

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF CHRISTIANITY

1 Corinthians 11: 24-26

Hebrews 10: 19-22

Galatians 4: 1-7

Ephesians 1: 22-23, 3: 19-21

AJMcS I wondered whether we might converse together over the distinctiveness of Christianity. I do not mean the distinctiveness of Christianity compared to the religions of men because that goes without saying. I mean the distinctiveness of Christianity compared to the experience of Israel in the past dispensation, and the experience of the Jewish remnant after the rapture, and even the experience of Israel in the millennium. I think we have been helped to see in the recovery of the saints to the truth that the dispensation, which we have part in, is distinctive. I thought it might be helpful for us to raise the level a little in thinking about that. I feel for myself that I often need to lift up my eyes and get a fresh view as to how wonderful and glorious Christianity really is.

The scriptures that I have referred to involve certain features that are distinctive to Christianity. First of all the Lord's supper is an occasion that is distinctive to this dispensation. It was not held in the past and it will not be held in the future. Paul received a distinct revelation from the Lord Jesus and placed the Supper in the assembly. What is highlighted in 1 Corinthians 11 is, 'This is my body, which is for *you*', that is for the assembly; and further, in relation to the cup 'as often as ye shall drink it'; the "ye" there being the personnel of the assembly. We partake of the Lord's supper every week, and it would be good for us to be reminded as to the glory and grandeur of what we can experience each Lord's day as we gather together, because it is truly something that is peculiar to Christianity.

Hebrews 10 also presents something that was not experienced in the past dispensation. Also, I think as we follow the teaching through Ezekiel in chapter 41, it is clear that it is not the experience in the dispensation to follow, so that it is really for Christians to have "boldness for entering into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus", v 19. What a wonderful thing that is, beloved brethren. As you read the Psalms you find godly men with godly experience, but they generally do not rise to the level of the holy of holies. However, the Christian, through the blood of Jesus, is able to enter in through the veil and prove in a vital way the blessedness of what it is to be in the immediate presence of God. I

think that is a wonderful thing, and something no doubt we will get help to converse over.

In Galatians 4, we learn that we are now in the time of sonship. We no longer need to have experiences continually that some of the saints had in the Psalms. We often say that Romans 7 is not Christian experience, although it may well be the experience of a Christian. So the struggle presented there is not meant to be the continual experience of a Christian because we are now in the time of sonship, and “God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba Father”, v 6. While Mr James Taylor remarked that the Spirit of sonship will pervade all in the Father's house, (vol 1 p168) this scripture shows that the saints of the present dispensation are distinguished from those who went before in that the Spirit of God's Son is sent into their hearts. We are therefore able to enjoy the Father's love in an intimate way that far surpasses that of any other family.

In Ephesians 1, the whole prayer should be borne in mind, because the Ephesian saints needed the eyes of their heart enlightened, as we also do. At the end of the chapter we see that this was in view of understanding that the assembly is able to share in the headship of the Lord Jesus and adequately set forth every feature of His glorified humanity. I take it that what underlies that thought is union with Christ. It is perhaps more developed in chapter 5, but it is only the assembly as being able to experience the love of Christ as united to Him and be formed after His glorified humanity that is able to come out and publicly express Him in the world to come. It is our privilege now to experience union with Christ. That is something that is peculiar to Christianity. There is no other family that is united to Christ. It is our experience, or at least it ought to be ours as Christians.

Finally, in Ephesians 3, it is glorious to remember that the Father is the Father of every family. That is most important to lay hold of, but there is only one family that is “filled even to all the fulness of God”, v 19. Think of the glory of all that the assembly is able to contain in the way of the blessed revelation of God Himself in this dispensation. The assembly is also the only family that is said to be “in Christ Jesus”, v 21. There is something distinct and unique to the assembly in all these scriptures. I should say that I know we can have a reading on each of these scriptures in their own right, but I thought if we went over them freshly, we might stimulate our hearts to go in more for these things. That is simply what was in mind.

JCG These are very wide-ranging matters that you have brought up and I appreciate what you say as to the distinctive character. It would bear on the beginning of Hebrews that in these last days God has spoken to us “in ... Son”, Heb 1: 1, 2. That would suggest the revelation that God had in mind, would it?

AJMcS Just so. You think of the way God revealed Himself in the past dispensation, if it is correct to speak about revelation in that context. God was known as the Almighty, then Jehovah, and in the millennium, while He never goes back from the truth of the economy, nevertheless, the thought of the Most High God comes in. There is something about the present dispensation that is unique and distinct, and it is for us to go in for it, do you think?

JCG Indeed. So that you started with the Lord's supper, which is very precious to all those who have the Spirit and enjoy entering into the remembrance of Him. Could you say more as to the two points you made?

AJMcS Well, in thinking about this scripture, it occurred to me that the passover was a memorial of an event, but the Supper is the remembrance of a Person. Not simply a Person who died, though that is involved in it, but rather a Person who is living, and who through His supper takes the opportunity to present Himself living to His own. The Lord's supper is for the assembly. That is simply what was in mind. 'This is my body, which is for *you*', and 'as often as ye shall drink it'. That is the saints of the present dispensation.

WL These things are available for every Christian, ourselves included, but you could not exactly say that every Christian was in the gain of them.

AJMcS Well, I would go further than that. I would say that I am not always in the gain of them myself, but why not? They are always available for us in this dispensation but there may be a tendency to take things for granted. We come to the Lord's supper every Lord's day, and the tendency may be to say, 'Well, it is just another Lord's day', but think of the blessedness of what God has reserved particularly for the saints of the present dispensation.

TCM The coming in of Christ and His life and His death is really what has given God the basis to introduce this wonderful system of things in great scope.

AJMcS Yes. Say more.

TCM It really brings out first of all the distinctiveness of Christ. God introduced a Man in which every thought of His was going to be fulfilled and find expression in the present time.

AJMcS That is the thought presented in the loaf. We need to remember that the loaf that we refer to on Lord's day morning is not the one body that represents the saints. It rather relates to the body of the Lord Jesus as a Man here on earth. That body was prepared for Him by God, and in that body He filled out the will of God. It is that which is presented in the loaf on Lord's day morning. We would never forget the atoning side, but the main thought expressed in the loaf is a blessed Man who came here and completed the will of God to God's entire satisfaction.

NJH Would the experience of union be in the Lord's mind in the giving of the Supper? He has already said, "why dost thou persecute me?" (Acts 9: 4), showing that He was linked so vitally with the suffering saints in the will of God as He had been Himself, but when it comes to the Supper does He not have the experience of union in His heart? What do you think?

AJMcS It leads on to that. It is important to see that not only did the apostle receive the revelation of the Lord's supper from Christ in glory and place it in the assembly, but he also received the truth of union with Christ from the same source. There must be a distinct connection there.

