge Wells;
N J Henry, Glasgow; J S Hutson, London;
A J McSeveney, Twickenham; P Martin, Colchester;
A E Mutton, Witney; D Spinks, Grangemouth;
P J Walkinshaw, Gillingham; E F Woodford, Dorking;
D J Wright, Havering; J Wright, Havering

LIFE'S JOURNEY

Alex R Henry

John 13: 3 (from 'and that')

Luke 9: 51; 22: 42

Genesis 5: 24, 27

Acts 9: 1, 3-5

I want to speak about a journey, and that is what life is all about, a journey. Young ones might think of a journey as being what they do on a holiday; while I am not wanting to speak about that sort of thing, I do want to speak about a journey. Before I start to say anything about our journeys, I want to speak about the journey that the Lord took:

From heav'n the Saviour came (hymn 245).

The scripture where we read first of all says, "he came out from God, and was going to God". We thought of the love of Christ this morning; we thought of the love that brought Him down, and the love He displayed when He was here. We thought of the love that took Him to the cross and all that that meant, and His present love. It is wonderful to think of it all. But that was the journey that Christ took, in the full knowledge of everything that it meant; "he came out from God". Think of that life of perfection. We often speak about thirty years of secret life, when He was here for the pleasure of God. I often think of what the prophet in Isaiah speaks about, that He grew up "before him as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground", Isaiah 53: 2. I think that is really the thirty years of the secret life of Christ; He grew up before God as a tender sapling; only for God. The curtain is no doubt pulled back in certain places where we can get some view of the life of Christ. When He was young He grew up "in favour with God and men", Luke 2: 52. When He was twelve, He could say, "did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business", Luke 2: 49; that was a life of perfection of thirty years. I know that it said of Mary that she had pondered it in her heart, Luke 2: 19. There was no doubt that she took account of that life, which was no doubt in every way perfect. Mary had other family, she had other sons, but the Lord must have been unique in that family, in that household. I do not think He would have carried out miracles or anything like that in that life of thirty years, because it was not for man, it was for the divine pleasure and there was what was absolutely perfect in it.

But then it came to His time of sojourn here when, at the waters of baptism, He came out in His public service; and there was what was for man. How wonderful that life was to be, three and a half years, what was compacted into that three and a half years. Think of the number of days, over a thousand days entered into that life and there was no doubt about it that there would have been something distinctive entering into every day. There are only a few days written about in the gospels, only a few days. And each gospel writer has his own impression of Christ; wonderful to think of it. Luke could speak about the good Samaritan, he could speak about the younger son in Luke 15; the other gospel writers do not speak about them. It shows that there was so much - everything - in the life of Christ, so that the gospel writers could write so much, and it would all be different. But then a lot of it is the same, and it only brings home the perfection of that life; it was never aimless: and that is why I read in these other passages.

He set His face, right at the beginning, and then set His face to go to Jerusalem, Luke 9: 51. You think of what that meant, He alone knowing fully what it meant, what He was going to accomplish at Jerusalem, what He was going to feel and suffer under the hand of men, and what He was going to suffer from God. Are we not moved as we think of it, to think of what would have gone through His holy mind as He moved in that direction? It says in Mark, that, as the disciples followed, they feared and were in amazement, chap 10: 32. It was as if His complete committal to the will of God was such, and His movements to Jerusalem were such, that they could not help being affected by it; nothing would have turned Him aside; thank God for that, nothing turned Christ aside. That is the greatness of that journey of the Lord Jesus.

