

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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CONTENTS

The Enjoyment of Fellowship

Page 1

The Fellowship of The Spirit

Jim M. Walkinshaw

Page 17

Hearts

David B. Robertson

Page 24

Assembly Conduct

David J. Hutson

Page 29

THE ENJOYMENT OF FELLOWSHIP

1 Corinthians 1: 9

Colossians 1: 12-20

1 John 1: 7

JRW I wondered whether we might get some fresh impressions in this reading of the enjoyment of fellowship. The scriptures that we have read are well known and much has been said in relation to them. Much has been said in relation to the principles that govern the fellowship, much instruction in relation to it, but my exercise is that we might know more of the enjoyment of it, and what can be enjoyed at the present time. I think that if we enjoy something that will lead us to value it, and I think that what we value we will be concerned to protect. I suppose that works out even in natural things, things that we enjoy. We might think of the family relationships that we enjoy: the more we enjoy them the more we value them; the more we value them the more we will be concerned to protect them.

I wondered if we might get some impression of that in relation to the fellowship. So this verse in Corinthians is full of teaching and instruction, and there are many here who can help us in relation to that, but I felt that we might get some impression of the scope and the dignity of the fellowship, and the privilege that is ours as called into it. The fellowship, as we have been taught, is universal and the "ye" that is here, "ye have been called", although directed no doubt specifically to the brethren in Corinth, by extension would involve every believer: that is the privilege that is available to every believer, "called into the fellowship of his Son". What wonderful dignity marks it. Again we might see that the fellowship is something which we enjoy, we should enjoy it here. It is in a scene of contrariety, it is in a scene where His Son has been rejected. The word was, "This is the heir; come let us kill him", Luke 20: 14. He sent His Son, and the consequence of that was that this world rejected Him. Over against that, God in His faithfulness has seen to it that those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ are called into the fellowship of that blessed One, His Son. Then he says, "Jesus Christ our Lord", that is, that those who come into the enjoyment of it, which is our concern now, are those who recognise and own Him as their Lord.

I wondered whether we might get an impression from Colossians as to the wealth of what is available to enjoy. Paul here

gives thanks to the Father for making us "fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light". He goes on to speak of the things which we can enjoy: he speaks of "the kingdom of the Son of his love". What enjoyment there is in being a subject of that kingdom. He speaks of the greatness of what has been secured: "in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins"; these are things that we can enjoy. And then he brings in the greatness of the One in whom everything is secured, in whom everything is settled; the One of whom it says, "that *he* might have the first place in all things". I think that is crucial, if we are to enjoy the fellowship and all that is available in it today; I think it is crucial that "*he* might have the first place in all things" to us.

I just touched on John, not to go into it too much, but, as we have been taught, Paul gives us the light and the structure of these things, and John gives the assurance and the encouragement, that even in a day of breakdown, even in a day when the love of the most has grown cold, the enjoyment of these things is possible. For he says, "But if we walk in the light as *he* is in the light". (I connect that a little with what the Father has done, "made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light") "we have fellowship with one another". So that what goes on in the world around us has no bearing on that; as we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship with one another. Then, as we know, things come in, but there is that available in "the blood of Jesus Christ". There is sufficient in what God has provided through our Lord Jesus Christ, to meet every exigency, every detail, and every difficulty that might come in. That is what is in mind, and I just wondered if it might help us to consider these things.

JB Yes, I am sure it is very important to be reminded of this, and to be well grounded in these wonderful privileges that are given to us of God. It is God who is faithful. You spoke of what is contrary, and God is faithful that we should come into this wonderful place, this wonderful area, where His love is known, and to share it with the saints. I think that is important.

JRW There is a lot in that expression that you draw attention to. It stands on its own; it is absolute: "God is faithful". We could have just read that, and that is absolutely true, "God is faithful". And then it goes on "by whom ..."; so the One who has called is that One who is perfect; we can rely on that.

RDP In the great matter of the calling, "called into the fellowship", it is

not exactly something which we own, is it? I mean there are certain things we choose, but the thought of the calling is greater than that, a different aspect is it not?

JRW I think so. It confers certain privilege on those who have been called, does it not? I think that is at the heart of my exercise really, that we might come to an appreciation and enjoyment of what we have been called to. Our brother has made reference to God's faithfulness, that is continuing. The way man has gone makes no difference to it. The fact that man has rejected His Son and cast Him out does not affect it: the faithfulness of God continues, and that enters into the calling, does it not? We have been called into the fellowship, and it is no ordinary fellowship, it is "of His Son". You can say a bit more about that.

RDP The thought of calling is not very much used. It used to be more used, did it not? People had jobs, but certain people had callings; it seems to carry an imperative with it, and something that cannot be resisted. So much of the Christian profession has deteriorated in what seems to be like multiple choice - this may suit you better than that might suit you, and so on, but God's faithfulness seems to be in this matter of a calling, which is something you cannot refuse, you cannot resist.

JRW I think that is helpful, and if we get that into our hearts that will increase our enjoyment of the fellowship and what it involves, because it is entirely of God, and is what God in His faithfulness has called us to. What you are saying helps, because every believer, everyone that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, is expected to answer to that. God had nothing less in His heart than that those that believe on the Lord Jesus Christ should enjoy what is available in the fellowship.

RDP When we think of the fellowship, we perhaps think immediately of our meetings, and that is not of course a wrong thought, but this is a vast scope. This is a very great thought, the faithfulness of God, the expression of it, the working out of it involves how the saints meet together, and so on. It is good to grasp the divine thought, is it not? God could have arranged it so that there were whole myriads of individuals, but He called all those who came to Christ, called them into the fellowship of His Son; there is something there which is in the ordering of God.

JRW I think so, so that it does not depend on us meeting together. We can enjoy these things as we are together, but it goes further. It is

something that is there, irrespective of whether we meet together, and I think if we can get something of that in our hearts and our souls it will strengthen us. The fellowship is a wonderful association. The basis for it is the acknowledgement of Jesus as Lord, and I can enjoy that in my soul as over against everything that is here. That is why I say it is something that we can enjoy as over against what we find in the world today.

JM I think you mentioned in your outline what the older brethren used to say, the fellowship of His Son is the dignity. Really there is no organisation - and I use the word 'organisation' because I cannot think of a better word - but there is nothing on earth that can compare with it, is there? We need to value it, and the problem at Corinth was that they were lowering the level of it. We need to keep the level of it up and enjoy it in its fullness.

JRW Yes, I am glad you say that. Much could be said about the reason for Paul writing in this way, and much has been said about it as you would know better than me. The brethren in Corinth were losing sight of it; they were saying, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ", 1 Cor 1: 12. They were losing sight of the dignity of it. But there are fellowships amongst men, and associations amongst men that do not have the dignity of this fellowship, and they are all linked in some way with the world that has rejected and cast out God's Son. I was thinking a lot of the parable where the man who planted a vineyard sends various ones and they are rejected, and then he comes to it, "I will send my beloved son", and they say, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him", Luke 20: 13, 14. That is the situation in the world today, and as we seek to be true to the Lord Jesus, and own Him as our Lord, we will find that.