Now, we are coming up to what some persons call Easter when there will be many professing Christians who will partake of what they call the Lord's supper only once a year. Well, we can experience that on the first day of every week, but the question is whether we appreciate it, as we ought to.

JCG The fact that the Lord gave this to Paul for our time, and including the Gentiles, enhances the matter, the fact that Lord instigated the Supper Himself and then also gave it to Paul from glory enhances the level, does it not? As you say, it should bring in a dignity that enables us through the Spirit to enter into the service of God through it or by it.

AJMcS Yes. The brethren well know that, up until Acts 7, God is still pleading with Israel and, at the martyrdom of Stephen, it is not only the

witness of Christ that is rejected, but also the witness of the Spirit. However, in Acts 9, a glorified Christ appears to the apostle Paul. It is at that point that the economy of local assemblies comes to light and it is in the local assembly that the Lord's supper is partaken of. You can see how all these things work together.

JAB Can you say a little more for our help about how the distinctiveness of Christianity is inextricably bound up with the distinctiveness of the Lord Jesus Himself? I was thinking of what you said as to, 'It is a Person we remember, not an event'. The distinctiveness of Christianity is nothing without Christ. Could you just open that up a bit more?

AJMcS Well in the past dispensation believers were very real. They looked forward to something. They had the promises but they never had possession of them. They looked forward to the Person but He had not come. In the dispensation that follows this one, while persons will also be very real they will not have the same link with the Lord Jesus as persons of the present time have. The title "Lord Jesus" used here is a distinctive title used by the personnel of the assembly. It shows that everything we have, and particularly the Lord's supper, is bound up with the Lord Himself, do you think?

JAB Yes, I do. That is helpful. Would that link, too, with the distinctiveness of the Lord's supper in contradistinction to all the other meetings that we enjoy so much, because the saints of the old dispensation read their Scriptures and no doubt talked about them, they prayed, they were addressed by prophets and others who were moved of the Spirit to do that; but the Lord's supper is distinctive in the same way that Christ is distinctive in a sense; is that right?

AJMcS As we call the Lord Jesus to mind, He uses that occasion to present Himself living to us, and that is what makes the difference at the Lord's supper. There is a distinct manifestation of Christ Himself. Well, if that is the case, and it is, how much ought we to enjoy that occasion. It ought not to be a mere formality every Lord's day.

CKR Say a word then on remembrance. Remembrance appears because it is both in relation to the loaf and to the cup. What do you feel? That is an active matter, calling Him to mind.

AJMcS That is exactly it. There is an interesting footnote, as the brethren know. Mr Darby says that remembrance 'has an active signification of 'recalling' or 'calling to mind', 1 Cor. 11:24. The footnote

does add 'as a memorial' there, but I do not think it is confined to that. As we come together at the Lord's supper, and through the giving out of a hymn perhaps, we can be set free in our minds from everything that has occupied us during the week. We have the emblems before us and we are able to concentrate on what is presented to us in them and to turn our minds actively to the Lord Jesus. He in His love presents Himself living to us as He comes to us, do you think?

CKR I was just thinking how precious it is. We really ought to do it every week as though it is the first time, with that freshness of wholehearted affection for Christ. You would not be anywhere else than doing what you are doing at that particular time because of your love for Him as reflecting His love for us.

AJMcS That is why what is presented in chapter 10 of 1 Corinthians is so important. Sometimes brethren look at that chapter in a negative way but the point of the chapter is rather reflective. We carry forward the thought of the Supper in our affections through the week. As we think continually over what is presented in the cup and the loaf, we have a great stimulating factor for us to arrive at the Supper the following Lord's day having proved ourselves, and therefore ready for a fresh manifestation from the Lord.

DCB Do we have to bear in mind the distinctiveness of this to Him? Christianity is distinctive because there is something that is for the heart of God particularly in this dispensation.

AJMcS Yes. It is not only what we get out of it (to put it simply), but it is what is for the Lord's own heart, is it not? He finds something in the personnel of the assembly that He does not find in any other family. That is remarkable when you think of the moral greatness of persons who have come before us, but there is something in the personnel of the assembly that is unique and distinct to the heart of Christ.

WL There is remembrance at the end of Malachi collectively, "and a book of remembrance was written" (Mal 3: 16), but this is superior, is it not?

AJMcS Yes. Say more about that.

WL There is something there collectively at the end of Malachi in that long gap, as we know, before the incarnation but there is a remembrance here that is unique.

AJMcS I think so. It is good to remember the saints and to remember

persons who have gone before, but it pales into insignificance when you remember the Lord Jesus. There is something distinctive about Him that transcends any other.

GAB Is there some significance in the fact that the Lord in instituting the Supper did not partake of it Himself, although He partook of the passover?

AJMcS You will need to help us as to that, please.

GAB Well, He partook of the passover as present, but He gave the Supper to His own in view of the fact that He was going away and He would be glorified. Is that not what marks this dispensation out as distinctive?

AJMcS It is very interesting to bring that in. When we come together, He is absent. However, as we go forward in the breaking of bread, if there are suitable conditions, He manifests Himself to us. He comes to us, do you think? Say some more.

GAB It seems to me that is what makes it so distinctive, that Christ is not in this scene any more. He is in another sphere but glorified.

AJMcS Yes, and He comes to us, not to leave us where we are. He comes to lead us into His own circumstances.

GCMcK In practice the disciples broke bread on the first day of the week. You get that in Acts 20, "we being assembled to break bread", v 7. Does that enhance the distinctiveness of what you are speaking about? It was not proceeding to what went before. It is a whole new beginning really when the Lord rose from the dead, a whole new realm opening up, do you think?

AJMcS Yes, as we know, in 1 Corinthians 11 the thought is the *Lord's* supper, no doubt because of the low state in the Corinthian assembly. However, what you bring before us in Acts 20 is very precious. The first day of the week really involves the beginning of a completely new dispensation and our hearts can rest in the fact that everything has been secured for the divine pleasure, and there is a Man out of death, do you think?

GCMcK I think so.

DBR The remembrance would involve a secret side. There is a public side here as well. What would you say about that?

AJMcS I think what you say is very important. The remembrance or the calling to mind is something that only persons who have the Spirit can take account of, but the announcement goes further than that. It is a public matter, announcing the death of the Lord, do you think?

DBR I think so. It is an important thing that that is done in the assembly; I mean the local assembly. We break bread and we take the cup and “announce the death of the Lord, until he come”. Say a little more about that please.

AJMcS What I am inwardly finds expression in what I am outwardly. The way that I call the Lord Jesus to mind and enjoy His presence can be detected outwardly in the way that I conduct myself, even at that occasion, do you think?