But that life in all its perfection would have availed nothing for us if He had not gone into death; and He went into death. The Lord Jesus, the Son of God, His life was perfect, yet He gave it up. He went to the cross and He died. He had to do that. He could say, "My Father, if it be possible ...", Matt 26: 39. Here where we read He says, "if thou wilt remove this cup from me:- but then, not my will, but thine be done". Think of what that cup meant! He knew everything, He knew what was in that cup; but He drank everything, He drank it dry. He accepted everything from the hand of the Father. What a gospel: the only basis that the glad tidings can go forth is because the Lord Jesus accepted that cup and went forward. He suffered at the hands of men; think of what that would have meant. Can you imagine such suffering at the

hands of men? Just think of a life that was given up for men, and it was a life in which He entered into all the sorrows, difficulties, and illnesses and diseases that men had, and there was not one that He turned aside. He healed everyone that came into touch with Him. Even a son being carried out dead, carried out to be buried; the Lord Jesus came up and the bearers stopped, and He gave the son back to his mother, Luke 7: 11-17. Nothing could stand in the way of the Lord Jesus in these three and a half years of public service when He was towards mankind, in all His beneficence. And yet when it came to this time they said, "Away with this man" (Luke 23: 18); "When will He die, and His name perish" (Ps 41: 5), "He saved others; himself he cannot save", Mark 15: 31. Think of the taunts, think of them beating Him on the brow, putting a crown of thorns on His head, think of the desperate conditions which were at that time at Calvary's cross; and then they put Him on a cross between two malefactors. They could not do worse for Him. And He suffered at the hands of men, but that was nothing to the sufferings that He had to bear from God. There were three hours of darkness when man could not look on what Christ was suffering from God. Believers know that He "bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Pet 2: 24); that was when He suffered the atoning sufferings from God, in view of sin and in view of sins. You think of the perfection of that work, the perfection of that work, that not only covered the sins of many from that time forward, but even going right back; so that God is righteous. What a basis to come out God has in the glad tidings.

Are you going to accept Christ as your Saviour; are you going to value Him? You think of what it meant: if you go back to the passover lamb, God could say "when I see the blood", Exod 12: 13. Have you ever thought of what that meant when God said "when I see the blood"? He was looking forward to the blood of the Lord Jesus, and He was looking forward to the value and the preciousness of that blood. The virtue of that blood can be yours today, you can come under the shelter of that blood today; and you can know what it is to have peace and joy in believing. You need faith to believe, and God will give you faith to believe. Because of the work of Christ, God's heart now is so glad to come out in blessing for man, offering Christ as the Saviour of sinners; what a gospel! The Lord Jesus is available today, He suffered and died and went into the grave, but He has come out of the grave. He is no longer in death, no longer in the grave. He was openly seen by many, as we read it in the reading this afternoon, "go to my brethren", John 20: 17. What delight the Lord had, with everything accomplished so that

He could come out and He could say, "go to my brethren".

That was the Lord's journey, and it is now completed, and He is in glory. He has been exalted high above all the heavens and no one can interfere with that place that He has won. There is a day coming when every knee is going to have to bow. Just think of it; those that have been so totally against Christ and so totally against Christianity at the present time, they are going to have to bow to Jesus; they are going to have to accept that He is Lord "to God the Father's glory", Phil 2: 11. That is a decree and that will never be altered.

Now what I want to speak about is your journey, because you are on a journey. There is a small passage in James, and it says there "what is your life?" chap 4: 14. As you are sitting there just think of it, "what is your life?". You are on a journey: there is a time to be born and there is a time to die (Eccles 3: 2), and you are on a journey between the two. Is your life aimless, or is your life relating to what is for the pleasure of God? I read about Enoch: if you look at the beginning of your Bible, you will see that from the creation to the flood is presented as just over sixteen hundred years. Enoch entered into that dispensation and it is interesting that he is mentioned again in Hebrews in the line of faith; he must have been a remarkable man. It says that, after Methuselah was born, Enoch walked with God. You might wonder what would have occupied him. He walked with God for three hundred years. We do not live such a long time now! But he walked with God for that time, and it says that God took him. Hebrews says, "he has the testimony that he had pleased God", chap 11: 5. But I also read about Methuselah. He comes into the pages of scripture and it says about him is that he lived for nine hundred and sixty nine years. Methuselah is the one in scripture that is the oldest person; he lived the longest. But there is nothing said about his life; have you ever thought about that? He lived the longest, he had the greatest opportunity, he lived for a number of years when Enoch was walking with God; but he died. Was his life just aimless? You will see that he does not enter into the epistle of the Hebrews as the line of faith. He died in the year of the flood.