JM There is a good deal of illnesses and difficulties with work, and all that kind of thing amongst us, and what is brought to light is the beauty and the value of the fellowship; there can be nothing greater than being in the fellowship of His Son, and that is actually working amongst us. There is a good deal amongst us for concern, but you can see that the fellowship of His Son is actually at work amongst us, and that is what is encouraging, is it not?

JRW Yes, and that is what we need to enjoy, is it not? And I think practically that is the way in which it is enjoyed. We speak of these blessed matters that we can enjoy in a spiritual way, but I think too there

is joy in these things practically as it works out.

GMcK I think it was a very good remark that it does not depend on me, it depends on Christ does it? Colossians will go on to show that. That is a good way of getting God's view of it; it puts me out of the picture. It is just a question of whether I am going to go in for it and enjoy it, but it does not depend on me, does it? If you would say some more about that it would help us I think.

JRW We come back to the faithfulness of God. God is faithful, and, as I said, that stands on its own. I think God's faithfulness would see to it that what believers have been called to will be held available in spite of what the enemy would do. The enemy is set against this. I think we have seen that increasingly. If you look at Christendom at large, which would profess to do things in relation to the name of the Lord Jesus, you will find that things are coming in absolutely contrary to Scripture, and contrary to His word. That is how effective the enemy can be, and I think we need to see that on the other side there is the faithfulness of God, and there is the glory of the person of the Son, and these things are centred in Him, and as we find our enjoyment in Him we know that it is secure. But say a bit more about your own impression.

GMcK I thought it was a very good view you were giving us, and I was just thinking as you were speaking that the enemy has been set, from the very beginning, against everything that holds Christ as its head - a Christ who is a Man in another place altogether. In the beginning of the Acts that was what stirred up the trouble, was it not? It has been that way ever since. The enemy is set against anything that truly holds a Man risen from the dead as its head, that is true fellowship with Christ as its centre.

JRW I think the more we are convicted as to the condition of things in the world, and the more we are convicted as to the fact that the Lord Jesus is rejected here, the more we will enjoy the things you are speaking of. That really brings us on to Colossians because you get there what we have been delivered from, not to dwell too much on that, but I think it is important, "delivered us from the authority of darkness". It is sobering as we look at the world at the present time in that regard. We can see that persons, even many Christian persons, are morally under the authority of darkness. Well, God's desire is that we might be delivered from that, and Paul gives thanks here to "the Father, who has made us fit ..., and has delivered us ...", so that it is not something we

have done, is it?

RDP Would you think in Acts, that the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ is tangible, you can almost see it? I was thinking of what Peter said "as many as the Lord our God may call" (Acts 2: 39), and "and there were added in that day about three thousand souls", v 41. But then they were together, they had all things in common, and so on in those beautiful verses which describe it, v 46, 47. But breakdown comes in, and the public view of it becomes submerged under a tide of man's will and man's mind, but that beautiful thing that was there was according to the calling of God. Peter has said, "Be saved from this perverse generation", Acts 2: 40. That is like Colossians; the scene of things around us comes in, and publicly obscures and clouds the beauty of what God has, but it does not destroy it, it is still there, is it not?

JRW That is where you can rely on the faithfulness of God. We need to get that impression firmly embedded in our hearts because otherwise we would look around and see the breakdown, we would see the mixture, and we would see the activity of the enemy and his success, and we would think that these things are impossible. But I think we should lay hold of the faithfulness of God, "God is faithful", and the blessed truth of what He has called us to, and then, as is brought out here, the power that there is available. It has often been said that there is not much mention of the Spirit in Colossians, only in verse 8 of this chapter, but the Spirit's power no doubt lies behind what God is able to do in us; "delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love". I think these are the things that we enjoy as in this fellowship.

RDP-r Does the word "into" - He has "called us into the fellowship" and "translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love" - suggest that there is something existent? As individuals we might be attracted to Christ, but as to our fellowship, we are called into it; so we join in something that already exists.

JRW I think that is most important. So the question is, 'Where are we living?'. We are moved really from one place to another. I remember a preaching on that, the gospel of place, and I think it bears on what you say; we are brought into the fellowship of His Son, and we are translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love. We change our ground. Practically we are living in this world, and we have to get our living, we have to work, we have to fulfil righteousness, but where are

we living? Do we know what it is to be living in the kingdom of the Son of His love? There is something very touching about that.

RDP-r Well, I was thinking of what was said as to the calling, and Abraham was called out, he was directed towards a new place which God had in mind for him, and that suggests what we are brought into, something that is existing at the present time as a result of what God has formed, and the privilege of being brought into that. I wonder sometimes whether we really appreciate the greatness of the One who has called us, and the right He has to command us in relation to these things.

JRW Yes, that is very much in line with my exercise. These things are available for us to enjoy. They are available for us to enter into, and they are available for us to enjoy. Could you think of such a God calling us into something that would disappoint or let us down? It is impossible, is it not?

We have read in Colossians, but we could have read in Ephesians which is perhaps a little further on in our experience. We get there where Paul says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ", chap 1: 3. I think that links with what you say, as we have an impression in our hearts of the God that has called us, the God that has made us fit, the God that has translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love; that must mean that there are blessings there for our enjoyment that surpass anything else.

DJW Do you think we need a sense that the fellowship exists? The fact that the Father has made us fit, that is a thing that is to be known, but do you think that the enjoyment of it for us is in the second epistle, the communion of the Holy Spirit, chap 13: 14?

JRW I think that is right, now say a little more as to knowing that it exists, because our brother has touched on the fact that in the beginning of Acts, in inaugural days, it could be identified in certain places. It was possible at some time to bring together every one that was called into the fellowship, but how do we know it exists today?

DJW I would like your thoughts on it, but do you think the 2 Timothy road is the only way to it? It is a question of walking in the light, persons pure of heart.

JRW I think that is good, the 2 Timothy road is the only way to it:

"every one who names the name of the Lord", chap 2: 19. That is important because it is the "fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord". The bond of fellowship is Himself; it is composed of those that own Him as Lord, and there is obligation on such, and responsibilities on such, to withdraw from iniquity: these are writings that bear on the day in which we are. The road to it however does not exactly demonstrate that it exists. How would we demonstrate that it exists?

DJW Well, to me it is just a question of accepting God's word, but the way of finding it is the exercise. You were speaking about privilege, and I think that is an important matter of the fellowship; we have each got something to contribute.

JRW Yes, and I think we know that it exists when we come into it. I mean if you wanted to know that there was a place such as London, and a place such as England, and the queen was the head of it, the simplest way to prove to yourself that it exists would be to go there, would it not? And you would find it is exactly as you have been told; yes, London is the capital of the country, and the queen lives at Buckingham Palace, and she heads up the state. Well, I think finding the kingdom is a bit like that, and as we respond to the call which our brother has spoken of, as we own the Lord Jesus as our Lord, as we withdraw from iniquity and follow the road which we have spoken of, we will find that we enjoy entrance into the kingdom of the Son of His love. Now a kingdom must have a king, and the King of this kingdom is the Son of His love. That is a very touching expression, and I suppose much could be said to touch our affections in relation to it. The apostle goes on to speak of the glory of the One who is King.