DBR So really the moral side is that there must be consistency with us. So that there is an expression, and there is power also, first of all to enter into the secret side. But there is also capacity to represent what is due to the Lord publicly, do you think?

AJMcS Yes. So not only do I prove myself before I go to the Lord's supper, but I ensure that when I come from it my behaviour is consistent with my part there.

Well, perhaps we can move on. What we have presented in Hebrews 9 and 10 is foundational for the Christian. The holy of holies is presented in chapter 10 as something that is set before the Hebrew believers to stimulate their interest to go in. Their tendency was to go back to a system where they would place a mere man between them and God. That mere man could go into the second tabernacle only once a year, with fear and trembling, and “not without blood”, Heb 9: 7. However, what the writer to the Hebrews is seeking to impress upon these believers is that the way into the holy of holies is now open for us to go in. It was not open to the persons of the past dispensation. That is the teaching of these chapters really, and I think that what we see in Ezekiel 41 would seem to indicate that there is not the same liberty to go in for the saints of the millennium. How precious and distinctive is the present time when we can go in.

WL In this chapter here, the section read, we have both “the blood” and “his flesh”. Have you something to say about that?

AJMcS You mean “by the blood of Jesus”?

WL Yes. Then “through the veil, that is, his flesh”. It does not repeat

'through his blood'.

AJMcS I thought that might come up. "By the blood of Jesus" involves His death because His blood was shed after He died. However, "through the veil, that is, his flesh", as far as I understand it, involves Him in His present condition before God. Is that what you had in mind?

WL Exactly. "His flesh", it is not flesh as we understand it, but it is flesh nevertheless, something very substantial.

AJMcS Does it link with, "And the Word became flesh", John 1: 14?

WL I think so. That order comes up; He took up a new condition. Nevertheless, it says here, "that is, his flesh". I do not know that I understand it too well, but that is what the scripture says.

AJMcS Yes. Therefore, the Word becoming flesh really involves that He entered into the condition of manhood, and that is a condition He retains. His flesh and blood condition has been laid down in death, but He retains His condition of manhood. There appears to be a similarity between what you refer to and Ephesians 2: 18, "For through him we have both access by one Spirit to the Father", in the sense that in order to go into the presence of God, we require to go through Christ.

DBR "His flesh", to speak reverently, would point to the substantiality of Christ's manhood where He is? He is a real Man there, do you think that?

AJMcS I do think that, and had He not been so then where would we have been?

DBR There would have been no place for us.

AJMcS I wondered that.

JAB Could you just say more about this principle of access that comes out here? There are very many young people here, and we have been speaking about the truth and the doctrine of some of these things, but access into the very presence of God is one of the easiest things to understand about what makes Christianity distinctive because it is so different from what went before when only a very few people, a very few priests, were able to go in. Now the youngest believer in Jesus, with the Holy Spirit, can have this boldness. Is that right?

AJMcS I am sure that they can, and that is my exercise in presenting this. Then the question I would raise in my heart is whether I have

entered in. I think, while entering into the holy of holies might include prayer, nevertheless, it is possible to pray and in your spirit not actually be there. Our personal prayers can be on the same level as the Psalms where there is usually not the confidence in God that a Christian ought to have. However, a believer who has entered into the holy of holies can be recognised from a certain condition of soul that can only be formed there, do you think?

JAB That is good to bring that out. You would not discourage anyone who feels that their prayers are like those in the Psalms because we have all been there, but you would encourage us to see that this is God's objective, again thinking of it from His point of view. He wants us there.

AJMcS Yes. There was a tendency at one time to regard entering the holy of holies as perhaps restricted to special occasions. However, the truth is that we have the opportunity to go in at any time.

JS Doing that we have the support of the Lord Jesus, “a great priest over the house of God”, to sustain us.

AJMcS Yes. Mr Remington used to tell us that the High Priest involves what the Lord Jesus is to us individually, but the “great priest” involves what He is to us collectively. I thought that was interesting because we do not want to allow conditions around us to deprive us of the privilege of going into the holy of holies. There is “a great priest over the house of God” and you can be restful that matters are in His hands and still go in. Do you think?

JS I think so. I think it is very assuring that this Person would support us in taking this approach.

AJMcS Just so. You can place your confidence in Him. In chapter 8, He is “minister of the holy places”, v 2. He has a wide range within His view and you can leave things in His hands and not allow the sorrows of the present time to prevent you from entering into the holy of holies.

JSp Would it also correspond with, “and we have contemplated his glory”, John 1: 14?

AJMcS I wondered that, but I would appreciate if you would say some more to help us.

JSp I understand that the holiest is more for contemplation, and how much there is to contemplate and deepen in. I feel the need for it

myself.

AJMcS Well, there is a Man there in final conditions, and all God's thoughts are settled in that blessed Man, do you think? Say some more.

JSp I cannot say much about it, but I feel there is a great system that is all centred in Christ and there is so much to feed the mind and affections on. If we learn just to set aside a little time to go before God and see what is there in that blessed Man, it would form spiritual substance in us.

AJMcS God has done everything from His side. The teaching of the covenant that precedes this is most important. The new covenant is not made with Christians. Nevertheless, the spirit of the new covenant can be appreciated and enjoyed by Christians. That helps us to see that He has done everything from His side to allow us to go into the holy of holies. So when we go in we are not exactly worried about our problems or our difficulties, we know that all is settled and we can behold the glory of the Lord.

JCG The distinctiveness of what you are bringing out for saints of this dispensation comes out in the expression, "new and living way". The reference to "dedicated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh" suggests the place that Christ has now as Man in glory. It is newly made, as Mr Darby's note makes clear. It is totally different. That would be what you have in mind as to the speciality of it.

AJMcS Very good. In the past dispensation the High Priest could only go in once a year, not without blood and with fear and trembling. Had he done things not according to divine order, judgment would have come in. No doubt we need to be careful in approaching God because the boldness here is not the boldness of the flesh. It is confidence in God Himself. He would have us to go in, and rather than something that might lead to death, it is a new and a living way. As Mr Raven said, 'The new and living way is from the cross to the heart of God', Letters p 244.

RG Do you think that in the holiest, we not only get an impression of Christ, but we get some fresh impression of the [*Father's*](#) feelings about Christ? I am thinking about the reference in Hebrews to "the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat", Heb 9: 5. The Father's affections are there and we take account of that, do you think?

AJMcS That is interesting. I think in Hebrews God takes pains to show His appreciation of Christ and express His complacency in Him. He also shows us a whole divine system centred in Christ that is also in complacency, do you think?

RG Yes indeed. Our understanding of what John 17 speaks of would grow, "that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them", v 26. That would come from the holiest, do you think?