You know you are on a journey. Nowadays, if you are going anywhere you can use a satellite navigation system to tell you where to go, and so that you do not get lost. If you take the wrong road, it can re-adjust and often it tells you to do a U-turn. Maybe we need to do a U-turn. I do not know what your life is like, but has Christ entered into your life? I read about Saul of Tarsus, and Saul was on a journey. He had

his mind fully fixed on what he was going to do; and maybe your mind is fully fixed on what you are going to do. He was journeying and the Lord Jesus said, 'No more; Saul of Tarsus, no more'. The Lord can speak to you tonight in the glad tidings and He can say, 'Have to do with me'. Think of how gracious the Lord was to Saul of Tarsus. Here is a man breathing out threatenings and slaughter: think of how vicious he must have been, everyone must have been afraid when they saw him walking along the road, and he would have had his entourage as well. But the Lord was greater; and the Lord was very gracious. "Who art thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus". I wonder if the Lord has spoken to you graciously, "I am Jesus". Maybe you need to have a definite link with Christ and then your life will change; so that you might be here for Him.

Everything changes when you get things into right perspective. If you take the constellations, and the sun and the stars, everything is moving constantly and God is over it all; everything has its own place and never gets out of place. You do hear of shooting stars, and they get burned up because they have gone out of their place. That is what the Lord wants for you; He wants you to find your place as you go through this scene on your journey. Where are you heading for, do you know where you are heading? Are you heading for a Christ-less eternity? You know what that means: that is hell. That is a lost eternity, when persons will be banished. I can tell you there will be many there who will be able to look back and say they had an opportunity, they had heard the glad tidings; and that is so sorrowful. Do not let it happen to anyone here. You need to have a link with Christ.

Saul of Tarsus, great man as he was, had to fall down, and he heard the Lord speaking to him. There were all those round about and they did not get it because the Lord was speaking to one person. That is the greatness of the glad tidings, that God can use the glad tidings to speak to one person; if you go through the Lord's pathway here it is often one person who gets the blessing. The Lord went to Samaria; it says "he must needs pass through Samaria", John 4: 4. Why? Because of one person, one woman, and then of course there were more that came into it after that because of the testimony of the woman. Saul of Tarsus became Paul and he could say, "For me to live is Christ, and to die gain" (Phil 1: 21); what a testimony he had, what a life he had. Do you think anything was going to hinder him being here for Christ? He must have been the greatest servant of Christ. He knew what it was to suffer for Christ and he knew what it was to be on that journey. Many times he

was sorrowful; he could say at one point, "all who are in Asia ... have turned away from me", 2 Tim1: 15. Think of what it meant to him to suffer. They had not left Christ, but they had left Paul.

So what journey are you on? Where are you travelling to? Have you got it all worked out, have you worked out definitely where you stand in regard to God? We are living in a world where there is just no fear of God, where persons have got no fear of God. They think they are indestructible. The Lord Jesus wants to have you for Himself, and He wants to regulate your life. He wants to set you on the course for blessing, and that is the journey. I would appeal to everyone here to put their trust in Christ, and the resources that God has He will have for you. One of the greatest gifts He can give you is the Holy Spirit, so that the Holy Spirit can direct your life and help you on that life for glory. Just think of the end of your life: is it going to be glory? May it be so for His Name's sake.