JB We speak together of the glories of Christ, which is very enjoyable, and something that you find is well worth coming along that road to, do you think?

JRW That is most important; the very notion of fellowship cannot be enjoyed by a person on his own, and I think what you say is most important, these are things which we can enjoy together. So I think our brother said that it does not depend on meetings, and that is right. The fellowship exists and is not dependent on the meetings. However, it is there at the meetings that we enjoy it with one another, do you think? And I think it is important to see that what we are speaking of, and the enjoyment of this kingdom, the enjoyment of fellowship, and the enjoyment of all that is ours in the Lord Jesus Christ, is available to

everyone that believes on Him. We would desire that when the brethren gather together far more might come and enter into what we are enjoying together.

RDP I hope what I said about depending on the meeting is not wrongly construed, because in the early Acts they delighted to be together, they shared something which the world had never known. They shared the fellowship, they enjoyed it, they enjoyed one another's impressions of it, but the enjoyment of fellowship did not depend merely upon being together in the sense that if a person is cut off from practically being with other believers, like John on Patmos, that did not mean to say that he is out of the fellowship of God's Son; he still enjoyed it. It is important to see the faithfulness of God. As you said at the beginning, we could have a reading on the faithfulness of God. We see His faithfulness in creation; He says that while the earth remains, certain things will remain. We cleave to that. Now, in relation to the fellowship of God's Son, God is faithful. If He has called us into it, it will not only always be available to us to enjoy, but the resources necessary to enjoy it, and to fill out His thoughts as to it, will also always be available; the resource is there.

JRW Is that not what comes out in Colossians? In the section we have read and elsewhere we find the moral road to it, but Colossians assumes the believer is still here on earth, with all the pressures, and exigencies, and difficulties, and trials that are around, and yet able in the midst of that scene to enjoy the most precious heavenly things.

RDP So that the fellowship has a protective sense, and the kingdom has a protective sense, but this is the kingdom of the Son of His love. This is beyond safety; you have got it for enjoyment. The kingdom of the Son of His love suggests Solomon; it is the blessings that have all been secured for one line and are now being set out and enjoyed. It is a unique expression, is it not?

JRW Yes, that is confirming because my exercise really was in relation to enjoyment. The side of safety is there, of course. I suppose if we were not safe there would not be any enjoyment. We could speak about Nehemiah and the way in which they built the wall to keep the enemies out, and all of that is involved, but I think what you are saying is that what comes out here, is the side of enjoyment. And then I think the more we enjoy it, the more we will value it. So we would not go outside this kingdom, would we? We would not elect to walk out of the gates

and go off independently after having had an experience of the enjoyment that is available there and all that there is for us in it? We would want to stay there and protect it would we not?

JM As our brother says, it is the antitype of Solomon, the kingdom of the Son of his love. Is not love the dominant thing in the fellowship, and where else would you experience love such as this, such as there is in the fellowship? Nowhere else could you have such an experience of love.

JRW We have often said that to know it persons must experience it. There is pervading love in all of this; the Son of His love would suggest that. And I think the young ones know what it is to grow up in an atmosphere of love. It starts in the household. Our brother has spoken about meetings, and I think love found in the meetings starts in the household. There is love in the households of the saints that springs from what we are speaking of here. The way in which the parents enjoy the experience of the kingdom of the Son of His love pervades the household, and the young ones grow up in that atmosphere. And then they come amongst the saints, and they find it there too. You will not find it in the world, the world where the Lord Jesus is rejected, where the Son of His love is despised, where the mention of His Name causes persons to blaspheme. This is where you find it, and I think it is something that exists concretely. I think in our experience it does, it exists, and we can enjoy it.

DJW You referred to the household. Does that link with Acts 16, the jailor and his house; they really in principle came into fellowship, the fellowship of God's Son.

JRW Yes. We had helpful meetings at Buckhurst Hill with Mr Bruce Grant, and he said that the way into it was "believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house", Acts 16: 31. The jailor came into the joy of that practically; he was saved. I think that is most important. Here the apostle speaks about the side of redemption, and the forgiveness of sins, and what we can enjoy in that way; yet what then comes before him is the greatness of that blessed One. It is the greatness of the Son of His love, the greatness and glory of the one in whom all these things are centred, culminating, as we remarked earlier, "that *he* might have the first place in all things". In this kingdom it is He who must have the first place, and practically, if we are to enter into the enjoyment of it, I think it is imperative that we have a sense in our hearts

of the greatness of the Person, and we give Him the first place.

JM And He is the one who gives character to this fellowship does He not? It all flows from Him.

JRW Absolutely, and it would be difficult to find language better than the apostle uses here: "by him were created all things, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or principalities, or authorities: all things have been created by him and for him. And *he*", emphatic, "is before all, and all things subsist together by him. And *he*", emphatic, "is head of the body" and then "that *he*", emphatic, "might have the first place in all things". When something of the glory of the Person enters into our hearts I think we need to give Him the first place.

RDP Do you think the alternative word helps? The alternative word to 'fellowship' is 'communion'. It refers to it here, and later in Corinthians we get "The cup of blessing which we bless", chap 10: 16. There you have the communion. It really involves Christ, does it not? It is really saying that you have Christ. That is what is given to the believer as called out of the world, as called out of the perverse generation: we have Christ for everything. Communion seems to me to be a very warm word; there is a closeness, a warmness, and a responsiveness about the word.

JRW I think that is confirmed by the scripture we have read because, after the apostle speaks as to what the Father has done for us, and that He has translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, it seems as though He cannot now speak enough of that blessed One and His love. I suppose that too is where our enjoyment lies.

JB It is interesting that it is God's pleasure expressed here. In verse 19, "for in him all the fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell"; think of how the Father loves to have His Son expressed.

JRW Yes, I think that is most touching, and the very revelation of God Himself is centred in Him, everything that God desires to make known to His creature in relation to Himself has been made known in Jesus, and everything is centred in Him. I feel very measured by it. We should come to a point where we find nothing outside of Him; I feel very measured by that, but I am sure that is God's intention, in His faithfulness, that we should be brought to that: there is nothing outside of Him.

DJW Is the fellowship therefore not only for us, but for God's pleasure? I was thinking of the way the Lord looked around in a circuit on His own, Mark 3: 24. Does that not convey something of His joy in those that are His?

JRW I think that is right. God really is going to head up all things in relation to His own glory, and I am sure what you say as to divine pleasure is important. Say a bit more about that.

DJW I do not like to distract from your subject, but it seems to me when the Lord says, "where two or three are gathered unto my name, there am I in the midst of them", Matt 18: 20. That is His fellowship, and it seems to me the prime object is for His pleasure. If He is getting His pleasure, I will get mine.

