

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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CONTENTS

The Channels of God's Love

Page 1

**Natural and Spiritual
Family Relationships**

John Strachan

Page 23

Four Sisters

T. David Beveridge

Page 19

**Blessing Through
Committal**

Robert Gardiner

Page 26

Baptised Households

Doug M. Welch

Page 29

THE CHANNELS OF GOD'S LOVE

Luke 22: 19, 20

DAB My preparation for the Supper this morning was directed by reading something during the week in Mr Raven (vol 11 p450). He said that, divine righteousness having been fully established in the work of Christ, divine love can flow freely forth in the channels it makes for itself. I was struck by that last clause - 'the channels it makes for itself'. I believe that the Supper - and indeed the service of God, which we have enjoyed again this morning - has been set in those channels. The Supper was not ordained or requested by anybody else. It was set on by the Lord Jesus Himself as an expression of His love to His own. I read in Luke because of the reference he makes about the blood, "which is poured out for you". The other writers do not speak of it in that way. John, who speaks of himself as a witness, speaks simply of it coming - "immediately there came out blood and water" (chap 19: 34, 35); but pouring out conveys to me that it was intended to express something on the Lord's part. I wonder if we could speak of this together and gather up what we have brought from the occasion this morning.

HJK When the Lord Jesus speaks of the loaf and the cup, and the pouring out, it is to remind us that He has died.

DAB Yes, and in thinking of it I wondered if we should perhaps think even more of the love that took Him that way. I emphasise that Mr Raven spoke of love making channels for itself. It did not come where it was expected; it did not come where anyone could dream of what that love would do. Then, in relation to the Supper, no one asked the Lord if there was some memorial here we could have, or how He was going to be remembered. The giving of the Supper as we have it in these two verses was entirely from Himself, and it is an expression of His love which comes right down to today.

JAH Are you thinking that this channel, the Supper, was not foretold in the prophets, but His death was. Could you clarify that?

DAB His death was spoken of in the prophets, although it is interesting that those who waited for Him did not really seem to understand the significance of that. Nor could they have anticipated just what wonder there was in the love that led Him to give Himself. I think if you had actually seen the movements of Jesus and your heart

had been opened to what was there, you would have seen a love that the Old Testament prophets could hardly convey.

JAH The Supper was reaching over to the new covenant but it was also beginning to introduce something of the mystery.

DAB The new covenant is rooted in the love of God and that is seen in the way that Jesus moved.

HJK This took place at the passover. There is some close connection between the passover and breaking of bread - I know it is not the same, but the passover was a remembrance.

DAB I do not know how much Israel understood that God had given them the passover because He loved them. He wanted them for Himself; it was love that led Him to bring them out of Egypt, "Let my son go, that he may serve me", Exod 4: 23. Love was there, but I think what is very affecting about the Supper itself is that it was not communicated to a mediator to pass on to us; the Lord Jesus has given the terms of it Himself, both here in the time of His life on earth, and from the glory. He was anticipating in giving the Supper where this pathway of love would take Him. It is very moving to hear a Man speak like this of the way in which He was about to die. He does so with a full heart in which His own had a distinct place.

MJK In the thought of the rivers, the source is one, but there is more than one river. Does that go along with the thought of the channels that you are speaking of?

DAB I am interested that you should say that. I have been thinking of the rivers. There is the account of the creation in Genesis, and man is set up in a moral relationship with God and in a position of responsibility, and then it says, "And a river went out of Eden ... and from thence it was parted, and became four main streams", Gen 2: 10, 11. We can apply those rivers in different ways but I think it would be a fair application to say that they speak of the love of God. It says of Pison that it surrounds the whole land of Havilah, as if it is finding its way across the whole scene of things in which man had been set, providing the background and the living spring which would sustain him as he sought to maintain a relationship with God in which he had been established.

DMW Does a channel of love have an object?

DAB That is very precious; to come to the Supper and feel that this

great stream of love that led Himself to do such wonderful things had me as His object. It had others things in mind, no doubt, but it is one thing to come to the Supper and to look at the emblems and think that the Lord did that for me. I do not mean just that He died for me, but He made that provision for me that I might have a meeting place with Himself in which the present power and value of His love could be experienced.

DMW Would love link with devotedness and commitment?

DAB Paul speaks of “the Son of God, who has loved me” (Gal 2: 20), and “Christ also loved the assembly”, Eph 5: 25. It does not just say that He loved. John is the same, “To him who loves us”, Rev 1: 5. As you say, love must have an object. It is not that it has simply found its way through all the obstructions, but in the flowing out of divine love it was always His intention that it should wash around us and enfold us in its depth and fulness.

WJK Would that be why it is not an ocean of love; there is no confusion.

DAB We have a reference in a hymn -

Filled in the ocean of that love (Hymn 400)

But I like the ordered way that the rivers are associated with the way that Christ has taken. There are His ways in relation to the world, its politics and all those types of things, but think of the way that His love has taken. It is very precious and it is flowing towards us. There is nothing aimless about the love of God; it was not hunting and seeking in that sense. The love of God flowed out with a purpose, and it made a channel for itself. There are canals around here where people have made a channel for the water to go their way, but the love of God has gone *its* way.

PH Do you link this at all with what the Lord says in this section, “This is my body which is given for you” and, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you”. He speaks to them directly. It is not as He says in Matthew in relation to the propitiatory nature of it towards all men, but it is directed to particular persons. Are we to feel that ourselves?

DAB Maybe like us it took some time before it really sank in with these men who had been there that this was given for them. One of the

things that has moved me more than anything is that the Lord should say this, “given for you”. That is the way that He emphasises it in Corinthians, “This is my body, which is for you”, 1 Cor 11: 24.

JRB Could you say something as to the word “new” in the context of your reference to channels of love? This is a new channel that is without precedent: never before had redemption been seen; never before had this new covenant been seen.

DAB The covenant is “in my blood”; that is what is new. It has been said before that the covenant between Israel and God was not exactly founded in this way, but I think that is what is so precious about this, that the Lord Jesus said, 'I will lay the foundation for this relationship with Myself, and this relation with God, and I will do it in love; and to show how much love is involved I will pour out my blood'. I think that is very fine.