Kirkcaldy

6th March 2011

COMPANIONSHIP

Jim D Gray

Hebrews 1: 6-9; 2: 13-15

I have a thought as to companionship. It came into my mind in the service of God that we were suited companions for the Son of God. This scripture refers to the bringing in of Christ “into the habitable world”. It is strictly speaking of the Jewish remnant in the future that will be attracted to the Lord Jesus and become His companions. At this time the writer is addressing Jewish Christians from Judea and Jerusalem, who had to flee because of the impending destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, around AD 70. The Lord is brought into the habitable world as the Firstborn. He is named as Son, but He is brought in and the remnant recognise Him, and they have a link with Him in companionship.

Companionship is not kindredship. Kindredship, in one sense, is something that exists; from one point of view you can do nothing about it. I just mean that, in a general sense, kindredship is that. As believers that which we derive from Christ, it belongs to us. But companionship is another thing. Companionship springs out of attraction. The Lord is “anointed ... with oil of gladness above” His “companions”. This passage brings out the greatness of His Person. It says in verse 12 of Hebrews 1 “as a covering shalt thou roll them up,” - that is the creation - “and they shall be changed; but *thou* art the Same, and thy years shall not fail”. The title “the Same” is His eternal personality. But I understand that “thy years shall not fail” in this setting here is the endless character of His humanity. That is something to grasp hold of, the enduring character of the Lord's humanity.

The passage brings out the greatness of the Person in His own distinctiveness, but it also brings out that He has companions. That must be in His humanity. It must be persons that are attracted to Him, that want to be in His company. Do you want to be in the company of Christ? You cannot enjoy eternal life apart from the company of Christ. It is bound up with Him: “and this life is in his Son”, 1 John 5: 11. It is bound up with Him. As we were remarking on Lord's day, the beauties of Jesus, His lowliness, His purity, His devotedness, His love, His kindness, His grace, attract you because you belong to Him. They attract you to that blessed Man. You have a desire to be His companion, be in His company. When He was here there were those

who gathered around Him and became His companions. It says in Acts 4 they recognised Peter and John that they were companions of Jesus (v 13); that is, that they had been in His company. I wonder if we are recognised by others as the companions of the Lord Jesus, those who frequent His company. To be a Christian you have to be in Christ's company. It says, "and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch", Acts 11: 26. That is because they were Christlike. It may have been a term of reproach, but it was reproach attached to the name of the Lord Jesus. Barnabas when he arrived there saw "the grace of God", Acts 11: 23. He saw that in persons who were desirous of being companions of the Christ.

What a blessed privilege it is to think that you are a believer and I am a believer in the Lord Jesus, but "saved by grace, through faith; and this not of yourselves; it is God's gift: not on the principle of works, that no one might boast", Eph 2: 8, 9. And we are desirous of His company, to be in the company of that blessed Man. What attracts you here tonight, dear young brethren, if it is not to be a companion of the Christ? There is no obligation on you, in one sense. You come here freely. You come here because you desire to be in a company of persons that are like Christ. What an environment to be in! What a safe environment to be in, with persons who are self-judged, who, by the Spirit, express the features of the Lord Jesus! We have not seen Him yet. When we see Him "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3: 2), but we have the privilege now of enjoying companionship, companionship of the Christ. Mr Darby says in the Synopsis in Ephesians chapter 2, 'A Mary Magdalene, a crucified thief, companions in glory with the Son of God' (JND Synopsis of the Books of the Bible Acts-Philippians p398). What a thing, dear brethren. 'A Mary Magdalene', that kind of woman, what she was, and 'a crucified thief, companions in glory with the Son of God'. We are going to be companions of the Son of God in glory. We touched something of the blessedness of it in the service of God in this place earlier in the week, on Lord's day, suited companions of the Son of God. That is why the Lord comes to us, because we are suited companions to Him, persons to whom He can make known His mind, His thoughts. A companion is one who shares in your thoughts. Kindredship is not necessarily that, but it should normally include it, but companionship involves that you share in the thoughts. There is a link there in affection where persons exchange thoughts. It is a shared life; you enjoy it in the presence of the Son of God, in the presence of the Son, in the presence of Jesus. You

receive from Him and you impart something to Him that He finds delight in. Not only is it for us, the blessedness of His company, but something for Himself. He desires companions. He has found companions in the saints and He desires their company because they are Christlike; they are like Him; they think like Him; they love like Him; they act like Him; they move like Him; their testimony is that of the Lord Jesus. These are wonderful things, dear brethren. What an attraction to us!