JRW Yes, I think that is right, and this really leads on to the thought of testimony, because what is secured here as we find our enjoyment in these things is what is for God's testimony. So He speaks thus, does He not, in John's gospel? I am thinking of what you are saying as to the pleasure of God and His desires. The Lord speaks twice in John in relation to the world believing and knowing. He speaks about what He is demanding for His disciples, the apostles that were there, but He then speaks of "those who believe on me through their word ... that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou has sent me", John 17: 21. And then, later on, "that the world may know that thou has sent me", chap 17: 23. I think there is testimony that comes to light in all of this, that would demonstrate the glory of the God that would bring all this to pass, do you think?

DJW You referred to Nehemiah, and it reminded me that the choirs went round that wall; the service of God was really maintained, chap 12: 31.

JRW Yes, I think that is right, and as there is what is provided for the pleasure of God, our pleasure is really according to that.

RDP-r Would you say that this is a very intimate matter, this fellowship?

JRW Yes, go on.

RDP-r Well, I was thinking that we, each one, have our link with the One who is the Centre of it, as well as having links with everyone that is in it. We can prove something of the fellowship practically amongst

ourselves. I was thinking of what Paul says about those who “gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship” (Gal 2: 9), which is very intimate. Is that something we actually enjoy in the fellowship? We would enjoy the warmth; we would feel the nearness to one another in relation to it.

JRW Yes, I think that is really the bond of the fellowship; that is what pulls us together, the fact that we individually love the Lord Jesus Christ. And we desire to give Him His place, as we have already said, “that *he* might have the first place in all things”; the first test is ourselves. Then I suppose it relates to my household and family. First of all does He have first place with me, do I own Him Lord in my own life personally? I feel very tested on this, I am not saying it as being absolutely in the good of it, but I can see how stability and enjoyment will enter into it as I know more of it. Then in my household, we have spoken about the households of the saints and the way the children can grow up, they feel safe, they feel loved, they feel that there is certain right rule and discipline in the house. So they grow up in the light of the fact that He has the first place, He is supreme. And then in the local meeting, in the assembly, as we speak.

RDP-r There is nothing remote about it, is there? You spoke about this country and the queen; there is a certain remoteness with regard to that, but there is not in this kingdom, this kingdom of the Son of His love; it is nearness, it is warmth, it is real. This fellowship really is something that is tangible in that way.

JRW And everyone has full access to the King. I love the touch which has been on my heart for some weeks now, where someone was speaking in relation to the country, you might say the country of England; there are subjects laying down their lives for the country and queen; it is very painful. But in *this* kingdom the King has laid down His life for every one of His subjects; how intimate that makes it, and that links on with what you were saying.

RDP The sad thing is that there was danger in Colosse; Paul brings in possibly the greatest expression of the personal glory of Christ in Colossians 1, and the danger at Colosse was that man would intrude, and philosophy and vain deceit. The Colossian error was described somewhere as the most subtle, JBS vol 5 p85. It replaced Christ with another man. That is possibly one of the dangers of our day. God is jealous as to the greatness of “Christ, everything and in all” (chap 3: 11);

that He must have the pre-eminence; He is to be the One.

JRW Yes, I think we have seen that in our own experience, and we see it in the world at large, we see it among men, and the tendency there is to replace Christ with another man, but I think again you come back to the faithfulness of God. He will see to it in a coming day. He has given all things into the hands of the Son, and He will see to it in a coming day that everything must be in subjection to Him. But our enjoyment practically is to enter into the spirit of that now.

PW It was said of the Gadites in 1 Chronicles 12 that they separated themselves to David, v 8. Do we have to hold to that attraction to Christ, otherwise everything will collapse?

JRW I think that is important, and that is a test to us is it not? Do I love the Lord Jesus enough? I think that is a great question, and in many ways it is the driving force: those that name "the name of the Lord" withdraw from iniquity, 2 Tim 2: 19. That must involve that I love Him, and that I desire to honour Him. Do you think that what we get here, which we did not touch on too much, "in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins", gives us some impression of the way that He has gone for each one of us, so that these things might be open to us? That would cause us to love Him, would it not?

KM In naming "the name of the Lord", do we convey the savour of that Name? That Name "is as an ointment poured forth", Song of Songs 1: 3. So what is in that Name could never be arbitrary in any sense whatever, and that ointment will be available in this kingdom which we are speaking about, the kingdom of the Son of His love.

JRW I am sure that is most important to us, and a challenge to us, because it is more than just profession. It is more than just saying the words; it is what we can convey in what we say and do. As you say, it is the preciousness of that Name, the ointment poured forth, what we are enjoying in relation to it. We speak of the young ones. The young ones will see through profession, but they can experience something in their hearts of what we are enjoying, do you think?

PWB I have been enjoying your thought. It is as Christ is given His place that there is enjoyment of the fellowship. Naturally when we establish something we always try to protect and preserve something in man's way, but it is really preserved by enshrining Christ in the heart. I was just thinking of John 12, "There therefore they made him a supper",

v 2. We see there the enjoyment of fellowship, with Himself and with each other.

JRW Yes, I think that is good. We all must know what the Lord will support, we all must know what is expected, but my impression is that if we come to a valuation of the fellowship, if we come to a valuation of the kingdom, if we come to a valuation of the Person, then that will provide some protection; and we would not go outside of that. We would not want to go outside of the kingdom of the Son of His love, because we know the enjoyment, and have a valuation of what has been secured there by Him. So our brother has spoken of Corinthians 10, and that connects with the verse we read in the beginning, and we get there the communion of the blood of the Christ. That of necessity means that everything in relation to this world is excluded. He has died to this world; He is rejected here which of necessity means that everything of this world is excluded. That is a test to me. I think the more we enter into the enjoyment of it, and the more we have a valuation of it, the easier some of these things might drop away. But I feel very tested myself.

PWB I feel very tested myself, but the more we have Christ before us, the more those things will have no place; but we do not exactly get rid of the world by miraculously dying ourselves, do we? We might seek to put ourselves into a set of rules and obligation and try and judge everything that is in us, only to find that we cannot do it. But if you have Christ before you, how *can* you have anything of this world? It is a world where also our Lord was crucified, Rev 11: 8. The sphere of which we are speaking is where joy and love is, the kingdom of the Son of His love, and that is something that this world can never give.

JRW The world where our Lord was crucified; the more we have a judgement of this, the more we see the world as a system that has rejected Him, cast Him out, and has no place for Him, the more we will enjoy what we have been called to.

JB It became very obvious for the man in John 9 that he just was not wanted by worldly associations, but he found his whole life in Christ.

JRW Yes, that is a very good example. What I find when we speak about a man like that is, the question is raised about me. That is where the test is. As we fix our eye on Christ, and we rely on faith which is of God, we find our way to it.

It was not in mind to say much in relation to the verse in John, just to strengthen what we have been saying. Much could be said in relation to his writings in this epistle, which would bear on what we have been enjoying, but John would show us that even in days of breakdown, even in days of tremendous breakdown, these things are possible; and it is possible to "walk in the light as *he* is in the light"; God has made us fit to share in that portion. It is possible to have fellowship with one another and to enjoy these things even in such conditions. There is available in the blood of Jesus Christ that which can cleanse from everything that might militate against us.