AJMcS I think what you say is very interesting. I have been wondering myself whether there is a difference between the holy of holies and the Father's house. Could you help us as to that?

RG No, I have nothing to add as to that. What are your own exercises?

AJMcS I am just feeling my way and would like to get help, but as far as I know in Hebrews, the teaching generally seems to be God and Christ involving the covenant, and the Father as such is not the main point. I think the experience of the holy of holies leads to a condition of soul that is formed in the Christian in the immediate presence of God when all around in the world is a wilderness. However, the Father's house does not relate to the covenant but to the family. It is not an area that is surrounded outside by wilderness with death and sorrow, but with everything that is suitable to the Father's own presence, and when we touch that in our spirits, we can enjoy the sweetness and fullness of that place. Does that commend itself to you?

RG Yes, I think that is very helpful and something to ponder.

WL The Father's house is an eternal thought, is it not? What we are reading just now is something that we can enjoy at the present time, although we *can* enjoy the Father's house but in its essence it is future.

AJMcS It is. As we often say, the house of God is provisional and the Father's house is eternal or permanent. It is helpful to go over the teaching as to these things.

JCG Would you say that references to the Father's house are more extensive? "In my Father's house there are many abodes", John 14: 2. Is it a wider thought? The holiest, of course, is the presence of God for contemplation and worship, but there is an expansive thought in relation to the Father's house, is there?

AJMcS Yes. There is room enough for every family there, and I think in its ultimate fullness that goes on to the new heavens and new earth.

CKR One of the distinctive features is that **He** has gone in. Is that not a very distinctive matter, that a Man has gone in? The ark was a distinctive central figure in the whole teaching in the children of Israel's history. How great it was! But in Christianity it is a Man that has gone in, and because He has gone in we can go in, and we will finally be taken there actually to remain there forever.

AJMcS That is just it. It was essential that Christ came into manhood in order that the dispensation as we know it might be set on. As you are saying helpfully, He has gone into the divine presence, and because He is there, we can be there too.

DBR Does that bring us to the liberty of sonship?

AJMcS I think it does. As we move on to that, would it be right to say that, while priesthood in the saints is not the main subject in Hebrews, nevertheless, it is implied, and the persons who go in would be kindred with Christ? The reason I say that is that if we are Christ's brethren along with that we are associated with Him as the Son of God.

DBR It is important to understand that. It is only what is kindred to that blessed Man that could really enjoy the liberty of sonship. Do you think so?

AJMcS That is what I thought.

The Galatians were Gentiles whom Paul had laboured much amongst, but after that, certain persons had come in with a wrong line of teaching and were seeking to lead them to Judaism. Paul felt strongly enough about that to say in effect that Judaism after the cross is no better than heathenism, Gal 4: 9. Therefore he brings in this wonderful reference in chapter 4 where he points out that, prior to the incoming of Christ, the child "differs nothing from a bondman, though he be lord of all", v 1. You can understand that when you read the experiences of the Old Testament saints.

DBR 'Received it as a gift', that is sonship, but then it says 'for the Jew was in bondage under law: the Gentile had right to nothing', chap 4: 5, footnote. It displaces every kind of man and leads us to share a place with Christ, do you think?

AJMcS That is most important. I am sure there may be many here

who are thinking, 'Well, we have been brought up with these things and know them well', but the fact is that not every Christian knows them nor has been taught them. In fact, wherever man has been given a place in Christendom, it is possible to find persons who are in bondage and are not able to experience the liberty of sonship.

GCMcK Does this expression “the fulness of the time” relate to your exercise as to what is special? It was not anything provisional, was it? We are not dealing with anything that is provisional, shadows or types, but “the fulness of the time” seems to set out sonship fully, God's thought that He had in His heart all along, do you think?

AJMcS Yes. God was working towards the point when He would introduce His Son. The way it is presented here is most important, “God sent forth his Son, come of woman, come under law”. I think we understand that when it comes to public service, the Lord Jesus was sent after He was sanctified which would relate to Him being anointed with the Spirit at the Jordan, John 10: 36. I need help as to this, but I wonder whether the sending here preceded that. Is it linked with the incarnation?

GCMcK I had not thought about that. I am not sure I could comment on that. It was certainly in God's heart, I suppose. The thought of sonship could only come to light in Christ in incarnation, but the thought must have been there in the union between divine Persons that man in sonship was really in mind, but that involves one of the divine Persons becoming Man, does it not?

AJMcS I am sure that is right. God's primary thoughts would be His ultimate thoughts, but they all awaited the incoming of One who as Man would be known as the Son.

WL Why do you think God waited as long?

AJMcS I do not know. What do you think?

WL Well, He proved man, and in every circumstance that man failed. So according to the beginning of Hebrews, “God having spoken in many parts and in many ways formerly to the fathers in the prophets ...” (chap 1: 1) - but this is distinctive, unique. But one wonders why God really waited “the fulness of the time”, what is really involved in that?

AJMcS God waited a long time, and it is clear that prior to the incarnation there were worthy persons. In fact, there are believers in

the Old Testament who were greater morally than we will ever be. Nevertheless, there came that point when God moved from His own side and a divine Person “emptied himself, taking a bondman's form”, Phil 2: 7. In that condition, He was sent. It is most remarkable when you think it was in view of, “that he might redeem those under law, that we might receive sonship”. No doubt He came for various reasons such as to glorify God but here it is presented “that we might receive sonship”.

WL The thought of sonship was in God's mind for a long, long time, “Let my son go, that he may serve me” (Ex 4: 23), but the reality of it is the Lord coming into manhood, into sonship, and we coming into the enjoyment of sonship by the Spirit. Is that right?

AJMcS That is right, and the way it is presented here is in a corrective setting. The Galatians were not enjoying this, therefore “the Spirit of his Son” that is sent “into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father” really involves what the Spirit cries but no doubt God's mind would be that we might cry, “Abba, Father”.

NJH Does the revelation of God in Christ not have a very distinct bearing on sonship as we come into it? It is not only the manhood of Christ, the recognition of that and appreciation of it, but also that God has been revealed in that One. Does that not give a special character to the sonship that we enjoy?

AJMcS Yes. As the Son, He is part of the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That involves God in revelation. We are not associated with the Son as such, but as the Son of God, there are other persons who are known as the sons of God and can be associated with Him in that light. Such have an intimacy of communion with the Father that is unknown to any other family, do you think?

NJH It is God, “God has sent”, and then it is the Spirit and then the Father, “Abba, Father”. That brings in, you might say, the whole realm of revelation in that glorious Man.

AJMcS Yes, and when you think about this expression, “Abba, Father”, there seems to be almost something that is untranslatable about it.

GBG Is this only true then if the state is low? I am just trying to understand this.