JAH There are many references in the prophets to the new covenant and the everlasting covenant but not new covenant ministers. Are you trying to say how it applies to us?

DAB This reference here is distinctive; it is “in my blood” - that makes it special, distinctive. What has laid hold of me this week in thinking about this is that the profoundest love lay behind it. This is not something that could be written on tables of stone; this was sealed in the outpouring of precious blood.

RSH The background to this is the Lord's speaking of “desire” - “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you”, v 15. Does that show the immensity of His love for His own, that He should have this special occasion with them at this time?

DAB In the Psalm it says, “Thou hast given him his heart's desire”, Ps 21: 2. While there was great desire in the giving of the passover, in a sense that did not satisfy the heart of Christ. Why did He give this if the passover would have been sufficient as a memorial, because it speaks of Him? But, there has to be something that is distinctive that can be associated, wholly and uniquely, with His own body and His own precious blood. If He can give that, then I think there is something that satisfies His heart. He wants to show how deep that love really is, and the only way He can do that is to speak about the unreserved sacrifice of Himself.

AAC This love is so great that from this point onwards it is available to

all. God's love is always available to all, but they were His chosen people - and they are still His chosen people - but the way in which this is recorded here by Luke suggests it is, in a sense, for anyone reading this scripture. When He says "which is for you", it must come home to persons, 'Can I have this for myself?'. Is the reason for that that this love is so great that it will find those channels wherever it will, and find an answer in them?

DAB I was thinking of the young people who we speak of as 'in fellowship', who are not yet breaking bread. They are standing in this channel, it is flowing around them. And this is an invitation. I know there is a moral side to it as well - proving - but the Lord is not limiting who can take advantage of this. We can illustrate that from John 3, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal", v 16. Mr Raven showed me that He had to say "the world" because in the very nature of the thing the love of God must be world-wide, as being the full revelation of the heart of God, vol 1 p22.

AAC The hymn writer suggests that the only qualification that I need is to 'feel your need of Him' (Hymn 446). It is available for any.

DAB In giving the Supper, He expresses a need of us.

DBB Is that why he says, "this do in remembrance of me"? There is going to be an answer to that love.

DAB Let us see what He has done from His side, because I think if we had a deep enough sense of that we would not be able to refrain from what you are speaking about. It is easy to speak of it, as we often have in the preaching, but how could we fail to answer to the love that has sought like this?

HJK Have you any thought as to why here it is "having taken a loaf"; everywhere else it is the bread, but here it is the loaf.

DAB It is a whole thought. That is something that always moves me when we come to the Supper, that there is something unreserved. We cannot identify anything about the Lord Jesus that He kept back. The Authorised Version speaks of "the sacrifice of Himself", Heb 9: 26.

DMW God does not have a different mind for someone else; He has the same mind for that person as He does for me. And love, because of the channel it has made for Himself, the basis of righteousness finds

what it seeks.

DAB I do not want to criticise, but one of the sad things about Christendom is that people take this up, and find different ways of exercising and performing this. You might go into different churches and they all perform this service differently. People have put their own gloss on it, but this was given in a way that was intended to be universal. It is an invitation by the Lord and is by the affections of Christ: “this do” - it is within the reach of the simplest. There is nothing ecclesiastical about this; nothing that requires study; it is the simplest invitation we could have.

DJK I was wondering whether the portion in John 2 was helpful too, as to these channels. The Lord's desire was that they would fill the vessels; “Jesus says to them, Fill the water-vessels with water. And they filled them up to the brim”, v 7.

DAB These were hitherto empty vessels but they filled them “up to the brim”. The point is not that they were different measures but that they were all full. That is another thing about this river that it can fill everybody to the brim. We do not have to get self-conscious about our measure, the important thing is to be filled.

PMW Do we see both the means and the end in this? The reference to the loaf gives a suggestion of the end, the securing of divine purpose in those that the Lord came to secure for Himself and the Father, and the means, as we have been speaking about here is encapsulated in these two verses.

DAB Another aspect about the loaf is that it speaks of the kind of answer that the Lord was seeking. We have been speaking about what He is seeking from each one, which is right, but His object was also the assembly. He wanted those He loved to be together, and so together that they can be spoken of as Paul does as, “one loaf”, 1 Cor 10: 17. It is the same in nature, the same in bonds of affection, the same in communion, the same in their love for Christ, supporting and developing all that with one another so that the answer to what He Himself has given should be undivided. The public fragmentation of it must be so painful to One who loves it so much.

NSB It says in the collective setting in Ephesians, “For this reason I bow my knees to the Father ... and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge”, Eph 3: 14, 19.

DAB He wants everyone to know it in nearness, “in order that ye may be fully able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height” (v 18), and “to know the love of the Christ”. A lot has been said about the four dimensions, but if you want to know those four dimensions, the place you need to be is at the centre. I think that is obvious: if you would be at the very centre, you could see those four dimensions. That is where the love of Christ is known - at the centre. His desire is not that we should be at the extremities of that great domain of love; He wants everyone to be at the centre. If you are at the centre you will get a sense of how vast the thing is. You do not have to be able to reach the edge to find out; you can stay at the centre where the love of Christ is known. Mr James Taylor said, 'We are in infinitude, but fixed in it intelligently', vol 20 p359; 33 p251.

DMW We are compacted together at the Supper, and have the same mind, and that is because we are at the centre where He is occupying us; He is the Centre.

DAB That is the simple consequence of doing what has been referred to, a simple injunction taken up, as Luke's gospel expresses it - “this do”. It has secured that compact unified answer. All thought of difference and divergence, and what may be naturally in our shortcomings and our various preferences, and all those kind of things, is submerged by our occupation with Christ and His love. Would that the effect of that remained with us!

JRB I have been thinking about “remembrance of me”, and the emphasis on “my body which is given for you”. In John's gospel he speaks about being lifted up, “I, if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all to me”, John 12: 32. The power of the Person is overwhelming.

DAB It is affecting that He intended this to remain current. If His death had been the end, if this was a memorial simply to someone who had died, all our thoughts would be in the past; but it is in “remembrance of me” and, if you remember someone who is living but absent, your first thought is about what they are doing now.

JRB So the cup, “the new covenant”, takes us into something that is complete and living.