GMcK I was thinking these are strong words, "we have fellowship with one another". We have it; can we all say that? It needs us to experience it before we can say these words?

JRW I think we do. We can say it in a certain spirit of humility, and yet thankfulness; I think we do have it. In the household we read Psalm 46 this morning, in relation to God, and we enjoyed the thought of God's greatness and the way that He is able to cause wars to cease, and the Psalmist goes on to say "Be still, and know that I am God", v 10. All these things we can enjoy together as we have fellowship with one another.

RDP-r Does this show the tremendous scope that is embraced in the thought of the blood of the Lord Jesus. I was thinking that first of all it is the basis for God to come out in blessing, then it is the basis for the forgiveness of our sins, and then it is the basis for the maintenance of things for the pleasure of God.

JRW I think that is good, we could have a reading on that too!

Manchester

27th February 2010

List of initials:

P W Burton, Taunton; J Bruce Ikin, Manchester;
K Marshall, Rotherham; G McKay, Manchester; J Mitchell, Chester;
R D Painter, Yeovil; R D Plant, Birmingham;
D J Willetts, Birmingham; P Wilson, Manchester

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE SPIRIT

Jim M Walkinshaw

Philippians 2: 1-5

Genesis 26: 1 (from 'And Isaac') - 6, 12, 14, 15, 18-24 (to 'fear not'),

25 (to 'Jehovah'), 26-28 (to 'and thee'), 31-33

John 16: 13-15

2 Corinthians 13: 14

I seek grace to say a word in relation to the “fellowship of the Spirit”. There is not much said directly in the Scriptures in relation to the “fellowship of the Spirit”. In fact I think the two verses that we have read are the two references that there are in the Scriptures directly to the “fellowship of the Spirit”, and there is not much by way of elaboration even then. So I feel limited in speaking of it and yet I feel that in the light of what we enjoyed earlier that we should get some impression in relation to it. I think the “fellowship of the Spirit” would cause us to feel our responsibility, and would give us a concern practically to know what it is to enjoy the fellowship of which we have been speaking. The fellowship itself, of course, is the same fellowship. There is only one fellowship, “the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord”, 1 Cor 1: 9. The Spirit is the power, I believe, whereby that fellowship, and the enjoyment of it, are maintained at the present time. Indeed, without that, speaking carefully and reverently, it would fall apart. I think we get that impression from the scriptures we have read in Philippians and Corinthians. The apostle puts these things together in chapter 2, and he says, “If then ...”. I do not think that is an 'if' of doubt; I think it is an 'if' of consequence and certainty, and what is evidently implied is that it is something that we need to go in for because he says, “that ye may think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking one thing”. As I have said, there is one fellowship and that fellowship is marked by unity. In Ephesians, another scripture that is often linked with it, the apostle speaks of “one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all” (Eph 4: 5, 6) and in the same section he speaks of “one Spirit”, v 4. So you see unity in relation to what we are saying. What comes in here is an impetus, you might say, in relation to our affections because he goes on to speak of “this mind ... which was also in Christ Jesus”, and I think the fellowship of the Spirit in that sense would link us with and encourage us to be of that mind. Much could be said about this section had I read on, speaking about the way the Lord

Jesus went, One who in His Person is God and yet had the mind to go down. He “emptied himself” (v 7) and was “found in figure as a man”, v 8. What a mind that was! So that mind, that character, is to be in us, and I believe that the Holy Spirit would cause that to be so; and the result is that we will know the joy and the enjoyment of the fellowship in relation to the “fellowship of the Spirit”. We will know what it is for the Spirit's power to hold these things together. It will hold them together in relation to those who form part of it, but also hold them together in relation to what is for God. Think of what comes out at the end of this section. It speaks of “God the Father's glory”, v 11. Well, I suppose that is in mind in all these things, that God's glory should be secured.

Now, I read in Genesis 26. I make no apology for reading quite a bit of this scripture because it is good to keep the context of it in mind, but I just wanted, with the Spirit's help, to take the young ones and all of us through a journey. Men speak, do they not, of the journey of life? I just want to speak of that in relation to the fellowship. I want our hearts to see what the divine end is, what the result is. At the start of the chapter it was a difficult time and, dear young persons, we are in difficult times at present. We are in difficult times in the history of the world at large. We are in difficult times in relation to Christendom, the breakdown that has come in, and almost more than that, the signs of the seeds of apostasy, in the way in which persons who profess to take the name of the Lord Jesus, who profess to be even in His service, go on not only with what is against the Scriptures and His word, but also with what is potentially blasphemous.

Well, Isaac was in a difficult time here and it appeared that he was looking towards the world. He was looking in another direction. It says here - and I want us all to note that - “Jehovah appeared to him and said, Go not down to Egypt”. I believe God would have a particular word for the young ones and all of us at the present time. However difficult things may appear, “Go not down to Egypt”. Do not look towards the world. You will find nothing there to satisfy your soul. On the other hand, God says, “I will be with thee and bless thee”. What a wonderful promise that is! We have spoken of the faithfulness of God and I would reiterate those three words at the beginning of the ninth verse of 1 Corinthians 1: “God is faithful”. God said to Isaac, “I will be with thee and bless thee”. I do not go into the detail of what He said although that is also very interesting. It is very interesting to trace through the Scriptures the way in which God was true to that, the way in which God's faithfulness could be identified in relation to Isaac; but

God would say, "Go not down to Egypt ... and I will be with thee and bless thee" . He said, "I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father ... because that Abraham hearkened to my voice".

That is another detail that I wanted to draw attention to. Isaac had a good father, and I would say that most of us can say that we have had a good father: that needs to be respected. "Because", God says, "that Abraham hearkened to my voice, and kept my charge". How thankful we are for our fathers! How thankful we are if God has given us a good father! That is God's love to you, and that is to be noticed. I am sure those who are fathers would say that they have not always done everything as they should have done. How we lack in many ways! And yet I believe, in the principle of it, God would say, "I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father ... because that Abraham hearkened to my voice". Speaking of fathers - and in a natural way I would include mothers - most of the young ones here have been set in a household, set in relation to the fellowship, in relation to the testimony, in relation to the Lord Jesus and His things. I would say, value that, because God will bless it. God will bless you in committing yourself to it.

As the chapter goes on, you see how that works out. It says, "And Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year a hundredfold; and Jehovah blessed him". Some of us can say in humility we know something of that. I am not speaking now of worldly riches; I am not speaking now of things that men would value; but I am thinking of what God brings in by way of blessing, and He gives us things that we can enjoy. He gives us relationships and associations in relation to the Lord Jesus and the fellowship that we can enjoy, that we can find our lives in; perhaps we do not do so as much as we should, but God, I believe, nevertheless blesses us! As it says here, "And Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year a hundredfold; and Jehovah blessed him". How good God is! As we have made reference already, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ", Eph 1: 3. That is what God has in His heart and mind for you, dear young person, and dear older one.