AJMcS One thing I find very interesting about the apostle is that he is

able to approach persons where the state might be low and bring in the most exalted thoughts to recover them. Romans 8 shows that where persons have been through the experiences that are involved in the chapter that precedes that, the normal outcome of that would be that they themselves cry “Abba, Father”, v 15. That would confirm that the apostle does not only use this term when the state is low. It is to be the normal experience of a believer who is in the gain of sonship, do you think?

GBG I just wondered if you could bring that in because it is “into our hearts”; so there is what is real proceeding here. I need help on it.

AJMcS The difficulty in Galatia was that although what was genuine was there, alas, wrong teaching was covering it up. It is well to remember that there are many genuine persons in the systems of Christendom but when it comes to the experience of sonship and union with Christ, you will find that these things are almost unknown. That is often because bad teaching has come in. What is really needed is to be with the Spirit in this cry of “Abba, Father”.

JCG I would like to get your thought as to the expression, “Abba, Father”. You have more in mind about that?

AJMcS “Abba” is a very intimate word, which Mr Darby has transliterated from the Aramaic rather than attempt to provide another term. I think that involves a certain intimacy of relationship, which as far as I know is limited to the personnel of the assembly, although of course first seen supremely in the Lord Jesus.

WL It is not a link with Judaism.

AJMcS What has occurred in Christendom (and of course we have not always been free from it ourselves, if we are honest) is but a continuation of what happened in Paul's day. At that time, Jewish teachers followed him wherever he went and tried to destroy the work of God in persons' souls. What has happened in the Christian profession is that what is Jewish, and even what is heathenish, has come in. Even though there are genuine persons in the systems of Christendom, wrong teaching has often covered up what is real and the work of God has not come into expression as it ought.

JS Is the distinctiveness of sonship to be kept before us in the preaching of the word and the teaching. I was just thinking, “for ye are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus”, Gal 3: 26. It is, you might say,

one of the articles of faith, and because we are sons, you get the Spirit of God's Son in our hearts.

AJMcS You are saying that we need to keep that constantly before us.

JS Yes, that is what I was wondering.

AJMcS I think that is right. Our behaviour needs to be in keeping with it as well because there is a certain standard and dignity about sons of God that you do not find elsewhere. There were certain things permitted and allowed in the old dispensation and a certain level of behaviour such as “Eye for eye and tooth for tooth”, (Matt 5: 38) which are not in line with the principle of sonship, do you think?

JS Quite so. So when the Lord in Matthew's Gospel is speaking about the assembly, He introduces Peter into it on the basis of sonship, “Then are the sons free”, Matt 17: 26.

AJMcS Very good. I am glad that you bring that in because in chapter 16 of Matthew's gospel, Peter receives the revelation of Christ as “Son of the living God”, v 16. However, before we come to the practical working out of the truth of the assembly in chapter 18, we have association with Christ in sonship brought in at the end of chapter 17. That is the only basis on which we can go forward and take up practical assembly exercises, do you think?

JS Well, I am impressed with that. We enter into assembly exercises in the liberty and the intelligence of sonship.

AJMcS Quite so. It is the only way to do so.

JSp Is it of significance that the Lord Himself uses this expression?

AJMcS Yes, I think that, but that is a deep scripture and I would be glad if you would say something to help us.

JSp The fact that we can use the same language as the Lord and, in our own limited way, have the same feelings as the Lord, is part of the distinctiveness. I was thinking earlier of how God signals this dispensation of His own, “God's dispensation, which is in faith”, 1 Tim 1: 4. There is the same kind of order of manhood down here in an extensive way. It must be wonderful for His own heart, do you think?

AJMcS What I find so wonderful about this scripture is that the Lord used this term in circumstances of the greatest pressure whereas the tendency might be for us to reserve this expression for circumstances

of the greatest privilege. The wonderful thing about the Lord Jesus was that even when He was in great pressure, He could use such an intimate expression.

TCM So do you think we should be helped to open our minds and our hearts to the great matter of the need for intelligence in this and our affections. It is not just “the Spirit”, but “the Spirit of his Son”, as if we would have some understanding of the greatness of the Father and what He has in mind. I was thinking of the intelligence side of understanding what is suitable for the Father.

AJMcS Just so, I am sure that sonship involves intelligence. Do you mean that “the Spirit of his Son” involves that we understand the Son's appreciation of the Father whereas the Spirit of the Father may more involve the Father's appreciation of the Son?

PAG Is it right to say that not only is this dispensation distinctive, but what we have in it is uniquely attractive?

AJMcS Say some more and help us.

PAG Well, the name of the Lord Jesus, “no one can say, Lord Jesus, unless in the power of the Spirit, 1 Cor 12: 3. What you have spoken of as “the new and living way”, and now this opportunity, we might say, to cry “Abba, Father”, and then the matter of union - these are attractive things for believers.

AJMcS That is really my exercise because I think in ministry we should present what is attractive. Mr Stoney's ministry, for instance, shows his desire to bring before the saints the fullness of what God had in mind for them and then urge them to go in for it.

DBR The term that Paul uses at the end of Romans, does that correspond with what our brother is saying? He says, “I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ”, Rom 15: 29. I understand that is sonship. It is the greatest of God's blessings for man. “The fulness of the blessing of the Christ”, how attractive that is!

AJMcS That is the only way to approach ministry.

DCB I was just wondering about the thought of an heir. All these remarks that have been passed would bring that in, “but if son, heir also through God”. Everything, the fullness and the richness and the blessing, all that belongs to God is available to us in the present dispensation.

AJMcS I am sure that is right. "Heirs of God, and Christ's joint heirs", Rom 8: 17. I wonder if that would take us to Ephesians 1 because as Mr Darby said as to the Lord Jesus, 'Whatever He created as God, He inherits as Man' (Collected Writings, vol 21, p324). Thank God, He does not inherit it alone! He has the assembly united to Him to share with Him in His headship. Is that right?

DCB Yes, that is very fine to see. The breadth of all that is in the divine heart is for us and we are sharing with Christ.

AJMcS As we know, in Ephesians 1 there is a prayer that precedes the verses that we read which really involves that the appreciation of this is not automatic. It requires a certain degree of spiritual enlightenment and intelligence in order that we might appreciate it. Nevertheless, the great result of it all is that we understand and enjoy that we are part of a vessel that is able to share with the Lord Jesus in His headship and adequately set forth every feature of His glorified humanity. You do not find that in Israel, no matter how blessed they were, or the remnant or those in the millennium. That is distinctive to the assembly.

AMB Is the result then divine workmanship, and particularly the work of the Spirit, the One of whom it says in the scripture in Galatians, "God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts". That must be formative. It must bring about a tremendous result, and is this the result that we see in these verses in Ephesians 1?