DAB And present too. We speak of the new covenant with Israel. They broke the old covenant and the new covenant awaits them. It has not really been consummated with the sons of Israel, but this is present.

As Paul suggests in 2 Corinthians 3: 18, it goes on to the glory.

DMW It is all based on the same foundation.

DAB What Israel will come into is therefore included in what the Lord has brought us into already. It is very precious to see that. It is worth thinking about how it is that the ways of God should depend upon a sacrifice. The world is acquisitive; its system is looking to gain things at other people's expense all the time; but God in His great plan gave what was most precious to Himself, and used that giving to lay the foundation of what will be truly eternal. All these things that people seek to acquire will disappear, they will fade; we will have to leave them all behind. It is a very wonderful thing -

And love that, giving all, secures
The universe for God.

(Hymn 171)

JAH We have this treasure in earthen vessels. It is like an open vessel, the treasure of the covenant, we hold it livingly.

DAB Our hearts have been filled with the love of Christ, whatever our measure might be. I know some earthen vessels that have become very fragile, but they hold the love of Christ in a really abiding way. That is something very wonderful to take account of. I was hearing about a sister who cannot communicate, but you can tell by attempting to communicate with her that her vessel holds the love of Christ.

DBB That shines out.

DAB He is able to preserve that. There is a sister in London who cannot communicate at all. You might ask why she is left here, but so long as that earthen vessel is there it is filled with what God has put in it. The channel that found a way for itself, found a way of filling that sister.

DJK Whilst these channels are like the river flowing out, as we have spoken of in Genesis, there is also what is flowing to God through these channels.

DAB That is the other side of what has been said; not only has love found an object but it must have an answer. Could love like this be unrequited? That is really the question that is raised at the Supper: could love like this be unrequited? That is what came to me when I read that passage of ministry: we are going to the Supper, and can that love be unanswered?

The love that gave Thyself for us
Forgotten cannot be

(Hymn 326).

WJK That is why what follows after is worship; that is the answer?

DAB Exactly so. Another aspect in which the love of God has found a channel for itself is the service of God. We gather for the Supper, and we have in scripture a clear reference to the way the Supper itself is to be held, but there is no text of scripture that shows us how the service of God should be conducted. We have been taught as to it in ministry, and the service of God proceeds in that way. But that was something that God did for Himself; He established the service of God and its order and its fulness; He did that Himself. We may say that brothers have helped us to do that, but where did they get the help from? It was something that God did. The service of praise is the point at which the out-flowing of divine love meets its answer. There is an expression of divine love, even in the service. Did any of us propose that we should be able to enjoy the service of God as we may? Is that something that any of us could set on and initiate, and be sure of doing for God's pleasure? Would anyone imagine that the service of God would be conducted in such nearness, and that our approach should be through Christ; or that we should access into the holiest of all? That is all an out-flowing of divine love. All God looks for in return is a note of praise.

NSB The apostle speaks in Romans 5 about this love, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit", v 5. Would you think that "love of God" is bi-directional?

DAB Yes, there is something formed in the believer which answers to God. The passage in Romans 5 is interesting because "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit". That is another expression of God's love that He has given the Spirit and, as entering into the heart of the believer, He fills the heart of the believer with the love of God. The reference to "shed abroad in our hearts" means that the heart of the believer becomes a fountain from which others might receive the benefit of the love of God. It is "shed abroad in our hearts", not just within the confines of the heart, but shed abroad. A lot of exercise follows in the epistle to the Romans, and then in chapter 8 Paul goes on to, "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord", chap 8: 39. That is a wonderful thing to arrive at. What is my measure after all - am I two measures or three? How much do other people benefit from the fact that the love of God is in my heart by the Holy Spirit? We might

get very occupied with our limitations as Paul goes through all that exercise, but he says, 'I have found a place where it can be known in its fulness, "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"'.

PH As to the service of God, I wondered whether we see that worked out in the woman in John 4? The channel finds its outlet, and the Lord was able to work out this matter with her in relation to the worship of the Father.

DAB That is a very interesting and practical example. There were two ways of getting from Jerusalem to Galilee, one went through Samaria and one did not. The channel of divine love chose the way through Samaria, and it did not just run through and leave some mark behind; He waited for the woman. That love had its object, and it was not simply that the Christ as Man loved that woman, but God loved her, but He loved all the people in the city as well.

PH Israel as a nation did not get on well with the people of Samaria, but the Lord with this woman showed the way of His thoughts in the gospel by moving in that direction.

DAB That leads back to what we were saying as to this being universal. In John 3, we have Nicodemus who comes burdened with an idea that he had some claim to these things. The Lord tells him that he has to leave all that behind, the basis on which His ministry is proceeding is that "God so loved the world, that he gave ...", John 3: 16. That was open to Nicodemus, and it was open to the woman at Sychar as well. She could not make any of the claims that Nicodemus made. She tried to, but they were spurious claims. The love of God was seeking her, and the Lord waited for that woman in order to show her the practical reality of the "whosoever" in John 3: 16.

PHM The verse you referred to here says that the Lord gave thanks; is that the Lord identifying the source of these rivers in the love of God?

DAB And maybe it is also giving a hint that the service of God is associated with the Supper. It is very wonderful that at the Supper itself there was a note of response to God and it was from Jesus Himself.

DMW Divine imperatives are associated with the channel of love.

DAB It cannot be resisted.

DMW "He must needs pass through Samaria", John 4: 4.

DAB The Lord has given practical form to what went into His teaching, it was “whosoever” - “whosoever believes on him”. That was the proposition to the woman. The fact that she was a Samaritan, that she did not have a legitimate parentage, that her religious claims were false, that she was a sinner, that she was unsatisfied and was living in sin; none of that held back the channel of divine love.

AAC Can you say something as to continuance? The channel of love has found us and we have tasted something of what it is to be in the flow of that channel of love, and therefore we come week by week to the Supper through the aid of that channel.