You will find there is opposition to it. The enemy will come in. That is what comes in here. "The Philistines envied him". You will find that in the world. If you are here in relation to the Lord Jesus, if you have settled peace in your heart, there will be a testimony. Whether you say

anything or whether you do not, there will be a testimony to what you are enjoying. You will find that will be envied by the world and you will find that the enemy, the devil, Satan, will attack you, and the way in which he will attack is to seek to cut off your refreshment. That is what comes in here: the Philistines stopped the wells of water and filled them with earth. That is what the enemy would do. He would cut off your refreshment, cut off your enjoyment in relation to the things of the Lord Jesus. He would seek to get in the way of your enjoyment amongst the brethren, your enjoyment in relation to the things of the Lord Jesus. As you come to meetings like this, as you come to meetings on the Lord's day, he would seek to cut off your enjoyment of it. He would fill it with earth; he would seek to occupy you with earthly things. You will find that is the way of famine.

And what happens here is that Isaac and his servants dug again and they found a well of water. Have you found that your appetite for divine things has lessened? Have you found that the enemy has come in? I would say, 'Dig again!'. You will find that the Spirit will give you power to dig again, and you will find a well of water. It happens again, does it not? You might think, 'Well, I have tried'. I have tried to do what is pleasing to the Lord Jesus. I have tried to be a testimony here, but the enemy comes in again, and he claims, "The water is ours". But then it says, "And he removed thence and dug another well; and they did not strive for that". I believe if you continue in relation to the things of the Lord Jesus, you will find refreshment will come in and the enemy can have nothing to say to it. Think of those blessings which God has in His heart, and you will find something in your soul which is impregnable to the enemy's attacks. "And he called the name of it Rehoboth," - meaning 'Broadways' - "and said, For now Jehovah has made room for us". You find in your own experience the way that God has come in and made room for you, maybe found a way through amongst the children at school, maybe found a way through in the office when you thought the time was coming when you might be tempted to deny the name of the Lord Jesus. Think of that, God will find a way through for you, and you could say, "They did not strive for that Jehovah has made room for us".

There is much to bring out in this section. The next thing I want to show is that God appears to him again and gives him added encouragement. He says, "fear not, for I am with thee". What happens then? The attack of the world comes in. This time you will find it is a

nicer and more friendly approach. Abimelech, and Ahuzzath his friend, and Phicol the captain of his host come along now. They might try and impress you; the captain of the host would show perhaps the strength and power that there is in the world. What does Isaac say? "Why are ye come to me, seeing ye hate me, and have driven me away from you?" I would say to you, young person, the world hates you. It may appear otherwise. This man Abimelech, a great king, came along with his friend. There is friendship here and outwardly the world may appear friendly. Outwardly the world may appear to have resource. This Phicol, the captain of his host, would appear to have resource. Have a judgment of the world. Isaac said, "Why are ye come to me, seeing ye hate me, and have driven me away from you?" I say again, dear young soul, and to everyone here, the world hates you, however it may appear. The world hates you because you are a lover of the Lord Jesus, and the world hates Him. Indeed, He says that to His own in the gospels. He says, "If the world hate you, know that it has hated me before you", John 15: 18. The world hates you. It has rejected your Saviour and mine, rejected the Lord Jesus Christ, nailed Him to a cross, crucified Him, cast Him out, and the world at the present time rejects Christ. It hates Him, and because of that, if you love the Lord Jesus, the world hates you.

I move on quickly because Isaac sent them away. There is an oath between them. It is not that we are here in any sense to harm the world. We would leave that side of things with God. God knows. "The Lord knows those that are his", 2 Tim 2: 19. We would leave that with Him. It says here, "that thou wilt do us no wrong". It is not that we are here exactly to do the world wrong, but we send them away because they hate us.

And the point I am coming on to is: "And it came to pass the same day" - the day that Isaac made the decision to send them away - "that Isaac's servants came, and ... said to him, We have found water". The day that you determine in your heart to have nothing more to do in relation to this world that has crucified your Lord, you will find water. You will find the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. That is what I am coming on to suggest. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit exists. I believe the way to experience it is to come to a recognition in your soul that the world hates you. There is nothing there for the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. He sent them away, and the same day that you do that you will come to it that you have found water. What refreshment there is in that!

I am not speaking, of course, to make it clear, in relation to the way in which we have to work and go about our daily lives in this world to fulfil righteousness. What I am talking about is the reality of things in our souls. He sent them away, and that same day he found water. Just remember that! Just remember that, young person, that the day will come when you need to make a decision. I say to you again, the world hates you. Send them away, and you will find water.

I just touch on John. I think we get an impression there in relation to the water. “When *he* is come”, this is the Lord Jesus speaking. There is much that could be said from this section in relation to the testimony that there is to the world in the Spirit here. Much could be said as to the way in which the Spirit is here and is standing over against the great tide of evil that is sweeping across this world, but in relation to the believer, the Lord Jesus is speaking to His own and says, “But when *he* is come, the Spirit of truth, he shall guide you into all the truth”. What refreshment there is in that! I believe we have had some impression of that today. What refreshment there is in considering the truth, the truth as it is in Jesus. It goes on to say: “for he shall not speak from himself; but whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak; and he will announce to you what is coming. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you”. What refreshment there is in the “fellowship of the Spirit”. That is the Spirit's service, to glorify the Lord Jesus. We have sung of it, have we not?

All things of Jesus Thou dost know,
Their glorious greatness to us show;
By Thee, blest Spirit, now adored,
We contemplate the Christ, our Lord. (Hymn 412)

What better refreshment could there be than that, to know the inward power of One who is able to take the things of our Lord Jesus and announce them to you? Wonderful matter, as I have said, in resisting the advances of the world, in sending it away, to find water, to find the refreshment, the “fellowship of the Spirit”, that is able to attract our hearts in relation to the greatness and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is that not what every lover of the Lord Jesus wants, that He should be magnified in our hearts? God will see to it that that will be so. The time is coming when it says, “every eye shall see him”, Rev 1: 7. Think of that day when the Lord Jesus will come out to be publicly vindicated! What a wonderful thing that will be for those who love Him, those who trust Him, those who look on to that day! In the meantime

there is the Spirit's power and the Spirit's work that would glorify Him.

Well, I just close with a reference to Corinthians because I believe this is a seal as to what we can enjoy in relation to “the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord”, and in relation to the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion” (or ‘fellowship’) “of the Holy Spirit, be with you all”. That is God's heart towards you. That was Paul's desire in relation to the Corinthians. He went through much, as we know, by way of exercise in relation to this locality and I believe we can see from this second epistle and what works out in it that the result of the apostle's work was blessing, blessing in relation to His people and glory and praise too secured for God. I believe that is what God would have in His heart and mind for every one at the present time: that every one of us from the youngest to the oldest might know what it is to be living in the enjoyment of “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit”.