AJMcS We often say that we are sons of God before we are members of the body of Christ. Membership of the body of Christ is consequent upon reception of the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit has a certain pattern according to which He works. When you think of the beauties and features of the Lord Jesus, it is remarkable to think that conformity to Him involves every moral feature of His glorified humanity. That must be the result of the Spirit's work, do you think?

AMB What do you think of what Paul says at the beginning of 1 Corinthians? These are thoughts that would not come into man's heart. They are in God's heart. That is where they began and He has imparted them to us, and by giving us the Spirit they live in our hearts and we are able to respond to what is in God's mind and God's heart.

AJMcS I am glad you bring that verse in because that also shows the distinctiveness of the dispensation. In the past, persons were not able to understand or appreciate these things, but in the present dispensation, the Holy Spirit is here in order that we might be able to

enjoy them, do you think?

AMB Yes, I do, and our affections must be bound up in this, must they not? The Spirit is sent forth into our hearts, and then also these are the things that God has prepared for those that love Him. We are here together this afternoon as a company that love Him, and in hearts that love God there can be formation by the Spirit according to Christ.

AJMcS Just so. What a wonderful thing it would be if there was a result from this meeting, in hearts being led out more towards Him.

WL It is a most remarkable expression and confirms what you have been saying, “the fulness of him who fills all in all”. We speak about Christ being unique, and that is true, but we belong to a vessel that is “the fulness of him”. There is no lack or want in the assembly, is there?

AJMcS Just so. So the One who “fills all in all” implies the deity of Christ, although I notice Mr Coates said that although this scripture involves that, it is said of the Lord Jesus as ‘the exalted Man’, JT Vol 33 p211. When you think of His glorified humanity, it is wonderful to think of the greatness of the assembly, able to share with Him in His headship and set forth every feature of that humanity.

WL Does this link with “the assembly in Christ Jesus”, Eph 3: 21? What do you say? I am wondering if it is a similar thought, “the fulness of him who fills all in all” and Ephesians 3, that climax there, “the assembly in Christ Jesus”. It is sublime, is it not?

AJMcS It is sublime. “In Christ Jesus” involves formation, and the remarkable thing is that the assembly is not only “the fulness of him who fills all in all” but can also “be filled even to all the fullness of God”, Eph 3: 19. I know time has almost gone, but we should speak about the experience of union. It is a wonderful thing to think that you can be part of what is exclusively for Christ. In the experience of union, we can appreciate that there is nothing else before the assembly save the Lord Jesus, and nothing else before Him save the assembly. Israel never had that privilege.

RG I was going to ask, if what we are saying now bears on the question our brother raised earlier as to why God waited so long. God was not quiescent through the previous dispensation, He was carrying this hidden in God and He was setting out in the types He brought in and setting out examples for their learning and education. So Christ and the assembly is really in God's heart from the very beginning.

AJMcS It is fine to bring that in. Where would we be without the teaching in the types to open up what is set forth in the New Testament? One other thing about that is that the persons that God was working with, prior to this present dispensation, will not be part of the assembly as the holy city, but they will have a place in it. You think of the greatness morally of these persons and how they will be in a suitable environment there. They will be in the holy city even though they will not be part of it.

WL And they will have bodies of glory. It was once suggested that that was exclusive to the saints of the assembly. It is not. To get into the holy city you must have bodies of glory.

AJMcS That is right. I think it is important.

RG Just to refer to what Peter speaks of, “the Spirit of Christ which was in them”, “searching what, or what manner of time” 1 Peter 1: 11. Really God was working in relation to the assembly although it did not become clear until the incoming of the Spirit.

AJMcS The Spirit of Christ appears to suggest the feelings that were expressed in these persons.

DBR In your opening remarks you referred to display. It is really the millennial scene here, is it?

AJMcS That is what I understand because it states “not only in this age, but also in that to come” v 21. Would it also be right to say that, while in eternity the prominent thought is the headship of God there is also an aspect of Christ's headship that is known by the saints? What do you think?

DBR I do think that. The very fact it says “his body”. I used to think “his body”, the thought of the body of Christ, was a provisional thought but it is not, it is an eternal thought. It is a wonderful thing, is it not?

AJMcS It is indeed.

DBR It far supersedes the idea of the twelve tribes. The twelve tribes could never express what the one body can express. The one body really expresses perfectly Christ, does it not?

AJMcS Yes. So there is no real type of the one body in the Old Testament. However, perhaps we have said enough about that. In chapter 3, there are many families and every one of them will know

something of sonship. That is remarkable but there is only one family that is able “to be filled even to” not ‘with’ as we often say, but “filled even to all the fulness of God”, v 19). I take it that involves God as revealed in Father, Son and Holy Spirit and that the assembly is capable of containing that revelation in a formative way. That formation underlies the response that is given from the assembly under Christ to God so that in Christ we are able to respond in a way that is in keeping with this wonderful revelation of God.

JCG Your exercise was that we should look for help through the Spirit of God and the Lord standing by us to appreciate some of these thoughts currently as we enter into the service of praise. Is that your thought?

AJMcS Well, the Father's Spirit would help us on that line in relation to the inner man. I find that encouraging because we see some of the saints beginning to grow old but we can thank God there is no diminution in the inner man. There is only increase there, and the Father's Spirit can strengthen that. Brethren have often proved the way the Father's Spirit has been operative in the service of God to ensure that our aged brethren along with us all are able to respond in worship to God.

Grangemouth

4th April 2009

List of initials

AM Brown, Grangemouth; DA Brown, Grangemouth;
DC Brown, Edinburgh; GA Brown, Edinburgh; GB Grant, Dundee;
JC Gray, Grangemouth; PA Gray, Grangemouth;
R Gray, Grangemouth; NJ Henry, Glasgow; W Lamont, Cumnock;
GC McKay, Glasgow; TC Munro, Grangemouth;
AJ McSeveney, Twickenham; DB Robertson, Cumnock;
CK Robinson, Glasgow; J Strachan, Dundee; J Spinks, Grangemouth

GOD'S WORK AND GOD'S PRESENCE

Alistair M Brown

Ecclesiastes 3: 14 (... "from it")

Psalms 4: 1

Psalms 84: 8 - 10

I refer to these scriptures, dear friends and brethren, with a view to comfort coming into this meeting, particularly into the heart of our sister with us and our brother's family, and to all of us, because death is a sobering matter indeed, and it bears on the human spirit. God knows that and He is able to bring in comfort. The Scriptures themselves are a comfort. It speaks of the encouragement or comfort of the Scriptures (Rom 15: 4), and I trust that a few words as to these passages that we have read might bring in comfort. The Scriptures are the word of God. They are inspired by the Holy Spirit of God and they speak, every one of them, of the Lord Jesus. He is the subject of the Scriptures and they therefore could not fail to bring in comfort. In fact the Scriptures bring in the answer to whatever situation we might find ourselves in. In sorrow, in the presence of death, the Scriptures bring in comfort. They bring in what is appropriate in other situations too, but we are here in the presence of death and the Scriptures bring in comfort. They bring in comfort because they are God's word and God's word is unfailing. You might say, it goes to the heart of the matter. A feature of the Holy Scriptures is that they do not cover things up; they do not gloss things over. In dealing with the matter of death, the Scriptures deal with it in all sobriety. They deal with death from God's point of view and, as we have heard in prayer, God has His Man, that is, His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the One who has conquered death. He went into it. He was put to death, but He delivered up His own life - He had the power to do that - and He rose again because death could not hold Him; life is inherent in Him. The Scriptures speak of One who is living and raised and ascended and triumphant and so there is comfort in the Scriptures.