DAB We could think about three practical things that we could do in answer to that love - I appeal to the young people about this, and I do so because I love them. We could listen to the preaching this afternoon, resolve between now and the preaching that we are going to come to the preaching in faith, and listen to what our brother has to say from God and expect to be affected by it. The next thing is that, while I treat the company here today as in fellowship, not everyone is breaking bread; the channel of divine love will keep flowing round you until you yield to that claim. The Lord's claim is one that is based in a complete and irreversible committal. He does not ask that your committal should be as great and deep as His own was, because it cannot be; but what He will do He will help you to use the love that gave Himself, and sustained Him in the committal He made for you. The third thing is that, if you have made that step, then your privilege is to have active part in the service and to be a contributor. This love needs an answer.

AAC We do not need anything from our side; He provides it from His side. We may say we do not feel able to answer to that love, but it is when we are caught up in the current of it that something comes, however simple, which answers to that love; and that is a place in which we find ourselves desirous of being.

DAB We know in nature what it is to love and to be loved. Some of us may know what it is in nature to have loved someone who did not reciprocate; that is nature - they did not find us compatible or attractive. But when it comes to the love of Christ, He makes a pressing and insistent claim. There are imperatives associated with the love of Christ. It is not because He finds the sinner loveable by nature, “God commends *his* love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us”, Rom 5: 8. That is the power in the love of Christ; it is such that

He is not waiting for any improvement or any condition, He just wants us to yield to the claim of His love. God demonstrated the depth of it in the pouring out of the blood of Christ.

HJK The three things you mentioned make me think of the mothers; it says that they brought their children to Jesus that He might touch them, Mark 10: 13-16. As parents, it is a wonderful privilege that we have to bring the children to where the Lord is because there is a certain blessing on just being there. We have mentioned those who came to be taught; it is the same as the babes, the mothers are bringing them here to Jesus, and they do not leave the same way that they came in here. Something is missed in our own souls by not being where the Lord is. He would bless them. We have said not all are breaking bread, but all are in fellowship in that sense.

DAB There are two institutions; there is baptism and the breaking of bread. In baptism you are committing the spiritual welfare of your child to Someone who loves that child - "having taken them in his arms, having laid his hands on them, he blessed them", Mark 10: 16. You are committing yourself to Someone who has already given you the assurance of His love. If you trust Him for your own salvation you can trust Him for your children - not just His power and His care, but also His love. Why would you not bring a child into the presence of Someone who loves them like this? Why would you not make a habit of it?

DMW The channel of love leads to what is living, and the atmosphere of love results in the expression of what is living.

DAB That is what we have been saying. There are some places where the canals are seasonal, where there is a flow of water, and when the canal is full it stops, but the Lord spoke to the woman in John 4 of "living water", v 10. It flows all the time and that is the power of continuance; that every day brings an opportunity - not always taken - to prove the freshness of that love.

AAC Unless we stay in the flow of it we will not continue. We must stay in the flow of it because it is the sustaining power in itself. This was reciprocal.

DAB The alternative is the sink of corruption and that has a certain tide to it, a certain power, a vortex to suck you in, but what will keep you in the stream of life is the love of Christ. No one has actually had to ask God to love them. You might ask a partner to love you or to show that

they love you. Has anyone had to ask God to love them? - “Hereby we have known love, because *he* has laid down his life for us”, 1 John 3: 16.

DMW It is something that we come into which is very wonderful. It is not anything that can be proved or attained to; it is something that we come into and we are developed in it.

DAB As you have communion with God, He would take you back up stream and show you where that love began, and what you were like when it began, “we being still sinners, Christ has died for us”, Rom 5: 8. That is the commendation of the love of God. Why does God need to commend love like that? But that is the nature of it.

DBB It is for us to be kept in.

DAB “Keep yourselves in the love of God”, Jude 1: 21. It is so easy. Sometimes we have to reproach ourselves about why we left the current of God's love?

CJB Is that why it says in John 4, “whosoever drinks of the water”, v 14?

DAB I used to think that there was a magic about one sip “whosoever drinks”, as if it was something you did once and things would change. I have not found that to be so; it is a new source to drink from. It was not that she had to labour to come to the well, because the water was within her, but she still had to drink of it.

DJK It seems that, in the channels, there would be boundaries?

DAB That links with the reference in Ezekiel 47 to the river: if you are not in the channel of divine love, then all around is dry; and if it is not dry it is bitter, stagnant. We prove that by experience. For the sake of our souls we need to stay in this channel.

DJK I was thinking that from God's side there is no limit, but the channel is directly aimed at us.

DAB God feels it if people do not get into and do not stay in it.

PH In relation to what was said earlier as to the service of God, how do we know this channel when we take part in the service of God? I have been exercised that so many of us know the terms that we can bring forward and speak, but when we are on our feet, especially in relation to the service of God, I am exercised to know the channel that is

coming from the divine source in taking part, and being really conscious of it at that time.

DAB We have had the experience of sitting in meetings and wondering whether we should or should not take part - would this sound good enough? would it sound right? will I get the words out? - and we end up just sitting there. Then you may get into a phase where you might be sure what to say because something sounds so familiar to everyone else; you go from over-hesitation to over-confidence in a natural sort of way. I warn those who have not experienced both of those that if you have been in the first you will one day be in the second, but what I have come to is that there is a focus for your mind. Mr A J Gardiner used to say that the emblems on the table are to help our minds - they are not just something to look at, they are something to focus your eye on: "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord". If there is a desire of anyone to contribute and they have not managed to break through, what I would say is that we should ask the Lord to give us a touch about His love, and answer to that. Treat your part in the meeting as an answer. Do not think you have to originate something, or that it has got to impress anybody, God Himself least of all. Take your part in the meeting as an answer to something which is flowing towards you. I think that would maybe make it easier for some of us.

JAH Do the hymns help with our minds? We can link on with something.

DAB There are two things with the hymn book as well; one is that we may not know it very well, and the other is that we might think that this or that hymn is used now so that it is safe, and there is a lack of exercise with it. In a sense there is more to learn from getting on your feet and speaking simply in answer to the love of God.

DMW If we go through the practical exercise and call on the Spirit, it may not come at that particular time we are asking for, but at some point it might; so we can get in that channel and respond accordingly.

DAB I think it goes back to what you were saying about an object, because you could sit there asking that the Holy Spirit would help you. If you wanted help to answer to the love of Christ, the Holy Spirit then has something to get some purchase on to help you with. Afterwards you can see that what you asked for you received.