May we know more of it in a practical way! May we get a sense in our hearts of the reality of these things of which we speak. It is not that we can point to them physically, but as entering into the joy of them, we know the reality and the truth of them in our own souls and in our own experience. May we learn, as Isaac did, that God's will is supreme. God would have us come into blessing. The way of blessing is to reject the world and all its apparent outward attractions. Commit yourself to the way in which the Lord Jesus has set you and be thankful if He has set you in a household where His name is loved and His rights are honoured. Be thankful for a good father and a good mother! Commit yourself to that in the will of God! Reject the advances of the world! Then you will find water, find refreshment in the power of the Holy Spirit, pointing you to the Lord Jesus where He is in glory and attracting you to Him. Then you will know the enjoyment of “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit”.

May that be the portion of everyone for His Name's sake and God's glory!

Manchester

27th February 2010

HEARTS

David B Robertson

Genesis 6: 5-7 (to 'earth'), 8

Romans 5: 5

2 Corinthians 4: 5, 6

Galatians 4: 6

It is in mind, beloved brethren, to speak about our hearts, remembering the word in Proverbs that says, "Keep thy heart more than anything that is guarded; for out of it are the issues of life", chap 4: 23. The heart of a believer, I believe, is very precious to God, and what is formed in it in the way of affection for Himself and for Christ and, indeed, for one another is precious to God.

I read in Genesis 6 to begin with because it speaks about man's heart; it also speaks about God's heart. The heart of man here is under the influence of sin, darkened by sin, the working of sin. It says of God, "it grieved him in his heart". I do not know if we would have much capacity to understand that grief, divine grief, the grief of God, but the scripture says that: "it grieved him in his heart" to see His creature in such a grip, we might say, a grip of evil. It says, "The wickedness of Man was great on the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart only evil continually": no power to do anything but evil. That is man under the power of sin, and I say again, beloved, God felt it. He felt it as no other could feel it: it grieved him in his heart. We read, "and Jehovah repented that he had made Man on the earth, and it grieved him in his heart. And Jehovah said, I will destroy Man, whom I have created". The kind of man that gave God grief, God could not allow that to continue. The flood came and man in all his wickedness was submerged. No doubt it is a type of the death of Christ where judicially God not only dealt with man's sins but He ended the man that sinned. He did that judicially.

Then in verse 8 it says, "But Noah found favour in the eyes of Jehovah". That is another man. Typically it is the Man that we read of in Romans chapter 5, "The one man Jesus Christ", v 15. Noah's name means rest and God had found a point in Noah that pleased Him in the face of all that multitude of evil that marked man continually. Many would have been involved in it, millions I suppose, but God found a point in Noah, typical of Christ, which has been described as a point of reconciliation. I do not go into the teaching of that at the moment but I

commend it to my younger brethren. That is what Christ provided God with in this evil scene. He provided God with a point of reconciliation. God could look on Him without grief in His heart, just perfect joy. I sometimes feel for myself, beloved brethren, that I scarcely understand how precious Christ was to God as a Man down here, providing rest for His heart, providing continual joy. Think of the Man of Psalm 16: "I have set Jehovah continually before me", v 8. That was the kind of Man that filled God's heart, and He undertook the work that was necessary to remove the sinful man judicially from the sight of God. It had to be that Man. No sinner could do it. A sinner could not even deal with his own state, but there was One great enough to deal with the whole matter judicially: that was the Lord Jesus, "the one man Jesus Christ". I would long to say more about that but it is not my subject at this time, but God has operated in His grace and has secured a foothold, we might say, in persons like you and me and He has attached our hearts to Christ. Wonderful matter that we are in this company today and Christ has a place in our hearts! He has won that. Mr Stoney says He has won it in His humiliation, and He satisfies it in glory, vol 2: 23. That is the Man down here in all His suffering. Paul says, "The Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me", Gal 2: 20. He has won our hearts and He holds our hearts in all His precious worth. He is no longer here; His work is accomplished and, as the scripture says, "in that he lives, he lives to God", Rom 6: 10. He is still the blessed Man who is filling God's heart with joy, but that joy is extended now to persons like you and me who find their joy and satisfaction in Christ. I trust every one in this room has found that, found in Christ a true source of joy and satisfaction. I would say that if you have not, I feel very sorry for you. I would commend Him to you, and God commends Him to you. It says, "whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood", Rom 3: 25. It is as if God comes out with Christ in His hand and presents Him in the glad tidings as an object for faith. Oh that you might, and each of us might, have reached that point where we have accepted what God offers in that blessed Person.

I want to go on from that and speak about our own hearts. I can only tell you now that the Man who was here and became the point of reconciliation is now in glory. He is filling the presence of God and filling the heart of God with eternal delight and joy. As a consequence of the exultation of Christ, the Holy Spirit has come down and He has in His service this wonderful matter that is touched on in Romans 5. I touch on these things very briefly, beloved, because I do not feel able to be

long, but it is a wonderful scripture to me and it says, "and hope does not make ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us". That is a wonderful matter, to be conscious of the love of God being "shed abroad in our hearts". "Shed abroad" means that it was no longer limited to a nation. Wherever you might be in the world, you can come into the value of this service by the Holy Spirit. It is "shed abroad" in that sense, "in our hearts". The love of God was declared fully in the death of Christ. It was fully declared there, and God commends that love to us. He commends His love to us. But His idea, His thought, is not only to commend it, but God's thought is that the love of God might become resident in your heart and in mine. It is not at a distance but resident: "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit". I find that most attractive. Of course, the love of God in its full extent was proclaimed in the death of Jesus. We have often heard that where sin was judged, God's love was declared. The death of Christ was not only sacrificial. God was judging something there but it was declarative and what was declared was the fulness of God's love. But now Christ is on high and the love of God is there. As the word says, "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord", Rom 8: 39. That is the love of God in totality. It was there, declared at Calvary, and it is resident now in Christ in glory, but in measure we have to come into it that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts". It is a touch of what we had in the reading. Your heart is not great enough to contain it all, but you can be immersed in it. It is like the bucket in the ocean. The bucket is full, but the ocean is still round about it. The ocean is there in all its vastness. That is the love of God: it is vast and yet your heart and my heart can be filled with it.

Mr Raven has another very fine point. If the brethren will excuse me, we owe so much to these men, but he said that the first breath of life that the Christian takes spiritually is that he breathes in the love of God, vol 5: 67. That is beautiful. You think of a person that had been recently converted and before that all his life or her life they had been breathing in the noxious influences that fill this world, these noxious, damaging influences in the world which is full of sin and wickedness. Think of that! We have been saved from much, but we knew something of it. But think of the lives of men who were completely dominated by sin and God acts mercifully and sovereignly and saves them, converts them, and instead of their heart being full of these damaging and evil influences of the world, there is the love of God.

What a transformation! I trust, beloved brother and sister, you are enjoying it. I trust you are conscious of it. It is by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the power for it, the power in which this can be known, that the love of God is actually, in measure, filling your heart, and you are conscious of it. What a blessed privilege and what a blessed thing it is!