There is comfort generally; but there is also specific comfort. From this passage we have read in Ecclesiastes I wanted to speak about God's work because that is what God does: "whatever God doeth, it shall be for ever; there is nothing to be added to it, nor anything to be taken from it". That is what the Preacher writes in this book of Ecclesiastes. God's work is remarkable. You might say we see it in creation, and we do; but we see it in persons that God has worked in, and God worked in our brother. God had worked in our brother whose body we are burying today. That work that God has done would start at

a very early point in our brother's history. It would start with God's initiative. It started with some stirring in his soul towards the Lord Jesus and it developed. Then it came to the matter of our brother's conversion where he gave his heart to Christ, and it did not stop there; it continued; and in these latter years when some of us have got to know our brother best, it continued to develop. It was God's work. I would just say this for our comfort that that work is indestructible. "Whatever God doeth, it shall be for ever" and the work that He has done in our brother does not perish with death, far from it. It is preserved, shining and glorious, for eternity because God will have it for Himself. "Whatever God doeth, it shall be for ever". The physical body, as we know from the scripture in 1 Corinthians, is sown in weakness and dishonour and corruption (chap 15: 42-44) but what God does, morally and spiritually, is indestructible and it is glorious, and it is forever. I find that a great comfort. I trust that we all do.

Now it raises a challenge about God's work in me, and it might just raise a challenge with every one of us, whether God is working in us. Have I given God the opportunity to work in me? Have I opened my heart to Jesus as Saviour as our brother did many years ago? It is an opportunity open to every one of us, perhaps most of all on this day when our hearts are sobered and softened as being in the presence of death. May our hearts be opened to receive Christ, that great work that God does! Scripture says: "For ye are saved by grace, through faith; and this not of yourselves; it is God's gift; not on the principle of works, that no one might boast", Eph 2: 8, 9. God works. May He work in the heart of everyone here for salvation and for comfort!

These two passages in the Psalms are very much associated in my mind with our beloved brother because he spoke of them often. He would draw our attention to the fact that in Psalm 4 it is not the pressure that enlarges us, but it is God Himself *in* the pressure who enlarges the believer. That is, that God can use even the most trying circumstances - He can even use the sorrow and the pressure of death - to bring about enlargement, enlargement in the knowledge of Himself, enlargement in our appreciation of Christ and of His work and of the fact that what that blessed One has done, He has done for ever. We are to grow in our appreciation of that work that He wrought on the cross of Calvary, the work of redemption in suffering and weakness, and yet what a powerful work. That work is forever and, in appreciating that, there is enlargement. In coming to know the Lord Jesus and, through Him, coming to know God for ourselves, there is great enlargement. Even in this time of pressure and of sorrow, may there be enlargement, enlargement in the appreciation of divine things, of what the Scriptures

speak of, of the work of God, of the love of the Lord Jesus, of His perfection and His beauty. God would occupy us, even (indeed especially) in a time of sorrow, with the Lord Jesus, with Christ. He would enlarge us with thoughts of that blessed One. He is so available: "When I call, answer me, O God of my righteousness: in pressure thou hast enlarged me; be gracious unto me, and hear my prayer". I think these were the experiences of our brother. He went through times of pressure and, you might say that pressure is what narrows us and makes us small. No! Our brother proved the enlargement that comes from pressure because he went through the pressure with God and in the pressure God enlarged him. May He enlarge the hearts of us all here, enlarge our hearts to appreciate His love! It is in God's love that our brother has been taken home by Christ. For the believer in Jesus, that is an action of love. What a comforting matter that is! It is available to all of us to be comforted by these things. May they not be strange to us! May they be matters that we know about and may Christ be a blessed Man who is real to us, known in our hearts, believed on by us so that we might know comfort and enlargement!

Well, the last scripture I referred to is in the eighty-fourth Psalm: "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand". Our brother often used to refer to this scripture in conversation. I believe he proved it, proved what it was to spend time in the courts of our God, that is in the presence of God Himself. That was his privilege as a believer in Jesus; he enjoyed it, and he knew that it was better. Christianity deals with things that are better, things that are "very much better", Phil 1: 23. The lot of our brother now is "very much better". We know that because the scripture tells us so, and we might say it is reinforced in the mind of believers by the action of the Holy Spirit there, to know that for our brother it is "very much better". It is better to spend one day in the courts of God, than a thousand. Our brother used to say that someone had asked an old believer, 'Better than a thousand of what?' and the answer was, 'A thousand of anything that you like'. In other words, a day spent in the presence of God for those that love Him is better than anything else. Our brother proved that in his life and he gave testimony to it, and now it will be his unending portion. He is with Christ now. How comforting that is! How available it is to every one of us who believes! That is our brother's portion now. May we who are left know something of this and lay hold of Christ and lay hold, as believing in Him, on the things that are better. May the Lord use these words.

Grangemouth
21st February 2009

I AM

David A Brown

John 8: 24

John 10: 14, 15

John 11: 25, 26

Revelation 1: 17, 18

I would like to say a little as to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Man in whom our brother had put his faith and trust, the One whom he knew as his glorious Saviour, and the One who is referred to in chapter 8 “for unless ye shall believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins”. The Lord Jesus Christ is a blessed Saviour because of who He is, God Himself. And in that way, as a blessed, holy, sinless Man, He was the only one who could be called the Saviour of the world, and I would therefore ask everyone in this room, do you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour? I would not like anyone to go from this room without the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. Those who believe not only have their eternity secure, but they live in the enjoyment of a blessed relationship with a Man who lives in glory, and He lives for the pleasure of God. Our brother often spoke of his love for the Lord. He often spoke of the knowledge that he had of Him, and he was one who was indeed “saved in the power of his life” (Rom 5: 10), saved in the power of His risen life. Let us know Christ in this way, the greatness of who He is!