CJB What about the sisters in relation to what we are speaking of?

As brothers we can stand up and speak, but I wondered about the sisters.

DAB There is something very precious in the opportunity that all of us have to be moved by the part that others take. That is another thing that the brothers ought to bear in mind, to be a little less focused on their own part and maybe to think more about the occasion as a whole to which they have the privilege of making a contribution. After all, the principle contribution has been made already in the love of Christ, and that puts everyone else's contribution in perspective. But we can have desires too, whether we are brothers or sisters, that something might be expressed that would touch our affections, to bring something fresh about the love of Christ and what it has led us into.

DBB Sometimes a sister will come up to you afterwards and say that you had expressed what she was thinking, which is very confirmatory for the brothers.

DAB I talk to a godly sister who sometimes says that she did not feel that things that were in her spirit had been expressed: there was a lot to enjoy but she would have liked to have something more that was fresh.

DMW It would be normal that the things which are in the hearts of the sisters are expressed, so that what we are engaged with publicly is an out of the world kind of thing. But it is already there; it is a subjective response in another area where the love is indigenous.

DAB There is a question often in the minds of the brethren, how do we know that the Lord has come among us on Lord's day morning? One answer to that question is that you sense the hearts of others opening. You might sense that others hearts have opened before your heart, but you sense that the hearts are open. They are not open only to receive something, although they look for that, but they are opening to express what is there. That might be audible, but it is a spiritual thing as well. The Lord captures everything that is present, whether those who are there speak or not. If the heart opens He receives what comes out.

DMW It is an exercise for the sisters. The more spiritual a person is perhaps the less they would say. Spirituality in the sisters is still important. You get into the flow of things so that you are transferred from the consciousness of time to where there is an endless sphere of response.

DAB We sometimes get preoccupied with capturing an impression, but it helps to remember that an impression is what is left on your spirit afterwards. It is what we carry away. I was thinking of the incident in John 12: "the house was filled with the odour of the ointment", v 3. If you had gone back the next day, you would have captured the odour of the ointment. You could have sensed if you went there another day that something special had happened in that house; but for those who had been there that fragrance would have recalled the experience they had had.

PH Did the woman in John 4 carry her impressions of Christ with her?

DAB She did, and she carried them in herself. The water pot in which she would have carried what was for her natural satisfaction was left behind. What she took she took in herself.

MJK Would you say that the expression of the thing comes forth from the Spirit of God and therefore we need to keep in mind the whole, not just ourselves - we are just a vessel at that point? We may be the vessel which is expressing what has come on the mind of the sister.

DAB After the occasion is over, the Spirit of God will ensure - will seal for you - the blessing of that experience. It might form itself in a more or less articulate way in your mind. You might be able to remember something specific that had been said, or something specific that had been sung, but it might simply be that you went away freighted as you never had been before with an impression of the love of Christ.

DBB It has often been said, it is better felt than told.

DAB That is the fruit of experience.

DGC Is the response to divine Persons always expressed audibly? I was thinking in relation to what has been said as to the sisters, such as to a sister saying to us afterwards, 'Thank you for giving out my hymn this morning', but there is also response from the heart in an inaudible way.

DAB I was at the breaking of bread once with George Crowhurst, an aged brother in London, and there was a long pause; and he got up and said, 'Lord it is right to be silent for Thou hast given us a spirit of worship, but it is right also to speak for Thou hast given us a spirit of praise'. There was a little admonition in that, but silence is not necessarily

weakness.

DMW What about the silence at the end of the meeting?

DAB Sometimes I feel it is hard to leave; that is a token of love. People who love one another find it hard to part, and the Lord does not exactly withdraw the sense of His presence abruptly. It says in the Song, “my beloved had withdrawn himself; he was gone” (Song of Songs 5: 6), as if it was quite abrupt. He had taken his hand out of the door and he had gone. The Lord loves us so much that He does not make the sense of His leaving abrupt.

DMW Where there is that experience it is a unified conclusion. It is quite interruptive if some take it upon themselves to try to end the meeting.

DAB Going back in history, we know that the collection used to be at the end. So there would come a point when the brother who was responsible for the collection would have to take it upon himself to decide that the meeting was over and go and get the box. I think what the brethren came to was that that brother was in an invidious position because he had to decide when the meeting was over; which was something that, if you were a spiritual person at all, you would prefer not to do. It is much better to let the experience run its own course and finish in its own time.

DMW It is a timeless meeting. We do not announce the starting or finishing time even, because it is a spiritual atmosphere with the Lord above the earth. The unified conclusion is a very wonderful experience in itself.

DAB Another thing that goes with that is that the meeting is not divided up into fixed allocations. We do not have to feel that the first part of the meeting has gone on too long we need to move on, or that if the meeting has been going for half an hour it is time to address the Spirit; that is not a spiritual thought. I have heard many say that it is a measure of fulness in the occasion if the latter part of the service is prolonged. On the other hand, my father used to say that he felt there was a spiritual tone to the meeting if the first part of the meeting was prolonged. In other words, if the immediate and instinctive answer to the Lord Himself manifesting Himself could be allowed to develop itself, then that would give a richness to what followed that maybe sometimes in our haste we miss.

HJK It says, “when the hour was come”, Luke 22: 14. The brethren used that as to the meetings being an hour long, but it is “when the hour was come”. “He placed himself at table, and the twelve apostles with Him”, but He did not say when it would end.

DAB Love is not late, and if the Lord said to us, 'At such and such a time I will be in such and such a place', surely any lover would be there; and they would not mind how long it went on. There is a limit to what we can sustain, and the Lord is in the other gatherings, but the object of that reference to time is when it is to begin, not when it is to end.