Well, I leave that and will go on to 2 Corinthians 4. Again it speaks of our hearts. Paul says, "For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus Lord, and ourselves your bondmen for Jesus' sake. Because it is the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts". It has often been pointed out that it is not only shone 'into' our hearts but shone "in" them; that is, that the believer's heart not only becomes a residence for the love of God, but it becomes a residence of the glory of God, the effulgence of God, God revealed in Jesus. Think of that: "who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". Dear brethren, these are wonderful things, wonderful! A brother told me that he and another brother had visited an old brother, over one hundred years old. He was sitting with a Bible on his table, and this affected me when the brother told me. He greeted them but he kept looking at the Book. It was open at 1 Corinthians 15 and he said, 'Look at this! Look at this! "Christ died for our sins", v 3. Is not that wonderful?' Well, is it wonderful or has it become customary to you? Has it just become a term to you or is the glory of God shining in your hearts? You can have no part in the testimony unless it is shining there, not *into* your hearts, but *in* them. What a thing that is! It says, "who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". I came across again a touch in beloved Mr Taylor's ministry just this week. He said, 'that lovely face', vol 50 p 425. There is not a face like it in the universe! It is not now the face of His humiliation; that face was marred; this is His face in glory, God's glory shining there, shining in all its fulness, and it is to be shining in your heart and in mine. Well, I do not think I can say any more about that, "the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". How wonderful that is! Another wonderful matter!

And so we come to Galatians. It says, "But because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father". Think of that, God having sent "the Spirit of his Son into our hearts": "the Spirit of His Son". We spoke about the Spirit of the Father today, but this is the "Spirit of his Son" and "God has sent out the

Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father". No doubt it is the Holy Spirit, but it is presented as the Spirit of God's Son. It is to bring out the feelings of sonship in us, beloved brethren. The Lord Jesus in 'becoming' man took the place of a Son. That is an absolute statement of wondrous truth. The younger men and women should lay hold of that because it is disputed widely in Christendom. He is the only begotten Son. We receive sonship on the basis of redemption and by faith and through being adopted. What a gift it is, the gift of sonship. It is the highest blessing that man can know, and in result it provides satisfaction for God. Paul says, "But I know that, coming to you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ", Rom 15: 29. I believe that is the blessing of sonship. What a blessing it is, "the fulness of the blessing", creatures like you and me who once were afar off brought into nearness and receiving sonship, and the Spirit of His Son is sent into our hearts, crying, "Abba, Father". In Romans 8 we cry it, by the Spirit, but here it is the Spirit that is crying, "Abba, Father" in our hearts. I believe the Holy Spirit is attesting to the great fact that God has operated in that heart and secured pleasure from it. He is attesting to the quality of sonship in the heart of the believer, and it is in such a heart that the Spirit is free to cry, "Abba, Father". Think of that brother and that sister; think of the Spirit crying out of their hearts, "Abba, Father". It is not the person that is crying, it is the Spirit, but He is crying it from your heart. He is attesting to the quality of what God has secured in that heart of yours and mine, a heart that was once "estranged from the life of God" (Eph 4: 18), and maybe in many a case a heart that was subject at one time to the darkening influences of sin in the world. No doubt that was true in degree of all of us, but here it is a heart providing the Holy Spirit with a base in which to cry, "Abba, Father".

Beloved brethren, these are wonderful things! May God bless the word!

Glasgow
27th February 2010

ASSEMBLY CONDUCT

David J Hutson

1 Timothy 3: 15, 16

I trust what I have to say, beloved, is not unconnected to what we have had before. I was thinking particularly of the challenge as to how we are to appear in the testimony. I was thinking how Paul was concerned that Timothy might know how to “conduct oneself in God’s house, which is the assembly of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth”. It relates to when we are together but it would have its bearing on how we come together. Our brother has referred to the assembly, the dignity which belongs to us as having part in it. So that Timothy is exhorted in this way, to know how one ought to conduct oneself. What a privilege it is, beloved, as we think of what the assembly is for the heart of Christ; and of what He has given to secure it. He gave Himself for it. He could not have given more; in His love He would not give less. What it is for God Himself, too, as the vessel of His praise - “to Him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages”, Eph 3: 21. It is a question then how we conduct ourselves as having part in it. It is especially manifest when we come together, but also how we come together and how we conduct ourselves as we are together. The whole question is as to the recognition of the dignity of the assembly.

Then it struck me - no doubt it has often been spoken of - that Paul speaks of the mystery of piety. We often speak of piety as walking here as having God before us. But here we have “the mystery of piety”. As we have been reminded, it is not just a question of how we are together; it is a question how we are all the time. How are we as having this great end before us, to have part in the assembly of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth? I have read of this wonderful pathway: how God has been manifested in flesh - that is the mystery of piety. I would like to understand it more, but how wonderful it is. Why should this be brought before us at this point? It suggests that something is to mark us, and there is to be seen in us something of what was seen in such absolute perfection in our Lord Jesus. There should be something here which manifests that we are persons that have had to do with God, indeed persons who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It says “has been justified in the Spirit”. We are persons who are different, because the Holy Spirit dwells in us. There is something to be seen in us. I know it is personal and unique as to Christ Himself, but it is

brought forward here in the context of the mystery of piety. Piety is something that is to mark us. It is the mystery of it and it was seen in One here who as to His Person is "over all, God blessed for ever" (Rom 9: 5); but He came into these conditions of blood and flesh apart from sin. So that it says that "God has been manifested in flesh". But the mystery of piety is what strikes me, that there is to be something that has found its expression in Jesus which is to find its expression here; something substantial expressed in us, as it says, "justified in the Spirit". It must be as the Holy Spirit is free with us because of our judgment of the flesh which is in us. Nevertheless it was in flesh - "God has been manifested in flesh". I feel difficulty in expressing it. Then it says, "has appeared to angels". Think of a time of need when angels ministered to Him (Matt 4: 11), when He was here in the condition of blood and flesh, in all the perfection of His humanity. But then, beloved, angels take account of us. We are told to observe certain things "on account of the angels", 1 Cor 11: 10. How do we appear to the angels, who are sent forth as ministers on account of the heirs of salvation, Heb 1:14? We are to be careful in relation to them. What do angels see; how do they take account of one they have been sent forth in relation to? Then it says, "has been preached among the nations". What a testimony this is! What a testimony the life of Jesus was, and what a testimony there is now to the One who is in glory. It says, "received up in glory". What a hope we have spoken of - soon we are to be received up in glory. But what in the meantime is the testimony here? What is to be seen in us, to be seen in me, which speaks of that blessed Man who was here in all His perfection? All that was seen in Jesus is to be continued, "that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh", 2 Cor 4: 11.

I trust I am not putting too much into this, beloved, but the impression has been with me today and I search my heart in relation to it; as to what answer there is to it in me. Why should it be, when Paul speaks of how one ought to conduct oneself, he immediately goes on to this great mystery of piety; and points out what was seen in Jesus? We might say reverently, it was how He conducted Himself. What a standard, but let us hold to it. And may it be that, as we are here, there might be the more in testimony to Him; and not only that but there might be more for God.

In the Name of the Lord Jesus.

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