In chapter 10, the Lord is speaking of Himself says, “I am the good shepherd”: “I am the good shepherd”. We know the section well, but I would say our brother knew the shepherding of the Lord Jesus in his life, and I think we all, to a greater or lesser extent, know the shepherding of the Lord Jesus. Think of what Jacob said at the end of his life, “The God that shepherded me all my life long to this day” (Gen 48: 15), and I think our brother knew of that shepherding. In the previous chapter it speaks of a person who was cast out. He was cast out because of his faithfulness and because of the fact that he confessed the Lord. That man who was cast out was found by the Lord as “the good shepherd” and He brought that man into the flock; He brought that one into the enjoyment of a living relationship with Himself as “the good shepherd”. And as we read on it says “and I know those that are mine, and am known of those that are mine, as the Father knows me and I know the Father”. How wonderful it is that that relationship between the Father and the Son was seen in this world; the

enjoyment of it, and the knowledge of it, was known in this world in a Man. We come into a blessed relationship with the Lord, as our dear brother did, in this way as being known of Him. How precious it is to know Him as “the good shepherd”, the One who cares for us, the One who loves us, as our brother did, and I am sure our dear sister would experience that at this time, the Lord Jesus as “the good shepherd”. As the Lord says, “am known of those that are mine”.

In chapter 11 He says of Himself, “I am the resurrection and the life”. Here was a scene of death, and we are in the presence of death as our brother has said, but the Lord Jesus is “the resurrection and the life”. He is the One who, for the believer, has removed the sting of death. He has made it of no account, and for our brother that is so; and for many in this room it is so, that we know One who is “the resurrection and the life”. Do we all believe in the resurrection? It is the foundation of Christianity. How great it is to know One who is “the resurrection and the life”! Here was the Lord Jesus in this scene of death, this scene of sorrow, and He was going to bring in life. Indeed, He was going to call a man by name and raise him from the dead. Is that not a wonderful thing, that we can know One who is greater than the power of death, One who has overcome the enemy, One who has taken that sting away as He did for this family here? He brought in life which was only available in Him. He allowed the exercises in chapter 11 to proceed so that He might become the blessed Centre and the blessed Head of that little family at Bethany. How precious that is!

Our brother has spoken of his memories of what our brother spoke about. I remember our brother speaking much as to this scripture in Revelation chapter 1: “Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living one: and I became dead, and behold, I am living to the ages of ages, and have the keys of death and of hades”. John was being spoken to here, and I just have this impression of the greatness of who Christ is: “I am the first and the last”. He has initiated everything and He will complete everything; and in our brother He has completed the divine work. He is making claim to what there was in our brother, and He has taken our brother to be with Himself which is “very much better” (Phil 1: 23). But, for those who remain, do we know this One as “the first and the last, and the living one”? Christ lives and He lives in the hearts and affections of many believers, multitudes of believers. Is He living in your affections, that blessed One who says He is “living to the ages of ages, and have the keys of death and of hades”? I just have a wonderful impression of the greatness of who the Lord Jesus Christ

is. Our brother did and he often spoke of it. I remember him, not long before he left us, quoting this verse in Revelation on Lord's day morning, and I was impressed by it at the time of remembrance. He knew that blessed One who was "the first and the last, and the living one" and who is alive "to the ages of ages". May we all have a greater impression of the blessed life that we can have as living in that heavenly realm, not only "saved in the power of his life" (Rom 5: 10) but enjoying that life which is beyond death, and beyond the sorrow and darkness that there is, to have our minds and affections filled with the glory of that Man and the place He fills at the Father's right hand. May our affections be stirred in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Man who has claimed our brother and who, if He does not come for His own, will claim many in this way. He is the great I AM. May we be worshipful in His presence and may we too be comforted and encouraged as knowing that glorious One for ourselves for His Name's sake!

Grangemouth
21st February 2009

(At the meeting for the burial of Mr Ted Steedman)

WIDOWS INDEED

Eric C Burr

1 Timothy 5: 3, 5

When we first heard of our beloved sister being ill and the prospect, in her age, of the Lord taking her, I think this was the first scripture that occurred to me. The Authorised Version says, "Honour widows that are widows indeed", and I think this characterised our sister. She had had a great deal to do intimately with death, and the sorrow of this was carried through many years. I think that our sister has shown the characteristics of one who is a widow indeed.

One has not heard her complain. As the scripture here says, she "has put her hope in God". And she rested in it she put her hope in God; a great thing that we would commend to everybody here that they might put their hope in God. It gives you assurance in the present life, and if I may speak for myself, I am often surprised at the way in which God makes Himself known again at some unexpected time, but at a time when it is precisely needed. I think that would be the experience of every believer, that they find that God is available and God is there whenever there is need for Him, even if we do not foresee the need. There is what God will be to us in our circumstances. I commend the knowledge of God to everybody here. Being fairly old myself I would say that it is impossible to do without God in your life, and we carry on life in dependence on Him. We are dependent on Him and we carry on life in dependence on Him.

There is of course the side of things to which our brother has referred in prayer. There is the life that is in Christ Jesus and the power of that, and its blessing, is there to be known by every person that has come into the world. The glad tidings of God are available to everybody. Salvation through Jesus, crucified and raised from the dead and living, is available to everybody. The glorious fact of His resurrection is a testimony that all who believe in Him will be themselves raised; and in whatever degree they have felt themselves preserved by Him and kept by Him, the reality is that - however small your faith may seem - He will be there, and He will carry you.

I have been affected by this, beloved, especially by that word in the Authorised Version of the scriptures 'a widow indeed'. Our sister was such - if you look at the tests lower down for the characteristics of widows it says, "Let a widow be put upon the list, being of not less than sixty years, having been wife of one man, borne witness to in good works, if she have brought up children, if she have exercised hospitality,

if she have washed saints' feet, if she have imparted relief to the distressed, if she have diligently followed every good work", v 10,11. I think it would be difficult to say that there was an item there by which our sister was not qualified. I do not know what Paul had in mind when referring to the list. I know there are many different things being said about it, but what I believe Paul had in mind is that the list is of those who are really widows, and I believe that our sister earned that word in the whole manifestation of her life amongst us.

The Lord has her in His presence now and, in the day when believers are raised to be with Christ for ever, she will be there amongst the millions who are the fruit of Christ's work. I just commend these qualifications to the brethren, because they are not applicable only to widows, or only to sisters; they are applicable to all of us who seek to do the Lord's work. It will be the remembrance of that that we carry of our beloved sister and, if we may as Paul says elsewhere, imitate their faith (Heb 13: 7), we would be sustained in the testimony of God in the present time.

May the Lord help us further.

London
30th December 2008

(At the meeting for the burial of Mrs Ruth Ellis)
(this word was not revised by the author)

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