Aberdeen, Idaho

8th August 2010

Key to Initials:

D B Bodman, Birmingham; C J Brien, Aberdeen; J R Brien, Witney;
N S Brien, Calgary; D A Burr, London; D G Coull, Aberdeen, Scotland;
A A Croot, London; J A Hibbert, Calgary; P Howie, Edmonton;
R S Hutson, Bedford; D J Klassen, Aberdeen; H J Klassen, Aberdeen;
W J Klassen, Aberdeen; P H Morris, Sunbury;
D M Welch, Denton; P M White, London

FOUR SISTERS

T DAVID BEVERIDGE

Luke 10: 38-42

John 20: 1, 11-12, 17-18

Acts 16: 13-15

Romans 16: 1-2

Just a simple word, dear brethren, as to the sisterhood. I was impressed on Saturday at the address relating to Martha, and I thought about the great value of the sisterhood. At one time amongst brethren sisters did not come to all the meetings. There were certain meetings at which only brothers were present, but through God's ordering and teaching of the saints, we now have sisters present at all occasions. How valuable that is. I just thought I would cite these four, two Marys, Lydia and Phoebe. There are many that we could speak of, but I was just thinking what a fine locality it would be to have the two Marys and Lydia and Phoebe in your gathering. The Mary of Luke 10 represents a spiritual person. In John 11 she was a woman of influence. It is a great benefit to have spiritual sisters amongst us, as well as spiritual brothers - that is divine order, God, Christ, man, woman - but then in the sisterhood, having sisters who are committed, there is something very precious. One of the things that is said in the passage about Lydia was that there was a "custom for prayer to be". Now, dear brethren, there was a custom when I was brought up and that was to be at the meetings. Very simply in our family, my father encouraged us to be at the meetings with the brethren. I know it is not always easy now in the times that we are living in. In past days sometimes persons were on shifts, but they made a point of being present with the brethren. I think there is something special about being together; some of us are retired and have no excuses for not being at the meeting. But, what is first in my life?

I am thinking about these sisters and the lovely features that marked them. What a lovely person Mary was. She "was listening to his word". I thought about that. She was a listener. Mary in John 20 was a lover, and the woman Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened to attend to the things spoken by Paul", she was one who attended to things, and things can slip if they are not attended to. I know that in my

own life. I have let things lapse, and I suppose we have all known that. In chapter 16 of Romans, Phoebe was a helper. You say, 'That is not a very exalted service', but I think in her case it was. I think she helped the brethren, and that is something we can all do. I remember our brother Archie Thompson saying that, even about opening a meeting. He said, 'You do not need gift to open a meeting. It is a simple matter to stand up and ask the Lord to bring in help'. But anyhow, in thinking of these sisters, I would trust that we learn to value the sisterhood amongst us.

So the first one I have read about is Mary. It says about Martha that she had a sister called Mary, "who also, having sat down at the feet of Jesus was listening to his word". That is the same Mary who brought the pound of pure nard in John 12. She had acquired substance. Do you know what affects atmosphere amongst us, dear brethren? It is not being terribly intelligent and intellectual in the meetings, and quoting reams of scriptures; it is what you bring in yourself that affects the atmosphere. I say that because sometimes we quote ever so many scriptures even in our prayers, and it just confuses persons. It is wise to be simple and it is wise to be brief, and Mary chose this part to sit at the Lord's feet and listen to His word. I think persons who listen to the word are persons who acquire substance. I know that involves experience. But she listened to His word it is not just hearing it: listening means that there is something within me that is attuned to what the Lord is saying. Martha had a whole series of distractions. I have always found that if you are in a company where there are many sisters, there is often a lot of talking. Have you noticed that? I find you just have to listen because I cannot follow when there are several people talking over each other. I am speaking very simply here. It is wise to be like Mary, and sit at His feet and listen to His word. Even when you are reading, you need quietness just to sit down, and maybe read over a hymn, and know and prove what the Lord's presence is,

Yet sure, if in Thy presence
My soul still constant were,
Mine eye would, more familiar,
Its brighter glories bear. (Hymn 51)

As sitting at the feet of Jesus there is much to be learned, and much to be experienced. And so I thought if we just saw that in Mary, sitting and listening to His word.

Then you come to Mary of Magdala. What a history that woman had! We have been reading about Rahab, the kind of woman she was, and here was this Mary of Magdala out of whom had been cast seven demons but she was a lover of the Lord Jesus and when the test came she was there in early morn at the tomb. It was still dark. You say, 'Oh, there is too much against me and hindering me; there are all sorts of things', but she was a lover, and I think you can overcome any difficulty if you love the Lord Jesus Christ, and she did. At early morn while it was still dark, she came to the tomb, and then it says where we read, "Having said these things she turned backward and beholds Jesus standing there". The Lord takes note of those who love Him. Maybe the brethren do not see it, but the Lord knows if even in the depths of your being you love Him, and what you do is for Him, and she was here because she wanted to be in the last place where the Lord's body had been. I know we may suggest that she was not too intelligent, but her affection led her to where the Lord had been laid in the tomb, and here He is, He reveals Himself to her and speaks to her, "Woman, why dost thou weep?" He takes account of tears. The brethren perhaps are passing through remarkable times of suffering. It pays to sit down sometimes and think about what some of the beloved brethren are passing through. It is quite a thing in your body if you are told you have cancer or some incurable illness so that you might not have long to live; it makes you think differently. When you are in the bloom of life you want to enjoy everything, have good holidays, and enjoy life to the full. While I am not saying there is anything exactly wrong with that, it is the natural desire of the human heart, but then when we are drawn up with the realities of the brevity of human life we begin to change the way we think. So this woman wanted to be near the Lord and she gets a wonderful message to convey to the beloved brethren, to these disciples. I think that was because she was a lover.

Now, I want to speak simply of Lydia, a seller of purple. I suppose she must have been a business woman in the city, but she worshipped God and she heard: "whose heart the Lord opened". She had to do with the Lord, like Mary, and she must have been before the Lord, and He had opened her heart "to attend to the things spoken by Paul". How much there is in the ministry. I am ashamed to say that there is much ministry I have not read that would affect my life, and arouse me as to matters I need to attend to. There is so much teaching available. It says of this woman that she attended to the things. I think that is important, dear brethren. I take that word to my own heart, the

need sometimes to attend to things. I speak simply. I would like to leave that point though; “where it was the custom for prayer to be, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had assembled”. It is a good thing to have customs. You always get up in the morning, you always have your breakfast and all the things you do during the day, but this is a finer thing. It was “the custom for prayer to be”. What a valuable meeting the prayer meeting is, as we have constantly been reminded; I am not saying new things in drawing attention to the value of the prayer meeting, the power meeting. If there are matters burdening us or are difficult, or there is sickness or illness, or help needed, the prayer meeting provides the greatest opportunity and resource to secure divine help. The best thing to do is speak to God about matters and bring them before Him. He has the power to meet our needs according to His will; so it was “the custom for prayer to be”.