Well, the second scripture brings out how He made us His companions. Have you ever thought of it? It says, “he also, in like manner, took part in the same”. He came into a condition of flesh and blood from His side; it was His own matter. The body was prepared for Him, the body of flesh and blood. It is a wonderful statement, “Since therefore the children partake of blood and flesh, he also, in like manner, took part in the same”. He came into the condition we are in. He had never been in that condition before. He had never been in a toilsome life before. He had never been in that kind of life. He had observed it in men as being in the form of God, but He had never partaken of it, but He comes into a body, takes part in the flesh and blood condition, sin apart, but He takes part in it. He knows what it is to go through the temptations, dear brethren. As soon as He came into His public service, the devil was there, right away, but He is anointed by the Spirit going forward to “plunder the goods of the strong man”, Mark 3: 27. He knew what reproach was. He knew what enmity was. He knew what it was to be hated. He knew what it was to be spit upon. He never knew that when He was in Deity, but he “took part in the same”, came into the condition of flesh and blood and all that attaches to it, everything that attaches to it, “sin apart”, Heb 4: 15. But everything else that attaches to it, He came into that condition. He can feel for you in all you go through, the struggles in life; He understands that because He has been here as a Man in flesh and blood. He had struggles in the sense that He was up against the power of Satan. It comes out in Gethsemane, His feelings, the depth of His feelings, what He went through, the pressure on Him. He was a Man who would pray. The Lord Jesus was a praying Man. He prayed all night several times in His life that we are told of. That is the kind of Man he was in the flesh and blood condition. He knew what weariness was. He sat by the well at Sychar, a Man “wearied with the way He had come”, John 4: 6. He did not use His divine power to overcome the weakness of the flesh, physically. He knew what weakness was; He knew that. He came into flesh and blood conditions and bore that, went through with that,

accepted the limitations of it. He needed sleep. When He was in the boat and free from His labours, He lay down and slept on a pillow, Mark 4: 38. The storm did not bother Him. He trusted in His God. That is the Lord Jesus, the One who “took part in the same”. It was not His by common lot; He came into it. Flesh and blood is ours by common lot. We did not come into it in that sense; we belong to it; but He came into it; and He came into conditions in which fallen man was. He came into the world in which fallen man was expressed, the same world that we are in. He came into that world and He went through that world. Even His own brethren despised Him. They did not believe in Him until after His crucifixion. The first time you find them amongst the brethren is in Acts 1. His mother was there and His own brethren. They were there. That is the environment the Lord Jesus came into. He knew all these things.

He “took part in the same”, but He set us free through dying. He set us free from the power of death: “that through death he might annul him who has the might of death, that is, the devil; and might set free all those who through fear of death through the whole of their life were subject to bondage”. He set us free. He brought us into an environment where we taste life. There is life outside the realm of death. Eternal life is the kind of life that lifts your spirit up because it is enjoyed on the other side of death. Our links together are beyond death. They will go through to eternity. But what a thing it is to be attracted to be a companion of that Man! That is, you have a desire to be amongst His people. You have a desire to be there because you are attracted to the features of the Lord Jesus there, and so you are set free, set free from the whole world and all its system. You have to work here; you have to earn your living here; you have to endure the toilsome life; but your eye is on the goal. But when you are on the way to the goal, you have companionship, and that companionship is linked up with the Lord Jesus.

May your heart be attracted into it for His Name's sake!

Edinburgh

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