I just speak of Phoebe, “Phoebe, our sister, who is minister of the assembly which is in Cenchrea”; then he goes on, “that ye may receive her in the Lord worthily of saints, and that ye may assist her in whatever matter she has need of you; for *she*”, emphatic, “also has been a helper of many, and of myself”. Think of the beloved apostle saying that. I do not know what she had done for him; maybe there is a record somewhere of what she did for him, but he learned to appreciate what this sister did for him. Maybe we should value the sisters more. Maybe they do more for us than we realise. We saw our aged local sister this afternoon and one of the things she does is she prays for all the brethren. How valuable that is, dear sisters, the prayers of the saints. I know sometimes in the meeting you maybe wish you could speak, but women are silent in the assembly, but there is a certain help that they can bring in. As I said, like Mary they can affect atmosphere. I almost was going to read of Abigail, because one of the things it says of her was that she “was of good understanding”, 1 Sam 25: 3. She had a judgement of a situation and she was able to speak to David and save him from doing something that might have caused a lot of harm. So the sisters are valuable.

That is all I seek to leave with us, dear brethren, how valuable the sisters are. May we be encouraged for His Name's sake.

Kirkcaldy
22nd June 2010

NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

John Strachan

John 2: 1-11

I think it is very interesting, dear brethren, that we have this occasion of a marriage recorded for us in the Scriptures. It is turned into a sign. I think it would mean that it is intended to have a spiritual significance. It is a very encouraging thing that there was this marriage where the Lord Jesus and His disciples were present. We are very happy to be here with our brother and sister today to share with them in their joy, their natural joy. It is right that it should be so since marriage is a divine institution. They have had to do with the Lord Jesus for themselves, each of them separately. Our brother has had to do with the Lord Jesus, and our sister has had to do with the Lord Jesus. Now, as set together, they have further opportunities of having to do with Him. The great benefit of marriage in the Lord is that it can be taken up in relation to Him and in relation to His interests.

Now, as things proceeded here, it began with the natural, and the natural link is very important because it is a divine arrangement; and it is intended that it should work out as a matter of love and joy in the relationship. However, it came to light that there was something deficient; and things may not always be plain sailing. There may be a time when some deficiency occurs, some lack, and it is a great matter when that happens to know where to turn, to turn to the Lord Jesus. He had the answer here. That is a very simple thing to say, but it is a very real matter to be able to turn to Someone that we know, Someone we can trust, Someone who has the answer to whatever the problem may be. So He had the answer here, and He used what was there at that time to provide the answer. There were these six stone water-vessels. Now, they were vessels for purification, and that is like what believers are to be, available to work out this great matter of moral purification. So the Lord indicates what to do with these; "Fill the water-vessels with water", He says. I think for us it is really a pointer to the application of the death of Christ being experienced morally in believers in such a way that there is some transformation brought about. The vessels were filled to the brim; there was no room for anything else. They are like persons so affected by the death of Christ that the Lord can say, "Draw out now"; draw out from these vessels. Then what comes out is the word of the feast-master, "thou hast kept the good wine till now".

I think it indicates something beyond just the enjoyment of the natural relationship. We think of the natural first, and then the spiritual; and I think it is leading on to the enjoyment of spiritual family relationships. Now, that is a very important thing. Along with the marriage and the enjoyment of natural relationships, there should be an entrance into the enjoyment of spiritual family relationships. I think the Lord is indicating that. It is not just enough to rely on the natural relationships alone, but the Lord would have us come into the enjoyment of spiritual family relationships. You might say, 'Where is that?' Well, it is in the family of God. It is in a wider family than the natural: the divine family, composed of persons who have been taken up through divine grace and have part in this wonderful family that is being formed at the present time.

Well, it says, "This beginning of signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory". It is a wonderful thing to have some manifestation of the glory of Christ, and I think where you can find that taking place is in the divine family. That is why it is so important that we should enjoy these family relationships, and make way for some manifestation of the glory of Christ. We sang a verse in the house this morning -

There Christ, the centre of the throng,
Shall in His glory shine,
But not an eye those hosts among
But sees His glory Thine. (Hymn 178)

That is very fine. Where would that be but in the divine family? It is a great matter to enjoy not only these natural relationships but also enjoy spiritual family relationships and to be conscious of something of the glory of Christ coming in. That is what will hold us, dear brethren, the glory of Christ. That will hold us eternally and it is enough to hold us for our time down here.

Now, we are going to miss our sister, but we are happy that she is going to be with brethren in another locality; they will have the blessing of having her there. One of the things that has impressed me about our sister is her attendance at the meetings, attendance, you might say, in the divine family. I would just seek to encourage all the young brothers and sisters to attend the meetings and enjoy their spiritual links in the divine family. John has a special place in the Lord's mind in this regard. The Lord says of him, "If I will that he abide until I come ...", John 21: 22. John has to do with our education for the divine

family and John's writings have a particular place in that regard.

Dear brethren, I just commend the word to our brother and sister, and to us all for our blessing, for the Lord's name's sake.

Dundee

17th July 2010

BLESSING THROUGH COMMITTAL

Robert Gardiner

Judges 1: 12-15

This, dear brethren, is one of the most attractive young couples in the Old Testament, and they are attractive because of their committal to the Lord, before and after marriage. Our brother and sister, as individuals, have been committed to the Lord Jesus before 11 o'clock this morning. Those of us that have watched our young brother grow through his teenage years know of that. He has been prepared to stand by what belongs to the Lord and seek in his measure in the teenage years - which have been difficult and are difficult for all of us - to be apart from the world and to be a help in his local meeting. From what our brother has said, this would be true too of our young sister. How wonderful! That makes them more attractive than many other young persons. Now that they are married, they are one.

In this section where we have read, the word of God comes through Caleb. It is God Himself that is speaking through Caleb, who says, "He that smites Kirjath-sepher and takes it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter as wife". Othniel, who was Caleb's nephew, values his cousin so much - one committed person valuing another committed person - that he is prepared to take up the challenge and overcome Kirjath-sepher. I would like just to use this simply to demonstrate that those that are blessed are blessed because of committal. Such committal, of course, is seen perfectly in the Lord Jesus. God said, "Who will go for us?", Isa 6: 8. There was one blessed Man who said - as Isaiah, "Here am I", and the Lord Jesus, in full committal to His Father's will went down even unto death, led captivity captive and "set free all those who through fear of death through the whole of their life were subject to bondage", Heb. 2: 15. What a committal it was by our Lord Jesus! The underlying reason is made known to us, "who, in view of the joy lying before him, endured the cross, having despised the shame", Heb. 12: 2. The joy of the assembly was before the Lord Jesus in such wise that there was no holding back; He gave Himself. He gave His all. Beloved young brethren, have you come to appreciate the committal of the Lord Jesus in such a way? If you have, then you yourselves will be prepared to be committed as He was committed. So Othniel is committed in that way.

Kirjath-sepher means, 'the City of the Book', and what this city

speaks of is prominent in the present day. This episode is spoken of in the book of Joshua, but I have read of it in the book of Judges because it is set in the day of declension, the day of being lukewarm. Many of the tribes did not take possession of the land as they ought to have taken possession. Look around Christendom and you will find that there are many persons who maybe know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour but who are not committed; not prepared to take possession. Othniel realises that this city has to be taken to take possession, and so he takes Kirjath-sepher, the City of the Book. This world, in which we are, where there is such lack of committal, beloved brethren, is a place where books have proliferated as never before. I just want to appeal to you young people: in your committal you must leave aside anything that tarnishes your spiritual well-being and your spiritual growth. There are books now being openly spoken of that are detrimental to Christian principles. Darwin's book on the Origin of Species should have no place in any person's house that knows and loves the Lord. There are authors who have written macabre books that belong to the underworld. These should not be found in any committed person's house. I say this because I believe there is a need now for us to leave aside what belongs to the world. I am appealing to every young person, as well as our young brother and sister, to leave aside everything that belongs to the world and that does not have the accreditation of the Holy Spirit. You commit yourself to the Lord by taking on board that which is accredited by the Lord.

Well now, Othniel takes Kirjath-sepher, and he is given Achsah as his wife. Our young brother and sister from today are setting out to go on together as one and to be fully committed. After marriage, Achsah shows her committal when she urges her husband to ask of her father the field. You will notice that there is a difference here from Joshua. It is "a field" in Joshua (chap 15: 18); this is "the field" in Judges. Joshua is like the beginning of this dispensation: "a field", the opening out, you might say, of what the apostles and those with the apostles were entering into under the power of the Spirit. But now when we come to the day of declension it is "the field". It suggests to me Paul's ministry, beloved brethren. She loved and appreciated "the field": 'ask of him the field', she says. I say in our day, lay hold of Paul's ministry. It is part of the greatest legacy that we have in this dispensation. It brings the truth from the Lord in heaven directly to bear upon us, to see us through, and to cause us to be like the Lord and to be for the Lord. As she springs down from the ass - what energy, what life

there is - Caleb said to her "What wouldest thou?". And she said to him, "Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a southern land; give me also springs of water". She realised the sun was shining in this land; she realised that there was blessing coming from God, but there could be a certain aridity about it and she says, 'I want water', "springs of water". She wanted what would give her the full produce of the land. Not thirty-fold, not sixty-fold, she wanted a hundredfold, and she wanted it with her husband, "springs of water". And it says he "gave her the upper springs and the lower springs". Paul's doctrine in all its glory is set out in the Ephesian epistle. It is not the terms of the epistle that we want to emulate, it is those Ephesian saints themselves of whom the epistle was true at that time when Paul wrote it. The upper springs open up for us in all their glory and greatness, beloved brethren; what there is in Christ for us, "every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ", Eph 1: 3. At the end of the epistle we get the lower springs where every relationship is spoken of, everything that we have to do in our lives, everything that we have to meet, all is laid out for us there. Why is it not in Corinthians? It is laid out for us in an epistle where we get the glory and greatness of God's purposes for us, first of all; and then from that height, how we can meet all that is down here in the power of the Spirit as we are here in testimony for the Lord Jesus. What a future we have before us! The Lord may come before tomorrow morning but, however short it is or however long it is, what a future we have! We have "the field", and the gift of the upper and the lower springs, so that we might enjoy the produce of the inheritance.

May our young brother and sister, and all of us here, be encouraged. May we be challenged, too, that in this day in which there is so much declension, so much that is detrimental to the Lord's Name, we might commit ourselves so that there is nothing that would hold us back from being fully here for the Lord and His interests in every local assembly. May it be so for His Name's sake.

Dundee

17th July 2010

BAPTISED HOUSEHOLDS

Doug M Welch

1 Corinthians 15: 29

It was very affecting to be a witness to the marriage occasion that occurred today; certainly we are thankful for the invitation.

I was impressed with the brevity and the comeliness of the ceremony itself.

But, I am sure the home going of our beloved brother in Glasgow is resting on our spirits, and this verse can be encouraging in light of this.

It is not just a household that is set up today, it is a baptised household. In military language, when somebody goes down they are replaced. In divine things, in the variety of what is established in the assembly, persons can never be replaced; but persons can step in.

I was also impressed with our brothers' words to give balance to the occasion, and to hear the vows our brother and sister made to one another. God appreciates a vow, and it has been before God and witnesses; and what God joins together no man can separate.

So, the words given as to the exercise of headship, and the experience of equality, provide for what is ahead for our brother and sister; but the Lord has asked for something further - a baptised household, and to step in.

Those who have gone before, their works follow them, and fruit may yet be seen. Undoubtedly, in the locality here in Aberdeen, where there has been much growth in terms of numbers, there is still a need. The need is for a baptised household; one ready to step in.

So, our brother and sister have been added here and, whilst our beloved brother in Glasgow has been taken from us, a valuable, faithful brother, place is now left for the rest of us; for younger persons to establish baptised households and step into the testimony of the Lord.

We are glad to celebrate this occasion with our brethren and the three words we have had can be commended to them with affections from all, and to be sealed with them for the days ahead together. May God bless the word.

Aberdeen, Idaho

10th August 2010

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